

The Cuban Missile Crisis: Legacies and Lessons

Twenty years ago this autumn, halfway through the 1962 football season, Americans learned from their President, John F. Kennedy, that Nikita Khrushchev had secretly placed nuclear missiles in Castro's Cuba and that an unprecedented U.S. showdown with Moscow was at hand. Did this mean World War III? The stock market dropped sharply. Here and there, housewives stampeded the supermarkets to stock up on canned goods. A handful of protesters, including socialist Norman Thomas, urged the White House to yield. But most Americans, including Congress and the media, backed JFK's imposition of a naval blockade—and the 13-day crisis ended with a Soviet retreat. Historian Robert Pollard examines the October 1962 drama and today's scholarly debate over its causes and consequences.

by Robert A. Pollard

At 7:00 P.M. on Monday, October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation on television. His face was grim. His subject was Cuba.

"Within the past week," Kennedy said, "unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere."

From the bases, once completed, the Russians could fire medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) as far north as Washington and as far

south as the Panama Canal. Kennedy noted that construction was also proceeding on air bases and on missile sites for intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), which could strike targets more than 2,000 miles away.

While home-based Soviet nuclear weapons had long posed a grave threat to U.S. national security, the President explained, the missiles in Cuba were different. This "secret, swift, and extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles" in the Caribbean, close to U.S. shores, was "a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which

cannot be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be trusted again by either friend or foe."

Kennedy said that he had ordered a "strict quarantine" by the U.S. Navy to intercept shipments of offensive military materiel to Cuba. He invited Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev "to move the world back from the abyss of destruction" by withdrawing the missiles from Cuba and entering into negotiations for the control of nuclear weapons.

The Bay of Pigs

The President acknowledged the risks inherent in his decision. "No one can foresee precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred," he warned. "But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing."

One of the epochal confrontations of the atomic age had begun. Millions of Americans wondered if a nuclear holocaust was at hand. Although the crisis was ultimately resolved without war, it raised numerous questions: Why did Khrushchev place the missiles in Cuba? Was their significance primarily military or political? Was Kennedy's response appropriate? Indeed, was this crisis necessary? Did the United States really win a Cold War "victory," as some pundits claimed at the time? What impact did the confrontation have on Soviet-American relations? On the arms race?

With the benefit of hindsight, some of these matters become clearer. But even after 20 years, certain elements remain a mystery.

The prelude to the crisis lay in the hostility between the United States and Cuba following Fidel Castro's seizure of power from Fulgencio Batista in January 1959. The Castro

regime's expropriation of American-owned properties and increasingly close ties with the Soviet Union prompted the Eisenhower Administration to impose a partial trade embargo and, later, to sever diplomatic ties.

Meanwhile, during the 1960 presidential campaign, the Democratic nominee, John F. Kennedy, charged that the Republican administration had allowed the Communists to gain a foothold just 90 miles from the Florida coast while offering "virtually no support" to anti-Castro groups.

In fact, CIA training of Cuban exiles in Florida and Guatemala was already well under way when Kennedy won the 1960 election; and Kennedy, as President, approved plans to deploy a 1,200-man exile force for an attempted overthrow of Castro. The landing at the Bay of Pigs in late April 1961 resulted in a humiliating U.S. defeat and a further shift by Cuba into the Soviet orbit. The Soviets rewarded Castro with large shipments of tanks and artillery accompanied by several thousand technicians and military advisers during the summer of 1962.

Seeing the Ponies

The Russians at first succeeded in concealing their deployment of offensive missiles.

Then, on August 31, 1962, Senator Kenneth Keating (R-N.Y.) declared that he had evidence of missile silo construction in Cuba. High-flying American U-2 photo-reconnaissance planes had already established that the Soviets were installing defensive surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) in Cuba, but U.S. intelligence found no solid evidence of any missiles which might threaten the U.S. The President and his advisers were also ap-

parently deceived by repeated pledges from Khrushchev and his emissaries that the Soviets would avoid any aggressive action in Cuba.

On September 4, the White House released a statement that the only missiles in Cuba were defensive in nature. But, with congressional elections approaching, Keating and other GOP spokesmen continued to hammer away at the Democrats on the Cuban issue.

In response, Kennedy told a press conference on September 13 that recent Soviet arms transfers to Cuba did "not constitute a serious threat to any other part of this hemisphere." The United States would only react if Cuba "became an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union." In the meantime, he said, U.S. surveillance would continue.

This did not soothe his Republican critics, who now included Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona and Richard Nixon, a candidate for governor in California. And on October 10, Keating claimed on the Senate floor that construction had begun on six IRBM sites and that the Administration was deceiving the American people. By his own account, Keating had earlier relied on leaks from the U.S. intelligence community, but he never disclosed the source for his allegations on October 10.

At the time, American intelligence apparently had still not discovered the missile sites. Heavy cloud cover

and fear of the new SAMs had inhibited reconnaissance by the U-2s in early October. Kennedy's top intelligence advisers, moreover, doubted that the Soviets would install offensive missiles before their protective SAM network was ready. On October 14, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, appearing on ABC's "Issues and Answers," denied the existence of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba just as a U-2 was taking pictures of them for the first time.

Finally, on October 15, CIA analysts identified bases under construction for MRBMs and IRBMs. This revelation surprised and angered Kennedy, but he took the news calmly. How should the United States respond? Kennedy appointed an Executive Committee (ExCom) of the White House National Security Council on October 16 to advise him during what was now looming as a full-fledged world crisis.*

During the next 13 days, the two superpowers were to come closer to war than at any time since the Berlin "airlift" crisis in 1948.

While the ExCom deliberated, the President maintained the appearance of business as usual. One morning, for example, Kennedy took

*Included were Bundy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, General Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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An Oval Office portrait
by Bernard Fuchs of
John Fitzgerald
Kennedy, who led the
United States through
Cold War crises over
Laos, Berlin, and,
finally, the nuclear
missiles sent by Nikita
Khrushchev to Cuba in
late 1962.



Woman's National Democratic Club.

astronaut Walter Schirra and his family out to see daughter Caroline's ponies, and then met with a White House Panel on Mental Retardation. During the course of the crisis, the President flew to Connecticut, Ohio, and Illinois for campaign appearances and issued statements on run-of-the-mill legislation, including a bill curbing indecent publications in the District of Columbia (which he vetoed). The ExCom members, too, took precautions, arriving at different White House gates at different times to avoid attention. When a few newsmen, notably the *New York Times's* James Reston, began to sense

what was happening, the White House managed to persuade them to remain silent.

The ExCom considered several possible U.S. reactions: to do nothing; to rely on diplomacy alone; to implement a blockade; to launch a preemptive air strike; or to invade the island.

The first two options were soon dismissed. The ExCom regarded the presence of the missiles as a serious threat; the Soviets were likely to rebuff diplomatic overtures until the missiles were operational. Few of the advisers, on the other hand, favored an invasion as a first move.

The two main options were an air strike or a blockade, with most ExCom members initially leaning toward the former. A "surgical" air strike against the Soviet missiles would be quick and decisive, its proponents argued. But further inquiry indicated that Soviet casualties on the ground might be high and the results uncertain. A Soviet commander at one of the missile sites, it was thought, might even be tempted to launch a missile on his own in the event of an American attack.

Gromyko Complains

To eliminate all the missiles, a costly amphibious invasion by U.S. troops would have to accompany any air strikes, possibly provoking Soviet counter-moves against West Berlin or Turkey. An air strike, moreover, would be "a Pearl Harbor in reverse," in Robert Kennedy's words. "My brother," he told the group, "is not going to be the Tojo of the 1960s."

By Thursday, October 18, discussion shifted to a partial naval blockade designed to halt the flow of Soviet offensive weapons to Cuba. A blockade would probably avoid a military clash while confronting the Soviets on the high seas, an area of comparative U.S. advantage. Yet this approach, as Dean Acheson noted, would not remove the missiles already in Cuba, and, during the blockade, the Soviets could prepare more and more of them for launching.

While his aides conferred, President Kennedy held a long-scheduled White House meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. The Soviets, by most U.S. estimates, were hoping to spring their surprise immediately after the U.S. November elections. Maintaining the deception that there were no missiles

in Cuba, Gromyko complained of American designs against Castro. Kennedy repeated his September warning against offensive missiles without revealing what he knew.

The key session of the ExCom occurred on Saturday, October 20. Rusk and McNamara secured President Kennedy's assent to a blockade rather than an air strike. Kennedy informed congressional leaders of his decision just two hours before his broadcast to the nation on Monday, October 22.

The climax came on the morning of Wednesday, October 24, as the U.S. "quarantine" took effect. Led by the cruiser *Newport News*, a U.S. naval task force of 19 warships formed a picket line in the Atlantic, 500 miles from Cuba, to intercept approximately 25 incoming Russian ships. The big carriers *Enterprise* and *Independence* took position near Cuba. Some 45 ships, 240 aircraft, and 30,000 men were directly engaged in the blockade. In addition, 25,000 Marines aboard Navy ships and more than 100,000 Army troops in Florida were ready for an invasion of Cuba.*

Eyeball to Eyeball

Shortly after 10 A.M. Washington time, the Navy reported to the President and his advisers that two Russian ships, the *Gagarin* and the *Komiles*, were approaching the American ships with a submarine escort. McNamara told the group that the prearranged plan was for helicopters from the carrier *Essex* to signal the submarine by sonar to identify itself; if this failed, they would use depth charges to make the Soviet vessel surface.

*The Soviets had put 22,000 personnel in Cuba, 10,000 of whom were guarding the missiles, as much against the Cubans as the Americans.

"I felt we were on the edge of a precipice with no way off," Robert Kennedy later wrote. "President Kennedy had initiated the course of events, but he no longer had control over them."

Then at 10:25 word came that the two Soviet ships had "stopped dead in the water." "We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked," Dean Rusk said, as a palpable sense of relief swept through the room. Later, the other Soviet ships reversed course.

The success of the blockade, of course, did not ensure the withdrawal of the missiles already in Cuba. Intelligence revealed that work on the missile sites was continuing, as was the assembly of Soviet Ilyushin-28 bombers.

Jupiters in Turkey

Kennedy and Khrushchev had exchanged messages up to this point almost daily, but to no avail. In a letter received October 23, for instance, the Soviet Premier had flatly refused to recognize the blockade, which he characterized as "outright banditry, or, if you like, the folly of degenerate imperialism."

Yet, Khrushchev provided a way out on October 26. In return for an end to the American blockade and a pledge not to invade Cuba, Khrushchev offered to withdraw or to destroy all launching pads and offensive weapons on the island. The Premier's tone was emotional. If they could not resolve the crisis, Khrushchev wrote Kennedy, "what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly what terrible forces our countries dispose."

A second message arrived at 10:17 A.M. on October 27, just as the ExCom met to consider the first one. In

less compromising language, Khrushchev demanded the withdrawal of 15 U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey in addition to the previous conditions.

Kennedy faced a dilemma: He knew the obsolete Jupiters were no longer useful to NATO defense.* But he could not accept the Soviet demand without seeming to legitimize the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The Joint Chiefs, joining the ExCom at midday, argued that the blockade had failed to force a Soviet pullout, and that the time had come for an air strike followed by a full-scale invasion of Cuba. Then word came that a SAM had shot down a U-2, killing Major Rudolf Anderson, Jr., one of the two Air Force pilots who had first discovered the missiles in Cuba. Several senior officials spoke in favor of an air attack to destroy all the SAM sites as well, but Kennedy rejected this option.

Khrushchev's Retreat

At this point, Robert Kennedy suggested that the President should ignore the second letter and reply to the first. While President Kennedy was sending a message to Khrushchev accepting the conditions of the October 26 message, his brother informed Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that "if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them." The Attorney General also told the Russian that the missiles in Turkey would be removed in due course, but not in exchange for the missiles in Cuba. (The last Jupiter left Turkey in April 1963.)

Khrushchev accepted the U.S. conditions on October 28. Kennedy publicly welcomed Khrushchev's

*Kennedy had earlier directed that the missiles be removed, but the State Department had not yet implemented his order.

“statesmanlike decision” on the same day. Over the next few weeks, Castro, angered by his exclusion from the Soviet-American deal, delayed implementation of the agreement by blocking UN inspection. But U-2 surveillance and observations at sea revealed that the Soviets had destroyed all missile sites and removed 42 MRBMs. (The IRBMs apparently were never delivered.) On November 20, the Soviets agreed to remove their bombers as well. The crisis had ended.

The public response in America was a combination of profound relief and patriotic celebration.

Most contemporary observers applauded the President’s courage and skill in forcing Khrushchev to retreat from a dangerous and aggressive venture. The President won strong bipartisan congressional support and a public approval rating, as determined by polls, of almost 80 percent, as well as the backing of America’s major allies.

Goldwater’s View

In the *Saturday Evening Post*, Joseph Alsop and Charles Bartlett credited Kennedy with acting firmly but with restraint. Kennedy had chosen a plan of action which allowed the Russians time for maneuver and minimized the possibility of military conflict. In contrast with his mishandling of the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy “never lost his nerve” in this crisis. Similarly, Walter Lippmann wrote that “the United States, which had overall nuclear superiority and conventional superiority around Cuba, was careful to avoid the ultimate catastrophic mistake of nuclear diplomacy, which would be to surround the adversary and leave him no way to retreat.”

Time hailed a U.S. victory. But

others chided Kennedy for not acting more boldly to eradicate the Communist presence in the Caribbean. Republicans charged that Kennedy had long ignored their warnings and then timed his response to affect the impending congressional elections. Senator Goldwater contended that Kennedy’s implicit pledge never to invade Cuba had “locked Castro and communism into Latin America and thrown away the key to their removal.”

A Link to Berlin?

In March 1963, Fidel Castro told a visiting newsman that certain aspects of the missile crisis remained a “mystery” which could take historians “20 or 30 years” to unravel. Even after 20 years, scholars debate three main issues: What were the Soviet’s motives? Did the United States overreact? What has been the crisis’s long-term effect?

President Kennedy speculated during the crisis that the Soviets had several objectives: to strengthen their position in the communist world (and possibly draw Russia and China closer together), to protect Cuba, to gain leverage on the Berlin issue, to close their missile gap with the United States, and “to deal the United States a tremendous political blow.” During a television interview in December 1962, Kennedy argued that while the Russians probably never intended to fire the missiles, their presence in Cuba “would have politically changed the balance of power. It would have appeared to, and appearances contribute to reality.”

The Soviet press at the time claimed that the missiles were designed primarily to protect Cuba against a U.S. invasion. But if this were the case, a considerably smaller

arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons, or even conventional arms and Soviet troops, would have sufficed. Castro himself said after the crisis that he had not wanted *nuclear* missiles in Cuba, and that Khrushchev had to talk him into it.*

In his 1971 memoirs, Khrushchev claimed that besides saving Cuba for Castro, the missiles "would have equalized what the West likes to call 'the balance of power.'" The United States had surrounded the Soviet Union with military bases, "and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine."

No Bargaining Chips

Scholars disagree on the military significance of the missiles, but a majority believe that the Soviet MRBMs and IRBMs in Cuba would have roughly doubled the number of Soviet missiles capable of striking American cities. (The Soviets had perhaps 75 home-based, intercontinental ballistic missiles [ICBMs] versus 450 to 500 U.S. ICBMs before the crisis.) Roger Hilsman, the State Department's director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research during the crisis, adds that missiles based in Cuba could have seriously eroded the U.S. ability to strike back after a Soviet nuclear attack.

*If the Cubans had controlled the missiles, the outcome might have been quite different, for Castro was prepared to go to nuclear war rather than submit to Kennedy's conditions. In a 1975 interview, Castro told Senator George McGovern: "I would have taken a harder line than Khrushchev. I was furious when he compromised. But Khrushchev was older and wiser. I realize in retrospect that he reached the proper settlement with Kennedy. If my position had prevailed, there might have been a terrible war. I was wrong."

The missiles in Cuba, however, were highly vulnerable, and they probably represented only a "quick fix" to Soviet nuclear inferiority. In 1962, the Soviets had assembly lines producing the MRBMs and IRBMs in large quantities, but their ICBM technology lagged far behind.

If the Kremlin hoped only to force withdrawal of the 15 American Jupiters, the planned Soviet deployment in Cuba was again disproportionately large—at least 42 MRBMs and 24 to 32 IRBMs. As Harvard's Graham Allison concludes, Khrushchev in the end probably "seized on a Cuba-Turkey bargain as the best hope in a bad situation."

As most U.S. scholars see it, the Soviets were not using the Cuban missile deployment as a "bargaining chip" to force the Allies out of West Berlin. The Soviets probably never would have traded their huge investment in Cuba for Berlin, and they must have known that any serious confrontation over West Berlin would have risked a nuclear war.

Anxiety over Beijing

But Harvard's Sovietologist Adam Ulam places Khrushchev's gamble in the context of both the Berlin problem and the growing Sino-Soviet rift. The Kremlin hoped that "a dazzling Soviet success in the international arena, a demonstration of continuing Soviet dynamism in foreign policy, might persuade the Chinese comrades to trust their nuclear defense to the Russians" and to forgo development of nuclear weapons. Likewise, Ulam writes, the Soviets may have wished to swap the missiles in Cuba for a peace treaty on Germany that would have denied nuclear weapons to West Germany. Anxiety over Beijing's bid for leadership of Third World revolutionary movements

may also explain Khrushchev's big effort on behalf of Castro.

If the Soviet missiles in Cuba did not tilt the real balance of military power, why did Kennedy bring the world to the brink of a nuclear exchange? During the crisis, President Kennedy estimated the chances of war breaking out at "somewhere between one out of three and even." Since the United States eventually removed its missiles from Turkey and pledged not to invade Cuba, some writers have asked, why did Kennedy confront Khrushchev with a choice between humiliation or possible annihilation?

A Needless Test?

Critics such as Ronald Steel, Barton Bernstein, and I. F. Stone have concluded that Kennedy shunned quiet diplomatic approaches and risked nuclear war largely in order to bolster his own image at home and abroad. After the Bay of Pigs, Cuba was Kennedy's political "Achilles heel," and his prestige could not survive another show of weakness. In Khrushchev's place, faced with nuclear confrontation or retreat, Steel argues, Kennedy probably would not have backed down: "Kennedy had politics in mind during the missile crisis. . . . One of the hallmarks of the New Frontier was a nagging sense of insecurity that manifested itself in an inflated rhetoric . . . and self-assumed tests of will, such as Cuba and Vietnam."

Kennedy's defenders, including Hilsman, Theodore Sorensen, and Arthur Schlesinger, note that several members of the ExCom and other advisers urged much stronger action than that which the President adopted. Kennedy vetoed an air strike or invasion, did not retaliate following the downing of the Air

Force U-2, and offered an informal compromise on the Jupiter missiles which helped to settle the crisis.

Given the Russians' earlier duplicity—what Robert Kennedy later characterized as "one gigantic fabric of lies"—it is not surprising that the U.S. President did not pursue a diplomatic solution through time-consuming traditional channels. Finally, Kennedy and his advisers never seriously considered the first use of nuclear weapons; they did not *try* to go to the brink.

All in all, Kennedy's decisions during the crisis were judicious. The President could not foresee all the consequences, good or ill, of his actions. Nonetheless, Kennedy kept his options open and always offered Khrushchev an outcome short of total defeat. Later, Kennedy discouraged celebration over the Soviet Premier's retreat, and cautioned newsmen against exaggerating its importance.

Never Again

What were the consequences of the crisis? Commentators as diverse as Hilsman and Steel agree that the 1962 showdown set the stage for a more cooperative relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Among other things, the superpowers established a direct "hotline" between the Kremlin and the White House and signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963.

Probably the most intriguing question about the 1962 crisis is whether or not it gave impetus to the massive Soviet arms build-up in subsequent years. Recalling Khrushchev's humiliation, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov later warned, "You Americans will never be able to do this to us again." By the end of the 1960s, the Soviets were

approaching parity in strategic nuclear weaponry with the United States, and the Soviet fleet, if not yet a match for the U.S. Navy, achieved "blue-water" status for the first time during the '70s. The Kremlin, however, may already have been committed to large-scale rearmament by 1960, in which case the Cuban missile crisis and the subsequent ouster of Khrushchev in 1964 had little fundamental impact.

Misperceptions

Few scholars today would echo Hilsman's description of Kennedy's October 1962 success as "a foreign policy victory of historical proportions" for the United States. According to Steel, ever the critic, the crisis involved a near-fatal failure of diplomacy and intelligence. Acheson similarly attributes the favorable outcome more to "plain dumb luck" than to skillful management, and Allison demonstrates that Kennedy and Khrushchev did not always exercise full control over their respective bureaucracies. Some Kennedy partisans, Robert Kennedy among them, were appalled by the unwillingness of certain advisers, notably Acheson and the Joint Chiefs, to contemplate the likely consequences of direct military action against Cuba.

The significance of the missile crisis was not nearly as unambiguous as some contemporaries believed, largely because the conditions — geography, timing, relative strength — surrounding it were unique. The "lessons" in the uses of U.S. strategic superiority, for instance, became largely irrelevant once the Soviets achieved a rough equivalence with the United States in nuclear weapons.

Clearly, each side misread the

other's intentions at the beginning. The Americans underestimated Khrushchev's willingness to gamble while the Soviets underestimated Kennedy's willingness to fight. The crisis further demonstrated that intelligence services can fail, that statesmen can lie, and, once again, that seemingly rational men can engage in reckless adventurism.

A still common misperception is that the crisis resulted in a tacit Soviet-American accord on the status of Cuba, bringing a certain stability to the Caribbean region. In fact, the United States never *formally* pledged not to invade Cuba because Castro did not allow UN inspection of the Soviet bases. And the Khrushchev-Kennedy messages did not clearly define the "offensive" weapons which the Soviets were prohibited from stationing in Cuba. Not until August 1970, as Sovietologist Raymond Garthoff notes, did Washington and Moscow reaffirm their understanding on this issue, such as it was. The vagueness of the Soviet-American accords underlay the controversies surrounding the Soviet shipment of MIG-23s to Cuba in 1978 and Washington's belated discovery in 1979 of a Soviet "combat brigade" on the island.

Sobering Up

The abrupt withdrawal of the nuclear missiles, however galling to Castro, did not undermine Cuban security; the Cubans continued to receive substantial military and economic aid from the Soviet Union. Most importantly, Castro gained an informal but credible guarantee against a Yankee invasion. Still, the cost to Cuba of the continuing U.S. refusal to restore normal economic and diplomatic ties has been very high. Over the long term, no one

“won” very much from the 1962 missile crisis.

The crisis was salutary in one respect. Contemporary observers perhaps exaggerated how close the superpowers came to a holocaust. But the experience was sufficiently sobering so that Soviet and American leaders have never since engaged in anything akin to nuclear brinkmanship. Improved communications and other safeguards have also lessened the possibility that a U.S. President will ever again face a nuclear showdown without prompt access to his Soviet counterpart.

President Kennedy himself came away deeply impressed with the need to reduce Cold War tensions. His address at American University

on June 10, 1963, drew what is perhaps the most enduring moral for Soviets and Americans alike:

“Total war makes no sense in an age when great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It makes no sense in an age when a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all of the allied air forces in the Second World War. It makes no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn.”

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