

Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)

In 1962 there were growing concerns that the Soviet Union was preparing to secretly supply missiles to Cuba, missiles that could deliver nuclear warheads. This posed a particular risk to the U.S. with Cuba only 90 miles south of Florida.

"On October 14, 1962, U.S. spy planes flying over Cuba spotted the first ballistic missile. On October 16 U.S. intelligence officials presented Kennedy with photographs showing nuclear missile bases under construction in Cuba. The photos suggested preparations for two types of missiles: medium-range ballistic missiles able to travel about 1100 nautical miles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles able to reach targets at a distance of about 2200 nautical miles. These missiles placed most major U.S. cities – including Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City – within range of nuclear attack. Kennedy also saw evidence of nuclear-capable bombers." –from <http://encarta.msn.com>

The Kennedy administration faced a situation with potentially grave consequences. An attack on Cuba could trigger a global war, but ignoring the threat of this missile build-up could also risk war.

Kennedy and his advisors agreed that a surprise air attack against Cuba was the only reasonable response. However, some recommended a blockade as a possible prelude to negotiations. Kennedy went ahead with the blockade; at the same time, the U.S. military began moving soldiers and equipment into position.

In a worldwide radio and television address, Kennedy warned Khrushchev that if missiles were fired from Cuba, the response would be a "full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union."

After a series of private negotiations and diplomatic maneuvers, on **October 28, 1962**, Khrushchev announced their decision to withdraw the missiles from Cuba in return for a "noninvasion pledge" from the United States.

A nuclear confrontation had been successfully avoided. The Cold War began to thaw as both super powers realized how close to the brink of nuclear war they had come.



*John F. Kennedy
35th President of the United States
—NARA photo*

*Veterans who served in the military during the **Cuban Missile Crisis** were part of this dramatic chapter in world history:*

My brother-in-law, Archie L. Watt, Sr., was in the Army in the 60's during the trouble in Cuba.

Donna Chase, Dover Foxcroft

My father, Robert C. Leet, served in the U.S. Navy during the Cuban blockade in 1962.

Amy Leet, Millinocket

I served during the Cuban Crisis.

*John E. McDonald, Jr., Mexico
U.S. Navy (Ret.)*

We are voting in honor of our father, Boyd A. Young, who was in the Army during the Cuban Crisis in 1962.

Karen and James Young, Portland

We, too, are voting in honor of Boyd A. Young, father and father-in-law, who was drafted into the Army and was on a plane headed to Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. At the last minute his plane was called back as the crisis had ended.

Lynn and Frank Kelley, Saco

My father, Ray Red, served in both Vietnam and during the Cuban Missile Crisis and is now retired from the U.S. Army.

Patricia D. Red, Topsham

*Wives wrote proudly about their **husbands'** service during the Cuban Missile Crisis:*

My husband, Don Cropley, served in the Army during the crisis in Cuba.

Valerie M. Cropley, East Millinocket



Don Cropley

I am voting in honor of my husband, Edward G. Tumosa, Jr., who served honorably in the U.S. Navy, including duty on the *USS Boston*, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was very proud to have served in the military for 4 years and said it was a great experience for him.

Joanne Tumosa, Newport



President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Nikita Khrushchev during their meeting in Vienna, Austria.

Additional Tributes Submitted Online

Tribute to my Husband, RMSN Charles W. Weaver, III:

My Husband Chuck was a Radioman aboard the heavy cruiser USS Newport News during the "crisis" which was directly involved in deterring enemy shipping from entering and returning to Cuba.

Pat Weaver, North Yarmouth, Maine

Tribute to my Father, John J. Arsenault, Jr.:

I am honored to send this tribute to my dad, who passed away almost 9 years ago. No excuse of course, but I grew up in the generation almost untouched by war, so I never truly appreciated his sacrifice to this country until it was too late to tell him. I now try not to miss any chance to tell our service men and women how grateful I am. So to my dad and all others, I thank you, pray for you, and honor you. God's grace.

Eleanor Calmes, Pittston, Maine