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During the Cuban-Missile quarantine, Soviet ships (including a Soviet Foxtrot-class submarine forced to surface) faced U.S. Navy warships and helicopters. A Russian artist, Valentin Alexandrovich Pechatin, created this painting depicting one such episode. The Soviet government had dispatched four Foxtrots to Cuba as part of its plan to build-up a large naval force on the Caribbean island. Pechatin's painting is maintained in St. Petersburg, at the State Central Navy Museum. Online via the U.S. Naval Institute.

On October 23, upset that American intelligence did not discover the missiles earlier, Bobby Kennedy voiced (at about 1:30 minutes into the recording) his irritation:

...we are closing the barn door after the horse is gone.

Quickly proceeding, as though the U.S. government was completely oblivious to their actions, the Soviets continued to build three missile launch sites. Determined not to have another failed military initiative, like "Operation Zapata" (code name for the April, 1961 fiasco at the Bay of Pigs), Kennedy did not back down.

American Naval ships were in place to enforce the quarantine. The President wanted any boarding to take place outside the 500-mile limit of Cuban-based MiGs. The Kremlin said it would disregard the blockade and not allow the U.S. to board its ships:

Imposing a naval blockade of Cuba is a provocation and unprecedented violation of international law; it is actually a challenge thrown down at all peaceable nations.

In a letter to the President, the Soviet Premier stated:

The Soviet government considers the violation of the freedom of navigation in international waters and air space to constitute an act of aggression propelling humankind into the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war.

The superpowers were standing eyeball to eyeball - and no one was blinking. It wasn't until October 24, when the crisis was first reported in *Pravda*, that the Soviet people learned about the developing danger in the Caribbean.

Confronted by the American blockade, a Soviet ship (the *Poltava*) turned away from Cuba. Dean Rusk, in a now-famous comment, told McGeorge Bundy:

We are eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.

Except the blink didn't last very long. The worst of the crisis was yet to come.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EYEBALL-TO-EYEBALL-Cuban-Missile-Crisis)

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Media Stream



Quarantine Patrol Along the Cuban Coast

Image online, courtesy The National Security Archives, George Washington University.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Quarantine-Patrol-Along-the-Cuban-Coast>



Confronting a Russian Ship

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

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The Poltava - Soviet Ship

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

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