Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives : Catalogue (Summary)

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962
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Catalogue Reference:
GB0099 KCLMA MFF 2

URL:
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Title:
THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

Date(s):
[1947-1989], 1992

Level of description:
collection level

Extent and medium of the unit of description (quantity, bulk, or size):
586 microfiche

Context

Name of creator(s):
The National Security Archive, from sources at US national security agencies, principal of which were the National Security Council, the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Administrative / Biographical history:
The documents included in the collection were generated by a broad range of agencies within the US national security bureaucracy. Particularly significant are those materials that chronicle the actions of the primary decision making body in the US government during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (NSC). Reports describing world-wide military and political developments originating from the US State Department, US embassies abroad, the Central Intelligence Agency, the armed forces intelligence organisation, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research are also prominent in the collection. In addition, US Defense Department, US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and US armed forces internal military reports are included. Finally, records from independent organisations involved in the events of 1962 form a part of the collection, and include papers from the UN and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

Archival history:
The National Security Archive, Washington, DC, USA

Immediate source of acquisition or transfer:
The National Security Archive, Washington, DC, USA

Content & structure

Scope and content:
The collection presents an integrated record of US decision making during the 1962 nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Much of the documentation focuses on the period from Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy's 16 Oct 1962 briefing of President Kennedy on the discovery of Soviet missiles in Cuba to Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev's 28 Oct 1962 decision to withdraw the weapons. Papers include intelligence reports, diplomatic cables, political analyses, military situation reports, and meeting minutes relating to the immediate backdrop to the crisis, the crisis (16 Oct-28 Oct 1962), and its aftermath. Papers concerning the background to the crisis relate to US attempts to overthrow Cuban Prime Minister Dr Fidel Castro following the Bay of Pigs invasion, Apr 1961; US and Soviet
nuclear capabilities and doctrine in the early 1960s; the deployment of US Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) to forward bases in Europe; and the concern over the resurgence of Soviet military aid to Cuba in the summer of 1962. Papers relating to the crisis include US intelligence reports confirming the construction of Soviet missile bases in Cuba; National Security Council minutes relating to a potential invasion of Cuba by US conventional forces, possible US air attacks against Cuba and the resultant Cuban casualties, the possibility of imposing an economic blockade around Cuba, the maintenance of US U-2 High Altitude Reconnaissance Aircraft flights over Cuba, and the possibility of Soviet retaliatory military actions against North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states in the event of US attacks on Cuba, 16 Oct 1962; Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) daily intelligence reports concerning Soviet missile bases and possible Soviet surface to surface SS-4 ('Sandal') nuclear missiles in Cuba; reports from the UN Security Council and General Assembly from the US Ambassador to the UN Adlai Ewing Stevenson; meetings between Kennedy and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Andreievich Gromyko; US estimates of Cuban ground forces; articles from Soviet news agency TASS denouncing American motives in Cuba; reports from US Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara regarding the possible withdrawal of US missile bases in Italy and Turkey in exchange for Soviet withdrawals from Cuba; discussions of the possible US 'Naval Quarantine' of Cuba; CIA estimates relating to possible Soviet first strike military capability with missiles in Cuba; NSC reports relating to the construction of IRBM and Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) bases in Guanajay and San Cristóbal, Cuba, 21 Oct 1962; President Kennedy's announcement to world heads of state regarding the US 'Naval Quarantine' of Cuba (24 Oct-20 Nov 1962) to prevent further Soviet arms shipments of offensive weapons and development of further missile bases, 23 Oct 1962; message from Khrushchev to Kennedy stating that the US 'Naval Quarantine' is an act of aggression against both Cuba and the Soviet Union, 23 Oct 1962; statements by US Ambassador Stevenson, Cuban Ambassador Mario Garcia Incháustegui, and Soviet Ambassador Valerian Zorin in the UN Security Council, 23 Oct 1962; documents relating to the operational readiness of US continental nuclear forces; minutes from UN Security Council meeting, 25 Oct 1962; letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy suggesting that the Soviet Union would withdraw missile bases in return for a US 'non-invasion commitment' towards Cuba, 26 Oct 1962; negotiations over verification of the Soviet missile withdrawal; the US non-invasion 'guarantee' to Cuba and the Soviet Union; and, the question of Soviet Ilyushin IL-28 ('Beagle') bombers and troops remaining in Cuba. The collection also includes retrospective studies of the missile crisis, including the US Department of State internal history of the crisis, US Department of Defense comprehensive reports describing the actions of military commands and units during the missile crisis, and US government records relating to the US-Soviet rapprochement developed in the 1970s and 1980

System of arrangement:
The collection is arranged in chronological order

Conditions of access & use

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Language/scripts of material:
English

Finding aids:

Allied materials
Existence and location of originals:
US National Archives, Washington, DC; National Security Files, President's Office Files, John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston, MA; Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX; the Harry S Truman Library, Independence, MO; Dwight D Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KA; independent scholars.

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Description control

Rules or conventions: