

Foreign Policy in the Early 1960s

READING FOCUS

- What were the goals of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and what was the outcome?
- What events led to the Berlin crisis and to the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- What were the goals of the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps?
- Which Cold War conflicts did Johnson become involved in?

MAIN IDEA

The Cold War intensified as President Kennedy and President Johnson became involved in anti-Communist conflicts in Latin America, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

KEY TERMS

Bay of Pigs invasion
 Berlin Wall
 Cuban Missile Crisis
 Limited Test Ban Treaty
 Alliance for Progress
 Peace Corps

TAKING NOTES

Copy the chart below. As you read, fill in facts about the outcomes of Cold War crises under Kennedy and Johnson.

Cold War Crises Under Kennedy and Johnson	Outcomes
Bay of Pigs	Failed invasion; United States humiliated

Setting the Scene Although they would have liked to dedicate more of America's resources to improving conditions at home, both Kennedy and Johnson found themselves in the front lines of the Cold War. It was a dangerous and expensive battle, but, as Kennedy argued, it was one worth fighting:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

—John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, 1961

As President at the height of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, Kennedy spoke boldly. In the crises he faced as President, though, Kennedy found that he had to act more cautiously to prevent a local conflict from sparking a global war.

The Bay of Pigs Invasion

Kennedy's first foreign crisis arose in Cuba, an island about 90 miles off the Florida coast. The United States had been concerned about Cuba ever since 1959, when Fidel Castro overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. Some Cubans had supported Castro because he promised to improve the lives of poor people. Castro claimed that the poor were being exploited by wealthy Cubans and by United States companies operating in Cuba.

Once in power, the Castro government seized large, privately owned plantations and property owned by foreign corporations, including some U.S. businesses. The United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba and refused to accept Castro as the country's legitimate leader. When Castro developed ties to the Soviet Union, American officials began to fear that Cuba could become a model for revolutionary upheaval throughout Latin America.

A Plan to Overthrow Castro After Kennedy became President, he was informed about a plan that President Eisenhower had approved in 1960. Under



Cuba's Fidel Castro (left) poses with his ally and supporter, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, at a United Nations meeting.

READING CHECK

Why did President Kennedy want to overthrow Fidel Castro?

this plan, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was training a group of Cubans to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro. The training took place in Guatemala, a nearby Central American country. Kennedy and his advisors expected the Cuban people to help the invaders defeat Castro.

Resistance to the plan soon surfaced, however. When Democratic Senator J. William Fulbright, head of the Foreign Relations Committee, learned of the scheme, he called it an “endless can of worms.” He warned the President:

“To give this activity even covert [secret] support is of a piece with the hypocrisy and cynicism for which the United States is constantly denouncing [condemning] the Soviet Union in the United Nations and elsewhere. This point will not be lost on the rest of the world—nor on our own consciences. . . . The Castro regime is a thorn in the flesh; but it is not a dagger in the heart.”

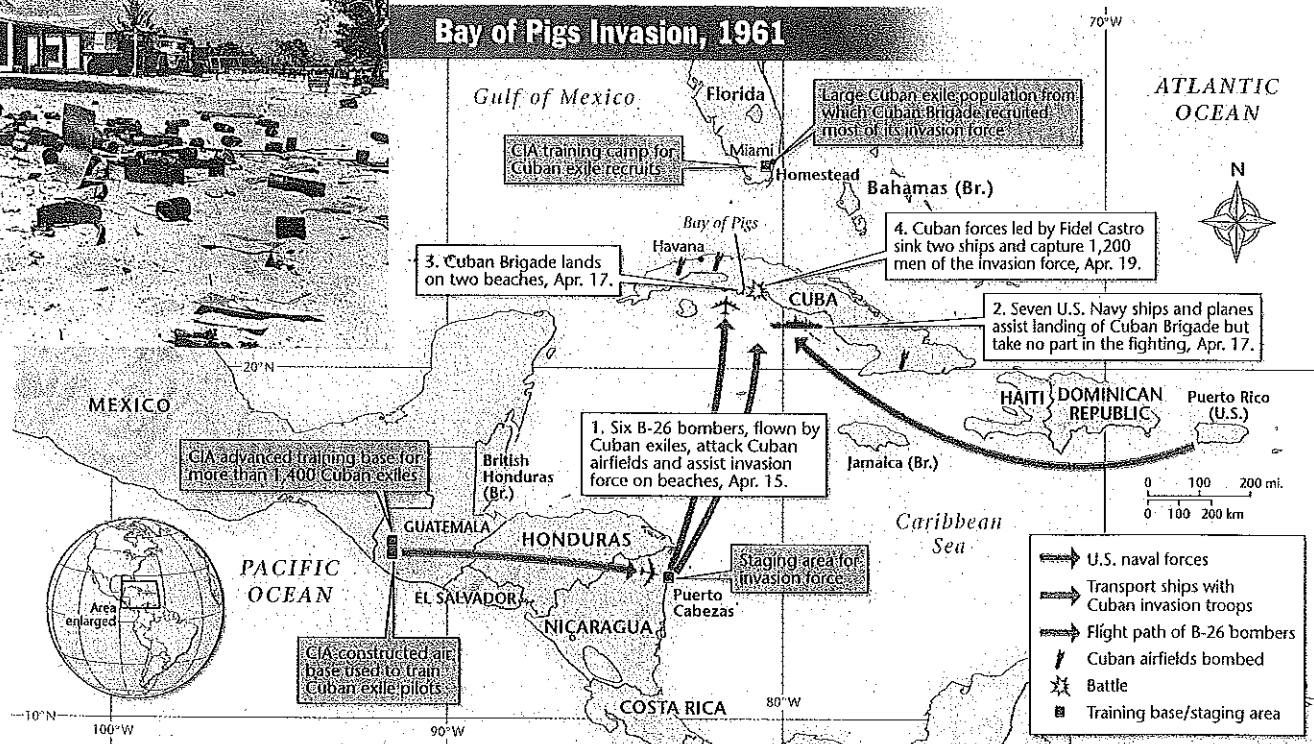
—Senator J. William Fulbright, memorandum to Kennedy, March 29, 1961

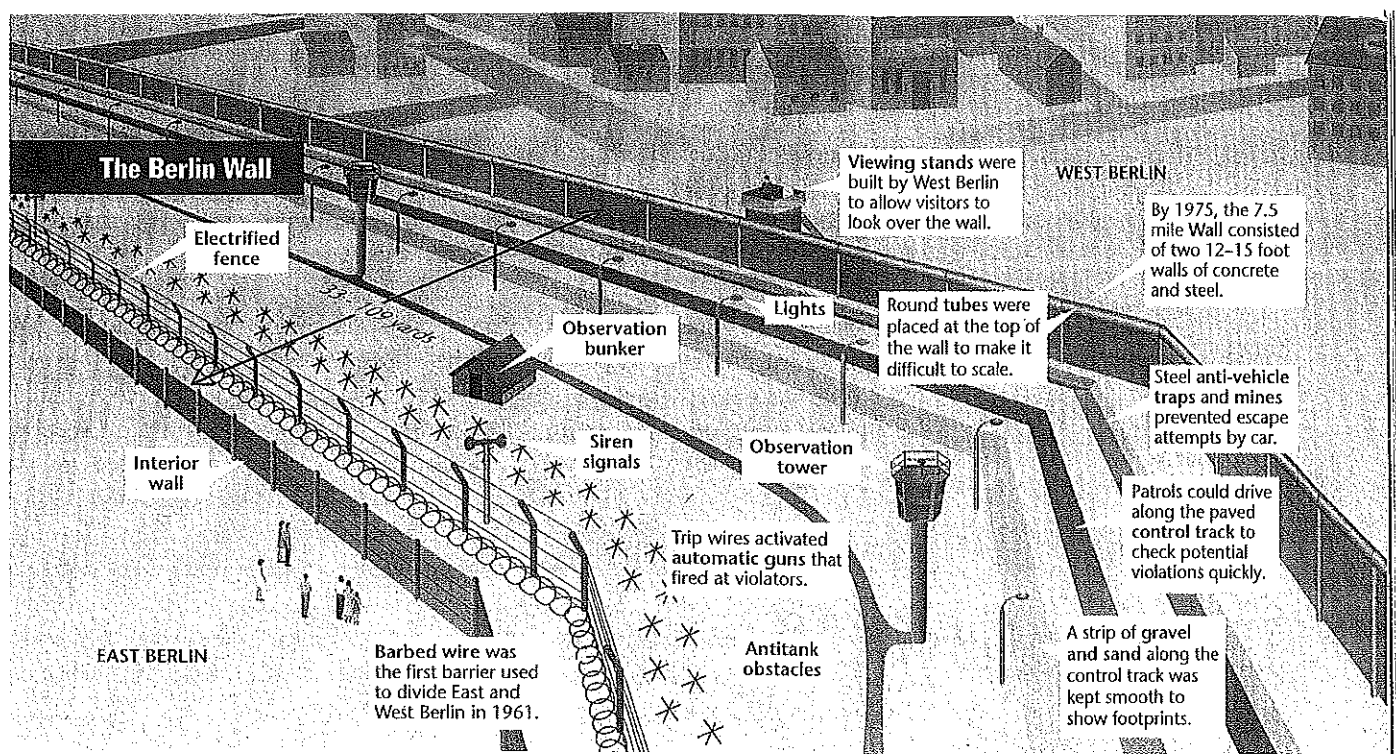
Despite such reservations and those of some military leaders, Kennedy accepted the advice of the CIA and agreed to push ahead with the invasion plan.

A Military Catastrophe The Bay of Pigs invasion, shown on the map below, took place on April 17, 1961. It was a total disaster. An airstrike failed to destroy Cuba’s air force, and Cuban troops were more than a match for the 1,500 U.S.-backed invaders. When Kennedy’s advisors urged him to use American planes to provide air cover for the attackers, he refused. Rather than continue a hopeless effort, he chose simply to accept defeat.

The United States lost a great deal of prestige in the disastrous attack. To begin with, the invasion was clumsy and incompetent. Furthermore, America’s support of an effort to overthrow another nation’s government was exposed to the world. The United States faced anger from other countries in Latin America for violating agreements not to interfere in the Western Hemisphere. European

MAP SKILLS This map traces the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion authorized by President Kennedy in 1961. The photo below shows a Cuban beachfront resort littered with artillery shells following the invasion. **Regions** (a) How many countries played a role in the incident in some form? (b) How do you think this complexity affected the outcome of the operation?





leaders, who had high hopes for the new President, were concerned about the kind of leadership he would provide.

The Berlin Crisis

Upset by the failure at the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy was now even more determined to prove his toughness against communism. Later in 1961, he had another opportunity when a new crisis arose over a familiar issue: Berlin.

Rekindled Tensions Over Germany After World War II, the Allies had divided Germany into zones. The United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and France each controlled one sector of the country. While the zones were meant to be temporary, the lines between them had hardened as Cold War tensions increased among the former Allies. In time, the western regions had been combined to form the nation of West Germany. The sector controlled by the Soviet Union became East Germany. The city of Berlin, although located completely inside East Germany, had also been divided among the World War II victors.

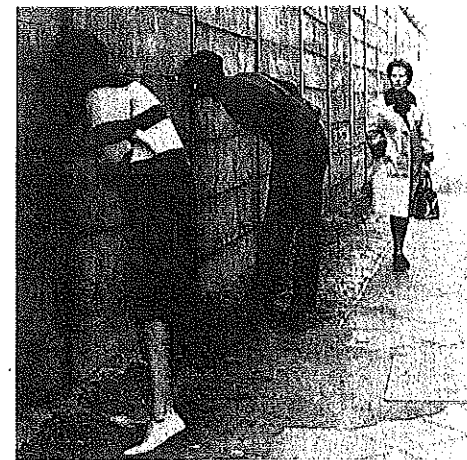
The Soviet attempt to cut off access to Berlin in 1948 had failed as a result of President Truman's successful Berlin airlift. Now the Soviets made another effort to resolve problems in Berlin on their own terms. They demanded a peace treaty that would make the division of the city permanent. Their goal was to cut off the large flow of East Germans escaping into West Germany, particularly through Berlin.

Kennedy feared that the Soviet effort in Germany was part of a larger plan to take over the rest of Europe. Adding to his fears, his first meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, in Vienna, Austria, in June 1961, went poorly. When Khrushchev made a public ultimatum regarding Germany, Kennedy felt bullied by the Soviet leader.

Kennedy Takes Action Upon returning home, Kennedy decided to show the Soviets that the United States would not be intimidated. He asked Congress for a huge increase of more than \$3 billion for defense. He doubled the number of young men being drafted into the armed services and called up reserve forces for active duty. At the same time, he sought more than \$200 million for a

INTERPRETING DIAGRAMS

Below, West Berliners peer through the newly built Berlin Wall into East Berlin near Checkpoint Charlie. Initially, tubes on the top of the wall were supposed to prevent escapees from getting a grip to pull themselves over. Later, as shown in the diagram of a typical checkpoint in the 1980s (top), a whole range of deadly deterrents were installed. **Analyzing Visual Information** As depicted in the diagram, what other hazards were added to prevent escape?



program to build fallout shelters across the country. He argued that the United States had to be prepared if the crisis led to nuclear war.

Kennedy appeared on television to tell the American people that West Berlin was “the great testing place of Western courage and will, a focal point where our solemn commitments . . . and Soviet ambitions now meet in basic confrontation.” The United States, he said, would not be pushed around: “We do not want to fight—but we have fought before.”

In August 1961, the Soviets responded by building a wall to separate Communist and non-Communist Berlin. The **Berlin Wall** became a somber symbol of the Cold War. Still, by stopping the flow of East Germans to the West, the Soviet Union had found a way to avoid a showdown over East Berlin.

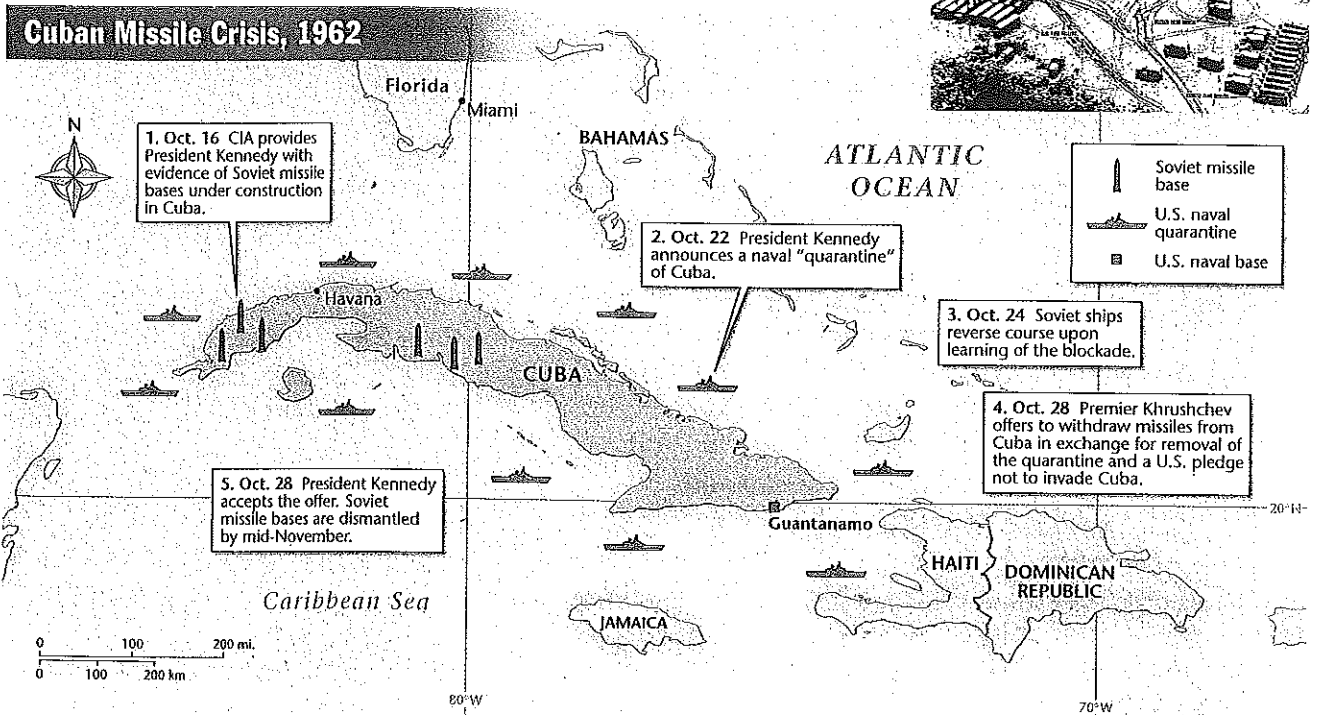
Although the immediate crisis was over, the tensions of the Cold War continued. Speaking in Frankfurt, Germany, in June 1963, Kennedy declared that the United States “will risk its cities to defend yours because we need your freedom to protect ours.” Two days later, the President addressed a cheering crowd near the Berlin Wall. To symbolize his commitment to the city, he concluded his speech with the rousing words, “*Ich bin ein Berliner*,” or “I am a Berliner.”

The Cuban Missile Crisis

Kennedy also had a chance to restore American prestige in another crisis with Cuba. The Soviet Union, disturbed by the attempted Bay of Pigs invasion, had pledged to support Castro’s government. On October 16, 1962, photographs taken from an American spy plane revealed that the Soviets were building missile bases on Cuban soil—only about 90 miles from the island of Key West, Florida. What followed was the **Cuban Missile Crisis**, a terrifying standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union that brought the superpowers to the brink of nuclear war.

Kennedy’s Options The Soviet missiles in Cuba did not radically change the military balance between the United States and

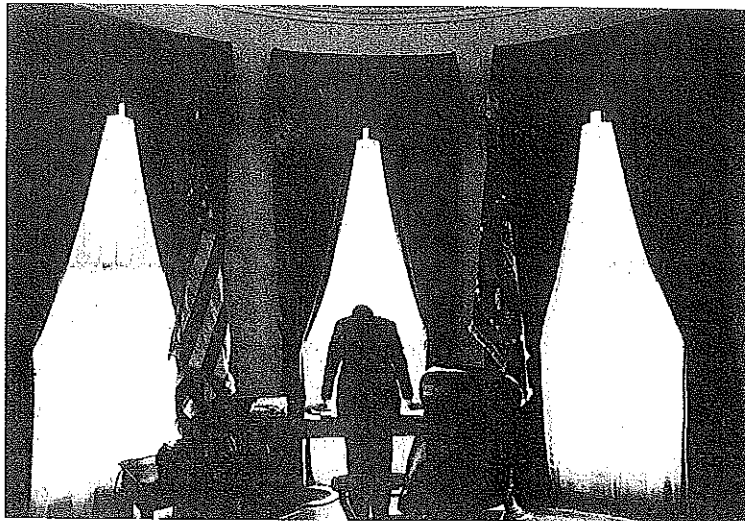
MAP SKILLS U.S. spy plane photographs such as the one at right showed missile bases under construction in Cuba. The map shows the naval blockade of Cuba, put in place during tense diplomatic negotiations to avert a nuclear disaster. Khrushchev offered to withdraw the missiles from Cuba if Kennedy promised not to invade the island. **Location** What details in the map help to explain (a) why the Soviet Union wanted a military presence in Cuba, and (b) why Kennedy was determined to prevent that from happening?



the Soviet Union. The Soviets could already inflict serious damage on the United States from bases within their own country. Yet installing missiles so close to the United States seemed to be an effort by the Soviets to intimidate the Americans. Kennedy was convinced that the missiles presented a direct challenge to which he must respond.

But how? The President quickly assembled his top advisors in a series of secret meetings. They outlined four possible responses:

1. Engage in further negotiations with Khrushchev. This option, although peaceful, would give the Soviets more time to finish building the missile bases. It also risked making Kennedy look hesitant and weak in the face of the bold Soviet move.
2. Invade Cuba. This would eliminate the missile threat and achieve the additional goal of ousting Fidel Castro. A Cuban invasion had failed before, though, and this plan risked all-out nuclear war with the Soviets.
3. Blockade Cuba. This action would prevent Soviet ships from making further missile deliveries. It would force Khrushchev either to back off or to take aggressive action against U.S. warships. However, no one knew how the Soviet leader might react to this step.
4. Bomb the missile sites. A series of airstrikes could quickly knock out the missiles. Yet would the Soviets launch a counterstrike, and where?



Attorney General Robert Kennedy argued against the airstrike option. It seemed, he said, too much like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that had launched the United States into World War II. At one point former Secretary of State Dean Acheson joined the discussions and declared that the United States had to knock out the Soviet missiles. He was asked what would happen next. His response points out the very real danger of a local conflict escalating, or expanding, into a widespread war:

Acheson: I know the Soviet Union well. I know what they are required to do in the light of their history and their posture around the world. I think they will knock out our missiles in Turkey.

An advisor: Well, then what do we do?

Acheson: I believe under our NATO treaty . . . we would be required to respond by knocking out a missile base inside the Soviet Union.

Another advisor: Then what do they do?

Acheson: That's when we hope that cooler heads will prevail, and they'll stop and talk.

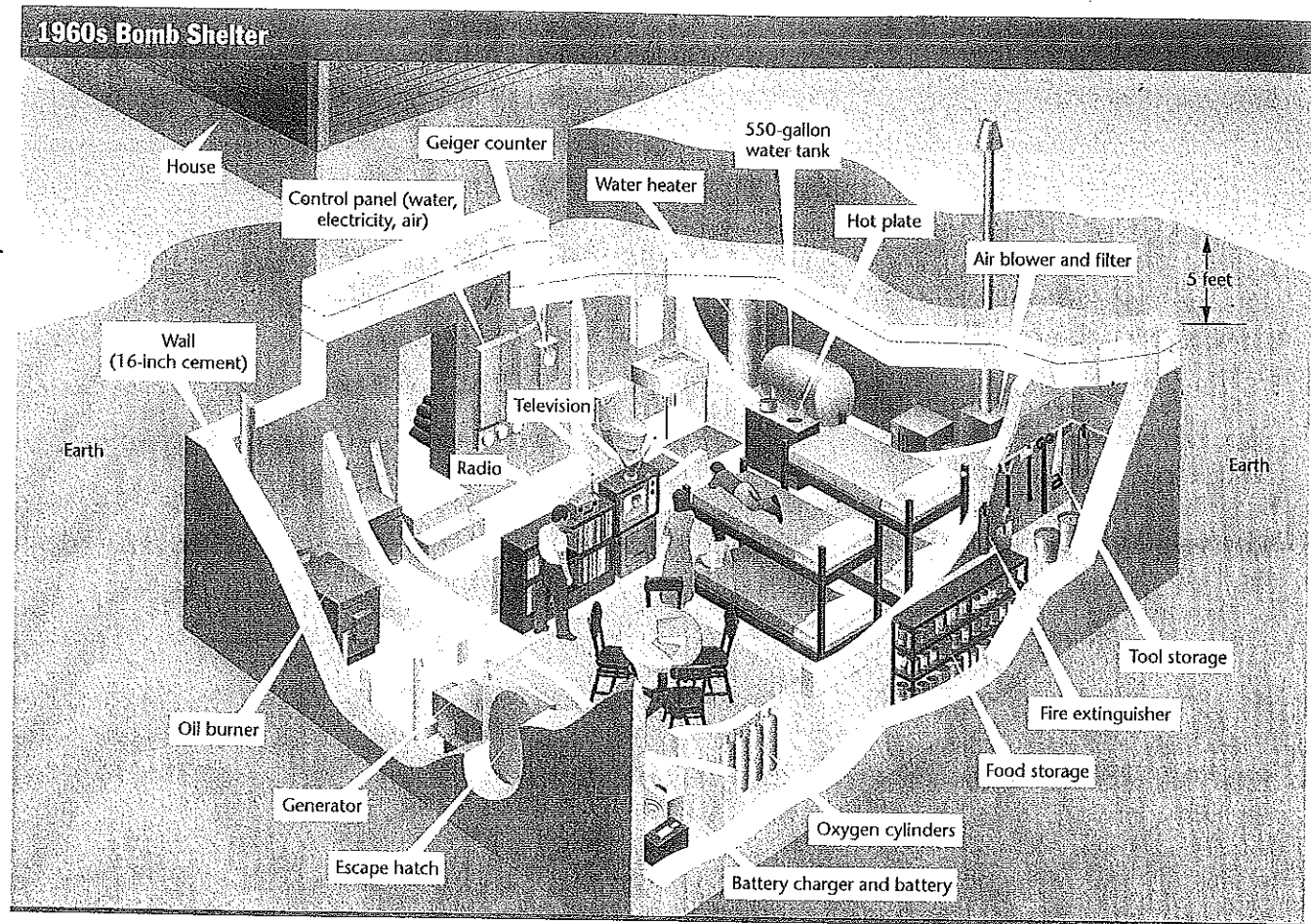
Kennedy Decides President Kennedy ordered United States forces on full alert. U.S. bombers were armed with nuclear missiles. The navy was ready to move, and army and marine units prepared to invade Cuba.

Kennedy listened to the different views of his advisors, grilling them with questions. Then, in solitude, he weighed the options, facing one of the most dangerous and agonizing decisions any President has had to make.

On Monday, October 22, Kennedy went on television and radio to confirm the press reports that had begun to circulate about Cuba. “[U]nmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in

VIEWING HISTORY This famous photograph shows Kennedy in the Oval Office. The photo is often used to evoke the loneliness of the presidency.

Drawing Inferences From what you know about Kennedy's previous foreign policy experiences, what factors might have weighed heavily on him as he made his decision on the Cuban missiles?



INTERPRETING DIAGRAMS

Many Americans hoped they could survive a nuclear war in a basement shelter that would protect them from radioactive fallout, the deadly particles that rain down after an atomic blast. **Analyzing Visual Information** Which features of this fallout shelter are intended to provide safety for the family, and which provide comfort and necessities for living?

preparation on that imprisoned island,” he said. The President then announced his decision: He had authorized a naval “quarantine” around Cuba. He was careful not to call the action a “blockade” because a blockade is an act of war. He demanded that Khrushchev “halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat. . . .”

America did not desire confrontation, Kennedy said, but neither would it shrink from aggression. He told Americans:

“The path we have chosen for the present is full of hazards. . . . The cost of freedom is always high—and Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.”

—President Kennedy, television and radio address to the nation, October 22, 1962

The World Waits The two most powerful nations in the world stood teetering on the brink of disaster. “The immediate public reaction was a mixture of anger and fear—but no panic—as they rallied in support of the president,” one reporter later recalled. Some people huddled in their bomb shelters, expecting the worst.

The naval quarantine went into effect on Wednesday, October 24. On October 25, a Soviet ship reached the quarantine line and was stopped by the navy. Because it was carrying only oil, it was allowed to proceed. Meanwhile, a dozen more Soviet cargo ships were steaming toward the blockade. Then, to

everyone's great relief, the Soviet ships suddenly reversed direction. Khrushchev had called them back.

Disaster Avoided The crisis was not yet over, however. In Cuba, construction on the existing missile sites continued. On October 26, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a long letter in which he pledged to remove the missiles if Kennedy promised that the United States would end the quarantine and stay out of Cuba. A second letter delivered the next day demanded that the United States remove its missiles from Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Kennedy publicly accepted the terms of the first note. He responded to the second note through secret negotiations and eventually met the demand.

With that, the crisis ended. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk observed to President Kennedy, "We have won a considerable victory. You and I are still alive."

The Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world closer than ever before to nuclear war. Such a war would have caused unimaginable death and destruction—far more, for example, than the atomic bombings of Japan in 1945, in part because more-powerful hydrogen bombs had replaced those early atomic weapons.

Kennedy emerged from the confrontation as a hero. He had stood up to the Soviets and shown that the United States would not be pushed around. His reputation, and that of the Democratic Party, improved just in time for the midterm congressional elections that were only weeks away.

The Aftereffects The Cuban Missile Crisis led to a number of efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear war. Once the confrontation was over, Kennedy and Khrushchev established a "hot line" between their two nations to allow the Soviet and American leaders to communicate quickly in the event of a future crisis. In addition, in the summer of 1963 the two countries (along with Great Britain) signed the first nuclear treaty since the development of the atomic bomb.

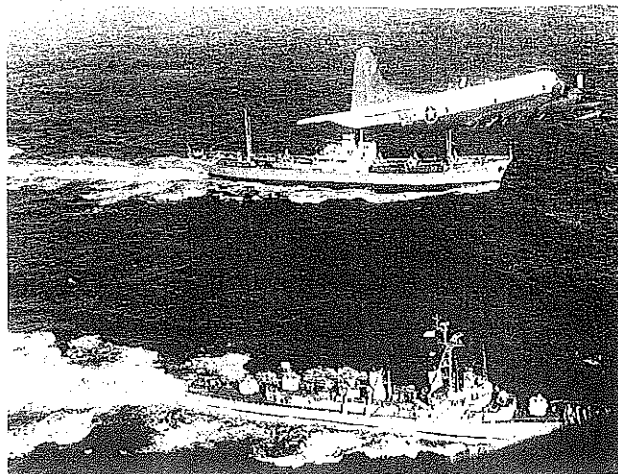
This agreement, the **Limited Test Ban Treaty**, banned nuclear testing above the ground. By doing so, it sought to eliminate the radioactive fallout that threatened to contaminate human, animal, and plant life.

The treaty still permitted underground nuclear testing, and the United States and the Soviet Union continued to build bigger and bigger bombs. Nonetheless, as Kennedy noted, the treaty marked "an important first step toward peace, a step toward reason, a step away from war."

The Alliance for Progress

The Soviet Union and the United States competed not only by building up their military forces, but also by seeking allies in the developing countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Many of these countries were terribly poor. Communist revolutionary movements in some of these countries were gaining support by promising people a better future.

To counter these revolutionary movements, Kennedy tried to promote "peaceful revolution"—that is, to help build stable governments that met the needs of their citizens and also were allied with the democratic countries of the West. Two months after taking office, Kennedy called on all the people of the Western Hemisphere to join in a new **Alliance for Progress**, or *Alianza para Progreso*. The Alliance would be



As a U.S. Navy patrol plane flies overhead, the American destroyer USS Barry pulls alongside the Soviet freighter Anesov during the American naval blockade of Cuba.

Focus on WORLD EVENTS

Memoirs of the Crisis Many policy-makers on both sides of the Cuban Missile Crisis composed memoirs of the event. In *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Robert F. Kennedy recalled with awe what the American team had experienced:

"We saw as never before the meaning and responsibility in the power of the United States, . . . the responsibility we had to people around the globe who had never heard of us; who had never heard of our country or of the men sitting in that room determining their fate. . . ."

Likewise, Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev set down his recollections in *Khrushchev Remembers*:

"I found myself in the difficult position of having to decide on a course of action which would answer the American threat but which would also avoid war. Any fool can start a war, and once he's done so, even the wisest of men are helpless to stop it—especially if it's a nuclear war."

a vast cooperative effort to satisfy the basic needs of people in North, Central, and South America for homes, work, land, health, and schools.

The task was a huge undertaking. The administration pledged \$20 billion over ten years to promote economic development and social reform and to prevent revolution. All citizens in the Western Hemisphere, Kennedy declared, had “a right to social justice,” and that included “land for the landless, and education for those who are denied education.”

Soon, however, Latin Americans began to question the benefits of the Alliance. Some viewed it simply as a tool of the United States to stop the spread of communism. Because of such doubts, the Alliance for Progress never lived up to Kennedy’s expectations.

The Peace Corps

Kennedy’s hope for a world in which nations worked together peacefully to solve problems was also reflected in his establishment of the **Peace Corps** in 1961. This program sent volunteers abroad as educators, health workers, and technicians to help developing nations around the world.

Paul Cowan was typical of many Peace Corps volunteers. After graduating from college in 1963, he worked in the civil rights movement, tutoring African American children in Maryland. In 1965, Cowan and his wife, Rachel, joined the Peace Corps and prepared to work in South America. After a training program at the University of New Mexico, they went to the city of Guayaquil in Ecuador to do community development work. Their job was to raise the standard of living in

Fast Forward to Today

The Peace Corps

The idea for an overseas voluntary service organization began late at night on October 14, 1960. Kennedy, in an unscheduled speech to students at the University of Michigan, challenged them to devote two years of their lives helping people in developing countries. The idea took off. With the official creation of the Peace Corps a year later, the first volunteers accepted assignments in a handful of countries.



The mission of the Peace Corps, as set by Congress in 1961, was to meet the need for trained workers in participating countries and to promote mutual understanding between Americans and other peoples. “Life in the Peace Corps will not be easy,” President Kennedy said in authorizing the organization. The more than 163,000 Peace Corps volunteers who served during the last four decades discovered the truth of

Kennedy’s statement. They have served in 135 countries, working side by side with local citizens—for low wages and only basic provisions—to improve impoverished areas of the world.

The mission and reach of the Peace Corps has expanded in recent years. In 1990, President George Bush celebrated the



“talented Americans who are . . . to become the first Peace Corps volunteers to serve in Eastern Europe”—in Hungary and Poland. A special “Crisis Corps,” created in 1995, provided workers who were trained to respond to humanitarian and natural disasters such as hurricanes. And in 2000, the Peace Corps announced that volunteers in Africa and in the Crisis Corps would be trained to provide education on HIV/AIDS. A “domestic Peace Corps,” Americorps, founded in 1994, trains workers in local community service projects in the United States. Volunteers receive various benefits, including money for college, in return for their service.

? What is the meaning of the Peace Corps slogan, “The toughest job you’ll ever love”?

poor areas and to work with local governments to provide services such as garbage removal and clean water.

Johnson's Foreign Policy

In 1963, Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency upon Kennedy's death. His foreign policy, like Kennedy's, focused on containing communism around the world.

The Dominican Republic In 1965, Johnson received word that the military-backed government in the Dominican Republic, a Caribbean nation close to Cuba, had been attacked by rebels. Johnson feared that the disruption might endanger American citizens living there. Arguing (wrongly, it turned out) that Communist elements were causing the disruption, Johnson sent 22,000 marines to the Dominican Republic. Their presence tipped the balance away from the rebels. Within a few months a provisional government backed by the United States was put in place. Elections were held the following year.

Vietnam Johnson also became deeply involved in the ongoing conflict in Southeast Asia between Communist North Vietnam and non-Communist South Vietnam. Like Kennedy, Johnson was determined to prevent the spread of communism there. By 1963, about 16,000 American military advisors were in South Vietnam. The United States was also contributing economic aid to the South Vietnamese government.

In his 1964 campaign for President, Johnson opposed more direct United States involvement in the war. Yet, before long he faced the prospect of a Communist takeover of South Vietnam, which he could not tolerate. During 1965, American involvement in the conflict deepened as more and more troops and money were sent to prop up the South Vietnamese government.

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

The Cold War

The United States and its allies continued to battle Communist expansion in the 1960s.

Analyzing Viewpoints What strategy did each of the speakers below want to pursue during the Cold War?

For Moderation in the Cold War

"The issues called the cold war . . . must be met with determination, confidence, and sophistication. . . . [C]hannels of communication should be kept open. . . . Our discussion, public or private, should be marked by civility; our manners should conform to our own dignity and power and to our good repute throughout the world."

—Secretary of State
Dean Rusk, speech at
the University of
California, Berkeley,
March 20, 1961

For Aggressiveness in the Cold War

"[I]t is really astounding that our government has never stated its purpose to be that of complete victory over the tyrannical forces of international communism. . . . And we need an official act, such as the resumption of nuclear testing, to show our own peoples and the other freedom-loving peoples of the world that we mean business."

—Arizona Senator
Barry Goldwater,
address to the
United States Senate,
July 14, 1961

Section

3

Assessment

READING COMPREHENSION

- Describe the causes and effects of the **Bay of Pigs invasion**.
- (a) Why did tensions reignite over the division of Germany? (b) Why was the **Berlin Wall** built?
- What goals did the **Alliance for Progress** and the **Peace Corps** attempt to fulfill?
- In what ways did Johnson continue Kennedy's approach to the Cold War?

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

- Drawing Inferences** What can you infer about the Soviet Union's foreign policy goals from its actions in the Cold War crises of the 1960s?
- Journal Writing** Write a fictional entry from a personal journal of President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Include details that demonstrate your understanding of the difficulties Kennedy faced.



Take It to the NET

Activity: Creating a Brochure

Create a brochure about the Peace Corps. Include facts about why people volunteer, where they serve, and what kinds of work they do. Use the links provided in the *America: Pathways to the Present* area of the following Web site for help in completing this activity.
www.phschool.com