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On the 22nd of October, 1962, President Kennedy addressed the American people on what was happening with ballistic missiles in Cuba. He announced that America would begin a quarantine of Cuba to prevent any more Soviet ships from delivering nuclear missiles to the island nation. This image depicts the President during that speech. Online via the U.S. National Archives.

The time had come for President Kennedy to brief the American people. He had reached his first-response decision: a "strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba." He signed the quarantine order (Proclamation 3504) in the Oval Office.

No one (including the Soviets) knew why JFK wanted broadcast time. When people throughout the country (including Soviet representatives in the United States) tuned in at 7 p.m. on October 22, they had no idea what the President would say.

After he spoke, life for the world's populations would never be the same:

It shall be the policy of this Nation to 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 upon the Soviet Union.

The President flatly accused Gromyko and other Soviet officials of lying to him. He warned the American people of difficult days ahead:

My fellow citizens: Let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can see precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred.

He also spoke to the Soviets:

And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.

The United States Strategic Air Command moved from DEFCON 5 (Defense Condition 5 - Normal Peace Readiness) to DEFCON 3 (Increase in Force Readiness) during the President's speech. B-52s were

dispatched to maintain airborne alert.

The gauntlet was thrown down. How would the Soviets respond?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-CLEAR-AND-PRESENT-DANGER-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-CLEAR-AND-PRESENT-DANGER-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

Media Stream



President Kennedy - Broadcast Photo

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

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Cuban Missile Crisis - DEFCON 3

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 production.

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