

75TH ANNIVERSARY ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

Diplomacy and the Resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis

by Nicholas Bomba

Many remember President Kennedy's Oct. 22, 1962, address to the world as one of the most terrifying experiences of their lives. As the presence of medium-range ballistic missile sites on Cuba became certain, the United States and its citizens were thrust onto the brink of nuclear war for the first time, bringing to full throttle the fears and uncertainties that underscored the Cold War. Resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis will probably be remembered as the Kennedy administration's greatest accomplishment, but it was not without the work of U.S. diplomats that the affair was successfully and swiftly ended. Without a doubt, they accomplished their obligation under the Foreign Service Act of providing the "first line of defense" in safeguarding the security of our nation. Through their efforts to influence worldwide opinion and ensure international cooperation, they provided the president and his advisors a foothold from which to act.

Although the United States was recognized as the leader of the "free world," it was evident that the interna-

tional community had to be convinced that the crisis was far more than an exercise of American paranoia. With this goal, the USIA distributed propaganda leaflets and set up clandestine radio stations that carried Kennedy's message throughout Cuba. This was followed by the televised confrontation between U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and his Soviet counterpart V.A. Zorin. Calling the evidence "clear and incontrovertible," Stevenson used U-2 photographs to prove that the Soviets had lied to the world. As Robert Kennedy put it, the "dumbfounded" expression of Zorin convinced even the most skeptical of British newspapers that the United States was not exaggerating. More importantly, however, the U.N. presentation successfully swayed once-doubtful worldwide popular opinion solidly to the American side. As a result of such efforts, the crisis became not a standoff between two powerful states, but rather a fight between a united front of determined people and an isolated Communist regime.

After securing public opinion, U.S. diplomats were faced with the more

daunting task of assuring the cooperation of both allies and neutral states. Indeed, President Kennedy was powerless without the explicit support of our Latin American allies, who, Dear Rusk warned, would be hostile if the United States attacked Cuba without warning. With Assistant Secretary of State Martin at the helm, an entourage of American representatives addressed the OAS and gained that body's approval for the naval blockade; had this support not been granted, the USSR would surely have disregarded the quarantine. In a single move, the United States was transformed from an outlaw acting in violation of international law to a champion acting in accordance with 20 allies. This success followed our ambassadors to Africa, where they convinced the governments of Guinea and Senegal to prohibit Soviet cargo jets from refueling, a remarkable accomplishment given those nations' sympathy for the USSR. With startling moves like these American representatives gave their government's policies the appearance of legitimacy. With political support from over 50 nations, the U.S. faced little resistance when it turned to the United Nations for backing.

As Kennedy considered the possibility of removing the Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Italy as a possible compromise with the Russians, the White House desperately needed to know how the affected states would react. Thus, the Foreign Service set out to assess and report on political conditions in the affected states. The State Department asked the embassies throughout NATO to assure the various governments that the United States was not compromising their security. It was Ambassador Hare's telegram explaining the Turkish government's anger that convinced the White House that such a move would endanger NATO solidarity. With such knowledge the negotiations in Washington and Moscow avoided a potential bargain that might have backfired strategically if not politically as well.



Nicholas Bomba, winner of the 75th Anniversary AFSA High School Essay Contest, receiving his certificate from Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the 75th Anniversary Gala on May 24 in the Benjamin Franklin Room of the State Department. Bomba, who graduated this spring, competed with over 300 students from Maine to Hawaii. He was awarded the grand prize of \$2,500 and his alma mater, Loyola High School in Los Angeles, received \$500 in honor of his winning essay. Eva Hartman of Lancaster, Pa. placed second and Kristian Dyer of Denville, N.J. placed third. This year's contest, sponsored by the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, was established to promote interest in the Foreign Service among U.S. high school students. Details for the year 2000 contest will be posted at www.afsa.org.

Foremost was the diplomatic corps' role as a messenger and a direct mediator between the United States and the USSR. Given the physical separation between the key players and the absence of satellite communication, the primary role of negotiation was directed to the diplomats, who facilitated the interchange and allowed the two sides to comprehend each other's terms. It was only through the American ambassador's frequent "courtesy calls" to the Soviet chairman and his foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, that lapses in communication and misunderstandings with President Kennedy did not escalate into warfare. In addition, unable to communicate with Castro directly, the State Department arranged to use the Brazilian envoy to Havana as an intermediary. In a telegram to the embassy in Brazil, the State Department directed American agents to instruct Ambassador Luis Batian Pinto to appeal to Castro "in such a way as to make it abundantly clear [the appeal] was a solely Brazilian initiative." Without such efforts the exchange of letters and telegrams between Khrushchev and the American chief executive would never have succeeded so smoothly and with such efficiency.

In the closing remarks of his Oct. 22 address, John F. Kennedy stated, "Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right — not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom." The combined efforts of his administration and U.S. diplomats abroad in resolving the crisis proved that the United States was, indeed, committed to preserving its principles while defending its people. Although the threat of nuclear conflict persisted — in fact, the Cold War had barely begun — Americans at home were instilled with a feeling of optimism and confidence that a system was in place to provide security in times of heated conflict. Today, as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism in our cities escalate, Americans still remain committed to preserving our role as leader of the "free world" despite the dangers on the home front. Never, since the autumn of 1962, has this determination faltered.

USAID V.P. VOICE • BY FRANK MILLER •

Know Your Performance Precepts

In May 1999, AFSA and the USAID Office of Human Resources negotiated new precepts for Foreign Service employee evaluations. These precepts are being used by rating officers, appraisal committees and selection boards to establish work objectives and performance measures, evaluate performance, and determine tenure for the current rating season which began April 1, 1999.

The new precepts integrate the six skill areas and five core values introduced in precepts issued in January 1996 and establish detailed, transparent standards for six grade levels.

The new standards clearly state for employees and rating officers which skills employees are expected to demonstrate at all grade levels. AFSA believes that these standards are less subjective and should result in less guess work on the part of the selection boards in determining annual rankings for promotion, tenure and other purposes. They also enable employees to determine what skills they must master in order to move to the next grade level.

Although agency management sent out notices announcing the new precepts in late May 1999, many employees are still not familiar with them. AFSA has been informed that many Foreign Service officer work objectives established for the 1999/2000 rating cycle are not based on the new precepts. This is easily remedied, since it is early in the rating cycle. However, AFSA has also learned that many FSOs in Washington have no established work objectives at all for the 1999/2000 cycle. This is appalling and should be addressed by HR immediately.

What do you do now? First, familiarize yourself with the new precepts and actively participate in the evaluation process. Second, review your work objectives in light of the skills required for your grade level under the new precepts. Your objectives must at least give you an opportunity to demonstrate that you meet the standards of your grade level. If you aspire to be promoted soon, your objectives should give you an opportunity to demonstrate that you have the potential to perform at the skill level at the next highest grade. Third, if you believe that your work objectives and performance measures may not give you the opportunity to demonstrate the skills required, bring this to the attention of your rater and appraisal committee immediately.

To speed up the process, review the objectives yourself. Remember that a work objective is a result-oriented outcome developed for a distinguishable task, not a statement of responsibilities. It is your job to have your rater establish work objectives that allow you to demonstrate progress or mastery in skills that have appeared in prior evaluations as areas in need of improvement. Selection Boards are always looking for employee growth.

For those of you with no work objectives, draft your own in light of the new precepts and give them to your rater ASAP. Follow up in a few days and try to come to closure with your rater and get approval from your appraisal committee in writing.

AFSA would appreciate feedback on the new precepts. Also, if you are experiencing problems either establishing work objectives or getting revisions made, please bring this to my attention.