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White House photographer Abbie Rowe took this picture of President Kennedy meeting with "Ex Comm" members on October 18, 1962. JFK is seated mid-way on the right side of the table. His brother, Robert Kennedy, is at the front-right of the picture. Along the wall are the easels which intelligence analysts used to display U-2 photos of Soviet missile-building sites in Cuba. Photo 79-AR-7550-C maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

"Ex Comm" (short for Executive Committee) was the group of senior advisers who met with the President throughout the Missile Crisis.

Of the participants—(including George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Lyndon Johnson, Bobby Kennedy, Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, Doug Dillon, General Maxwell Taylor, and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Curtis LeMay (front, left)—many were "hawks" during the first day of the crisis.

By the 18th of October, the President needed to meet with a Soviet representative. Although it was not time for the Soviets to know the Americans were "on to them," the President discussed Soviet intentions in Cuba. Advancing the "defensive weapons only" argument, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko denied America had cause for concern.

During the late morning, JFK meet with Ex Comm. Members discussed various options, including a naval quarantine [euphemism for blockade] of Cuba.

At the end of the meeting, the President recorded a summary of the day's discussions. Let's listen-in.

The next day, General LeMay urged the President to take out the missiles by air strike. Concerned about that approach, the President concedes:

I don't think we have any satisfactory alternatives.

The problem for the President, of course, was not just offensive nuclear missiles located so close to America. If he initiated military action against Cuba, what would the Soviets do in Berlin? The President's overriding concern was: As Cuba goes, so goes Berlin.

European allies cared a lot more about Berlin than they cared about a small island thousands of miles away. JFK said he didn't want U.S. Allies to view his country as "trigger-happy Americans." (Follow the link to hear the Ex

Comm discussion.)

Meanwhile, more U-2 missions disproved Gromyko's assurances. Construction at the missile launch sites (including those for the longer-range SS-5) was accelerating.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EX-COMM-and-The-Crisis-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EX-COMM-and-The-Crisis-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

Media Stream



Ex Comm Meeting

Image online, courtesy the GPO blog site.

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George Ball

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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McGeorge Bundy

Image online, courtesy The Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

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Lyndon Johnson

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Robert McNamara

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

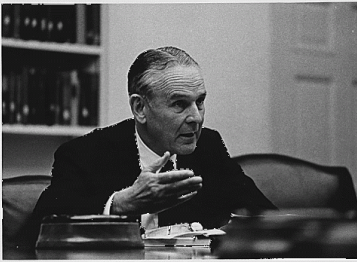
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Dean Rusk

Image online, courtesy the LBJ Presidential Library.

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General Maxwell Taylor

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Gen. Curtis LeMay

Image online, courtesy the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

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Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko with JFK

Image online, courtesy the National Security Archive, George Washington University.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Soviet-Foreign-Minister-Andrei-Gromyko-with-JFK>



Cuban Missile Sites - Map

Image online, courtesy the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

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Berlin - View of the Sector Wall

Image online, from the German site, Senate Department for Urban Development.

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EX COMM and The Crisis

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Cuban Missile Crisis - U-2 Photo Evidence

Clip from *DEFCON-2: Standing on the Brink of Nuclear War During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, a [Discovery-Channel](#) documentary (hosted by Tom Clancy) including interviews, historical footage and recreated scenes, produced to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Missile Crisis. Copyright, Discovery Communications, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the program.

The documentary is based on a book, with the same title, by Norman Polmar and John D. Gresham.

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