

# October 1962: How Close to the Brink?



Servando Gonzalez

According to common lore, in October 1962, the U.S. intelligence discovered that the Soviets had placed medium-range missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba. These missiles, they claimed, were capable to hit targets in Washington, D.C. and as far as Chicago. This started what later was known as the Cuban missile crisis.

According to most people who have studied the Cuban missile crisis, October 1962, was the time when world teetered closer to the brink of thermonuclear war and the end of civilization as we know it. This opinion has been repeated over and over by most specialists who have studied the crisis.[1]

Well, I strongly disagree, and I base my disagreement on simply verifiable facts that point to a quite different story.

## **The Cuban Missile Crisis ([Google Images](#))**

Similarly to the alleged CIA failure to anticipate the 9/11 events, much has been written about the CIA's failure to predict the deployment of Soviet strategic nuclear missiles on Cuban soil in 1962. This failure has been directly attributed to the CIA's September Estimate.

On several occasions, President Kennedy had asked the intelligence community for an evaluation of the Soviet

military buildup in Cuba, but apparently no official within the government, probably with the exception of John McCone, had anticipated the Russian move. On each of the four times that the U.S. intelligence community emitted its National Intelligence Estimate,[2] with official reports on Cuba and the Caribbean, they had advised the President that the Russians would not make offensive weapons available to Castro. The last NIE, dated the 19th of September, just before the crisis erupted –the now notorious September Estimate– provided similar conclusions. Based on the appraisal of the information made by Sherman Kent and his analysts, the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) concluded without reservations that Soviet emplacement of offensive missiles in Cuba was highly unlikely.

Following the methodology to evaluate information described in a previous article,[3] the estimate pointed out that the Soviet Union had not taken this kind of step with any of its satellites in the past. In fact, the Soviets had never placed strategic nuclear weapons outside its own territorial borders, not in the loyal Communist Eastern European nations, nor in communist China.[4] Both U.S. military and civil leaders had believed all along that the Soviet Union would never risk such action, especially after the repeated reassurances, both public and private, the Soviets had given them.[5]

However, just a few days after the estimate was issued, American U-2 planes took photos in which the CIA photo-interpreters found what they considered strong evidence of the presence of Soviet medium-range strategic nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. What went wrong?

Well, actually nothing went wrong.

The fact that never before, and never after the Cuban missile crisis the Soviets deployed nuclear missiles beyond their borders is a strong indication that the predictions of Sherman Kent and his analysts in their evaluation of the situation in

Cuba was confirmed by the facts. They forecasted that the Soviets would never place nuclear missiles in Cuba, and they sure didn't. The only thing that would have proved the Estimate wrong would have been the actual proof of the presence of nuclear warheads in Cuba in 1962. This would have been the smoking gun.

But, contrary to repeated, unsubstantiated claims to the contrary, as of today, the presence of nuclear warheads in Cuba in 1962 has never been proved.[6] And no smoking gun has ever been found for the simple reason that it was never there. Consequently, the September Estimate could not have been more accurate. Sherman Kent and the rest of the people at the USIB proved their worth to the American intelligence community.[7] Unfortunately, they didn't know that, by doing the right thing on behalf of the American people, they were damaging the interest of their (unknown to them) true masters, the CFR conspirators.

In a *post mortem* analysis of the alleged causes of the Estimate's "failure," Assistant Director for National Estimates Sherman Kent, Chairman of the Board of National Estimates, reluctantly admitted that they had come down on the wrong side. Yet, he could not restrain himself from pointing out what he considered the "incredible wrongness of the Soviet decision to put missiles in Cuba." [8] Of course, Kent was absolutely right in believing that, if Khrushchev actually did what he seemed to have done, he was dead wrong. Even more, something that perhaps

Kent might have thought, but didn't put in writing, by doing what he apparently had done, the Soviet Premier would have proved to be a stupid, incompetent fool and a madman. However, as any book about the Soviet Premier can show, this was not the case. Nikita Khrushchev was a lot of things, some of them not pretty, but he was not a kook.

Now, an elementary rule of tradecraft states that when there is an unexpected, unexplainable change in the opponent's behavior, the first thing to suspect is deception. According to the CIA's own prescribed tradecraft practices, as stated in the document *A compendium of Analytic Tradecraft Notes*, [9] there are warning signs to detect enemy deception which address the likelihood that a country or organization is engaged in a disinformation attempt. The first set of warnings has to do with the likelihood that a country may be engaged in an attempt to distort the analyst's perceptions: (I have added between brackets the known facts which prove that every single one of the six warning signs was present during the Cuban missile crisis and were later ignored by CFR agents at both the NSC and the CIA.)

1. **Means.** The country being assessed has the experience and means to undertake sophisticated deception operations. [*Maskirovka*, a common Soviet practice. During WWII, the Soviets had built a huge factory near the Ural Mountains fully devoted to the production of decoys and dummies.]
2. **Opportunity:** When the country is known to have knowledge of the periodicity and acuity of technical collection vehicles that pass over an area it wishes to protect, analysts have to be aware that the resultant information may be incomplete if not also deliberately distorted. [After studying Power's U-2 after it was shot down in the USSR, the Soviets knew about the plane's extraordinary capabilities for detection.]
3. **Motive.** A motive to deceive is believed to be present. [In the case of Khrushchev, his motive may have been his desire to get rid of the unreliable Castro. But he also may have wanted the Americans to do, unwittingly, the dirty job for him.]

The second set of warnings focuses on anomalies in the information available to the analysts. These warning signs include:

4. **Suspicious gaps in collection.** The analysts are not receiving the range and volume of information they would expect if there were no deliberate tampering with sources and collection platforms. [The US information collection activities on the Soviet Union stopped after Powers' U-2 plane was shot down.]
5. **Contradictions to a carefully researched pattern.** The new information does not match with the opponent's previously observed priorities and practices. [The Soviets never had deployed nuclear warheads beyond their borders.]
6. **Suspicious confirmation.** A new stream of information from clandestine sources or technical collection seems to reinforce the rationale for the action. [I.e., information provided by Penkovsky, a suspected Soviet plant, reinforced the alleged existence of nuclear missiles in Cuba.]

The author of the *Notes* was Jack Davis, a retired officer who spent 40 years as practitioner, teacher, and critic of intelligence analysis. Though the *Notes* were published in 1997, they summarized tradecraft practices that have been standard operating procedures in the CIA for many years, including during the Cuban missile crisis. Therefore, the gross failures in tradecraft by the CIA analysts, and the CIA officer's inability to detect the Soviets' deception efforts, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be attributed to "errors," but to a willful desire by CFR agents in the U.S. government to mislead president Kennedy.

It is difficult to explain why so many senior CIA officers committed such an obvious breach in their established tradecraft practices. Nevertheless, I have a theory, but explaining it would take too long and is beyond the scope of this article. So, if you want to know it, you may have to read my book *The Nuclear Deception: Kennedy, Khrushchev, Castro and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, available at Amazon.com.[10]

Finally, why did President Kennedy fail to seize the opportunity to get rid of his supposed archenemy? Why didn't he authorize the U.S. Navy to board the Soviets ships allegedly bringing out of Cuba the missiles and their nuclear warheads, and verify it? Did Kennedy know something we don't? These are the real questions to be answered to solve this historical riddle called the Cuban missile crisis.

### **Who Controls the Past ...**

Some of the readers familiar with the subject of the Cuban missile crisis may object that, contrary to what I have expressed above, there is an abundance of books proving beyond any reasonable doubt that there were missiles and their nuclear warheads in Cuba in 1962. However, a serious analysis of these books shows that most of what they claim is in contradiction with the facts.



The reason for this hemorrhage of books trying to pass as fact non-confirmed assumptions is because, faithful to Orwell's 1984 dictum, "Who controls the present controls the past. Who controls the past controls the future," the CFR conspirators give much importance and spend an inordinate amount of time muddying the historical waters. For example, for many years the most widely accepted interpretation of the Pearl Harbor events was CFR member Roberta Wohlstetter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*.<sup>[11]</sup> In it, after accepting that the U.S. government knew of the incoming attack, using a recurrent CFR excuse she attributed the inability to act to a failure in inter-agency communication.

In the same fashion, the most accepted interpretation of the Cuban missile crisis was the one advanced by CFR member Graham T. Allyson in his book *Essence of Decision*.<sup>[12]</sup> We now know that Wohlstetter's and Allyson's interpretation of the events

is totally false, and perhaps not by mistake, but by design.

As with the case of Pearl Harbor, after the Cuban missile crisis many professional disinformers passing as serious scholars have published a spate of terror ridden books trying to convince us about how close we were to the nuclear brink during the crisis. In these books the nuclear warheads allegedly present in Cuba in 1962 have miraculously reproduced like rabbits jumping from a magician's hat and the Russian officers in the field had their itchy fingers close to the firing button.

This, however, has nothing to do with the reality of the events. Unfortunately, most people still believe the fairy tale concocted by the CFR conspirators. If things have changed in relation to the 9/11 events, it is because of the Internet, a medium the CFR conspirators cannot control, and its ability to advertise critical books published by small, non-controlled publishing houses.

Now, why do the CFR conspirators devote so much time to fixing the past? The answer is simple: because by giving credibility to past artificially created, non-existing threats they add credibility to present and future, artificially created, nonexistent ones.[13] As James Jesus Angleton once said, "The past telescopes into the future." [14]

© 2019 Servando Gonzales – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Servando Gonzales: [servandoglez05@yahoo.com](mailto:servandoglez05@yahoo.com)

### Footnotes:

1. See, I.e., "[To the Brink: JFK and the Cuban Missile Crisis](#)," ; "[The Brink of Nuclear War: The Cuban Missile Crisis](#)," ; "[The Cuban Missile Crisis: The Brink of Nuclear War](#)," ; "[On the Brink of Nuclear War: Leadership and the Cuban Missile Crisis](#)," ; "[The Cuban Missile Crisis: On the Brink of Nuclear War](#)," ; "[The Brink:](#)

[Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962,](#)" ; ["To the Brink: JFK and the Cuban Missile Crisis"](#).

2. In 1950 the CIA created the Office of National Estimates, to produce high-level national intelligence estimates, in an effort to forecasts possible Soviet behavior.
3. Servando Gonzalez, "[Lies, Damned Lies and 9/11,](#)" September 28, 2019.
4. See, Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), p. 6; Hugh Sidey, *John F. Kennedy, President* (Greenwich, Conn.: Crest Books, 1963), p. 298; Klauss Knorr, "Failure in National Intelligence Estimates, The Case of the Cuban Missiles," *World Politics*, Vol. XVI No. 3 (April, 1964); and Arnold Horelick, "The Cuban Missile Crisis. An analysis of Soviet Calculations and Behavior," *World Politics*, Vol. XVI No. 3, April 1964.
5. On the apparent failure of the U.S. intelligence community to predict the deployment of the Russian missiles in Cuba, see *Investigation of the Preparedness Program*, Interim Report on the Cuban Military Buildup by the Preparedness Investigating Committee, Committee on armed Services, U.S. Senate, 88 Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1963. The Report is usually called the Stennis Report because Senator Stennis was chairman of the subcommittee.
6. During an interview at the Kennedy Library in 1970, somebody asked Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric about the presence of nuclear warheads in Cuba in 1962. Gilpatrick's answer was clear: "We never had any positive evidence" [that Soviet warheads were in Cuba]. "If you ask my own belief, I don't think that there were." ... "I think there were plans for flying them in, but I don't think they were actually matched up ... with the launchers." Quoted in Seymour Hersh, *The Dark Side of Camelot* (Boston: Little,
7. Men of strong convictions, some of the authors of the



September estimate, notably CIA officers Sherman Kent, Abbot Smith and John Huizenga, never recanted. Faced with their apparent failure, their conclusion was that it had been Khrushchev, not the Estimate, who had been wrong. Information on Kent, Abbot and Huizenga in Raymond L. Garthoff, "US Intelligence in the Cuban Missile Crisis," in James Blight and David Welch, *Intelligence in the Cuba Missile Crisis*, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 21.

8. Sherman Kent, "A Crucial Estimate Relived," *Studies in Intelligence*, Spring 1964.
9. See, Central Intelligence Agency, *A compendium of Analytic Tradecraft Notes*, Washington, D.C. February 1997.
10. I have studied this theory in detail in my book [\*The Nuclear Hoax: Kennedy, Khrushchev, Castro and the Cuban Missiles Crisis\*](#),
11. Roberta Wohlstetter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962).
12. Graham T. Allyson, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York : Little, Brown, 1971).
13. See, i.e., Webster Griffin Tarpley, *9/11: Synthetic Terror Made in USA* (Joshua Tree, California: Progressive Press, 2006).
14. Contrary to the disinformers who have painted Angleton as a patriot, he was a traitor and a criminal serving the interest of his CFR masters. See Servando Gonzalez, "Deconstructing Angleton: Was the CIA's Mole Hunter Just Paranoid, or Something Else?,": *Paranoia*, Fall 2012. [You may read the article here.](#)