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Detering Opportunistic Aggression During the Cuban Missile Crisis: Necessary Reminders and Applications for Today

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Introduction

The popular image of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is of President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev going “eyeball to eyeball” over the placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba; but, this characterization leaves out just how important U.S. leaders considered Berlin to be during the crisis—making it a useful case study of the United States seeking to deter opportunistic aggression in one theater while engaged in a near-conflict in another theater.¹ Analyzing the Cuban Missile Crisis through the lens of deterring opportunistic aggression can yield some important lessons relevant to the current threat environment, characterized by two peer nuclear adversaries and their regional partners, all of which are revisionist in nature and capable of simultaneous or sequential aggression in geographically separate theaters.

This *Information Series* examines the role that the threat of opportunistic aggression played in the Cuban Missile Crisis. First, it examines whether U.S. political and military leaders believed opportunistic aggression was a realistic possibility, and if so, the extent to which they were prepared to deter it. Second, it considers the political and military actions U.S. leaders took to deter opportunistic aggression both before and during the crisis. Third, it explores how U.S. political and military leaders judged the adequacy of their conventional and nuclear forces for various contingencies during the crisis. Fourth and finally, it examines how allies’ views and interests affected U.S. actions to deter opportunistic aggression. The concluding section



highlights and summarizes relevant lessons from the Cuban Missile Crisis for U.S. policymakers to consider as they make plans and provide resources to deter and defeat opportunistic and potentially coordinated aggression in the future.

Threat Perceptions of Opportunistic Aggression

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis was in some ways a continuation of the 1961 Berlin Crisis. From 1958-1961, culminating in the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union placed ever greater pressure on the United States and its allies, Great Britain and France, to vacate Berlin completely. While West Berlin remained under allied control, it was essentially an island surrounded on all sides by East Germany, a member of the Warsaw Pact. Narrow road and air corridors linked West Berlin to West Germany, but if the Soviet Union and its allies sought to gain control of all of Berlin militarily, there was little NATO could do with its conventional forces in time to save the city. The attitude of U.S. leaders toward defending West Berlin therefore became something of a barometer that European allies could use to judge U.S. willingness and ability to come to their aid in a war against the Warsaw Pact.

Even though the United States and Soviet Union de-escalated the 1961 Berlin Crisis relatively peacefully, U.S. intelligence sources continued to indicate that the Soviets hoped to increase pressure on West Berlin—so when Soviet radars and missiles appeared in Cuba in October 1962, many U.S. leaders concluded that such actions were either meant to distract the United States from defending Berlin or meant to gain leverage over the United States to settle the Berlin question in the Soviet favor.² Once U.S. leaders understood the full scope of Soviet weaponry flowing into Cuba in October, their immediate reaction was to presume some sort of connection with Berlin. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, noted:

I think Berlin is very much involved in this [Khrushchev's motivation]. For the first time, I'm beginning really to wonder whether maybe Mr. Khrushchev is entirely rational about Berlin. We've already talked about his obsession with it... But they may be thinking that they can either bargain Berlin and Cuba against each other, or that they could provoke us into a kind of action in Cuba which would give them an umbrella for them to take action with respect to Berlin... If they could provoke us into taking the first overt action, then the world would be confused and they would have what they consider to be justification for making a move somewhere else.³

Concurrent U.S. intelligence assessments agreed: "They [the Soviets] also probably believe that the missiles will reinforce the deterrent link between Cuba and Berlin which was implicit in the 11 September Soviet statement and in subsequent private conversations. Moscow clearly is seeking to portray Berlin as a hostage for Cuba."⁴

As the Cuban Missile Crisis progressed and the United States weighed seriously the option of a major attack on Soviet bases in Cuba, leaders in the White House became increasingly convinced that the Soviets would respond in some manner against Berlin. Secretary of Defense McNamara, for example, stated, "How will the Soviets react? ... How could Khrushchev afford



to accept this action without some kind of rebuttal? He can't accept it without some rebuttal... Where?... How does this affect our allies' support of us in relation to Berlin?... Iran... and Korea... Exactly. And we call it a worldwide alert."⁵ President Kennedy agreed, stating simply, "I think it is more likely he [Khrushchev] would just grab Berlin."⁶ Indeed, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko told President Kennedy on October 18, in the early stages of the crisis, that the Soviets would "be compelled" to end the allied presence in Berlin if the Soviet Union and the United States could not come to an agreement.⁷

Given the global nature of U.S. commitments and the potential domino effect that U.S. action in one theater might have in another theater, how did U.S. political and military leaders act to deter or avoid provoking opportunistic aggression?

Political and Military Actions to Deter or Avoid Opportunistic Aggression

The Kennedy Administration felt compelled to act in response to Soviet actions in Cuba, even though some European allies might object and state that they had learned to live with being in range of regional Soviet nuclear missiles. Early on in the crisis President Kennedy acknowledged the "dilemma" posed by the U.S. outpost in Berlin and the Soviet capabilities in Cuba, stating that "action of a type contemplated would be opposed by the [NATO] alliance – on the other hand, lack of action will create disunity, lack of confidence and disintegration of our several alliances and friendly relations with countries who have confidence in us."⁸ Secretary Rusk agreed, stating, "But we think that, when the full scope of this becomes known [in Europe], that [taking] no action would undermine our alliances all over the world very promptly... I think we also have to think of the effect on the Soviets if we were to do nothing. Now suppose that they were to consider this a major backdown, then this would free their hands for almost any kind of intervention that they might want to try in other parts of the world."⁹ Having decided to take action in response to the Soviets, the Kennedy Administration debated how best to demonstrate resolve, strengthen security, and reduce risks.

The U.S. response involved a mixture of demonstrating resolve through military posture changes as well as diplomatic consultations with allies, political signaling via official announcements, and certain internal risk-reduction measures. Secretary McNamara recognized early during the crisis that U.S. military preparations served dual purposes as both deterrence signals (both direct and extended deterrence) and, should deterrence fail, an improved ability to accomplish U.S. objectives.¹⁰ McNamara stated plainly that U.S. actions were signaling multiple audiences simultaneously, both allies and the adversary: "It's a political problem. It's a problem of holding the alliance together. It's a problem of properly conditioning Khrushchev for our future moves."¹¹

Thus, President Kennedy and his advisors tailored his nationally-broadcast speech on October 22nd to act as both an assurance to allies and a deterrence threat to the Soviets. President Kennedy stated, "That is why this latest Soviet threat – or any other threat which is made either independently or in response to our actions this week – must and will be met with determination. Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of



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peoples to whom we are committed—including in particular the brave people of West Berlin—will be met by whatever action is needed.”¹² These words were backed by deeds because only six hours before the speech, President Kennedy ordered the dispersal and alert of U.S. strategic bombers.¹³ Gen. Curtis LeMay, then Chief of Staff for the U.S. Air Force, speaking publicly less than two months after the crisis, cited the bomber alert as a critical deterrence signal to the Soviets that helped deter opportunistic aggression: “Perhaps most important of all, our Strategic Air Command was able to move quickly to an alert that provided a strong and silent umbrella under which the quarantine could be carried out without expanding into war.”¹⁴ In short, Gen. LeMay believed that generating nuclear forces to a higher alert status allowed U.S. leaders to operate their conventional forces with more confidence that they could deter Soviet escalation in Cuba and elsewhere.

Adequacy of Conventional and Nuclear Forces

The Kennedy Administration pursued a “two and one half” war construct for its conventional war planning in which the Department of Defense prepared for major conflicts in Europe and East Asia, and a lesser conflict in a third region such as the Middle East.¹⁵ The 1961 Berlin Crisis only accelerated the Kennedy Administration’s calls to Congress to grow the defense budget to meet the larger set and severity of threats. Yet, even after a steady stream of investment, U.S. leaders acknowledged their dependence on nuclear weapons to fight conventional wars—such as the size of the Soviet conventional advantage. Gen. Taylor testified to this fact, stating, “To meet a massive attack today, because of the lack of adequate conventional forces in the West, it would be necessary to resort to atomic weapons early in the conflict.”¹⁶

In fact, U.S. political and military leaders up to President Kennedy understood that a conventional battle for control over Berlin would almost certainly require U.S. nuclear first use. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, as the Executive Committee contemplated U.S. military options against the Soviet bases in Cuba, President Kennedy stated, “We have the prospect, if the Soviet Union, as a reprisal, should grab Berlin in the morning, which they could do within a couple of hours. Our war plan at that point has been to fire our nuclear weapons at them.”¹⁷ He clarified shortly afterwards that such a U.S. response was not meant to be a disarming first strike against the Soviet Union: “But, I think, if we’re talking about nuclear war, the escalation ought to be at least with some degree of control.”¹⁸

Towards that end, the Commander of Strategic Air Command, Gen. Thomas Power, recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 16th that the United States alert its forces in three ways: “generate all command forces through declaration of Defense Condition 2 (DEFCON 2), initiate B-47 dispersal plans, and mount an airborne alert.”¹⁹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered SAC to begin its bomber dispersal and alert almost immediately, but Secretary of Defense McNamara held off on ordering SAC to DEFCON 2, just below the level of general war, until October 23.²⁰ These general war preparations also included the U.S. Navy deploying its new Polaris submarines (SSBNs) to their battle stations while SSBNs in port entered a higher state of readiness.²¹



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In advance of moving to DEFCON 2, SAC ordered all its units to focus on “covertly attaining the maximum state of readiness.”²² It is unclear if the emphasis on “covert” was meant to provide maximum advantage for a preemptive strike against the Soviet forces in Cuba should President Kennedy have ordered it or whether it was to increase readiness without inadvertently escalating the situation overall. The historical record contains evidence for both justifications and, in Europe at least, U.S. military leaders saw the quiet increase in readiness as supporting both U.S. attack options and refraining from appearing overly aggressive.²³ This quiet change in posture in Europe may have helped incentivize the Soviet Union to also keep their forces from moving to a higher alert—the U.S. intelligence community had no significant indications of major Soviet posture changes against NATO or Asian allies even during the height of the crisis.²⁴

The Impact of Allied Perceptions on U.S. Leadership

Senior officials in the Kennedy Administration frequently voiced their concerns about alliance solidarity and security as they debated how to respond to Soviet movements into Cuba. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and President Kennedy often suggested to the larger group that key allies should be notified about U.S. deliberations and options, such as Great Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany.²⁵ Turkey and Italy also played prominent roles in U.S. deliberations as they hosted U.S. Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs); this status as host nations meant they were simultaneously the potential targets of a Soviet response to U.S. moves against Cuba, while also being the potential subjects of a missile swap agreement between the United States and Soviet Union—withdrawal for withdrawal.

One of the major divisions that developed early on in President Kennedy’s Executive Committee was between those who believed large-scale decisive military action against the Soviets in Cuba would be the greatest assurance to allies, particularly in Europe, and those who believed that overly-aggressive action against Cuba could provoke a Soviet response against Berlin, or elsewhere in the world, leading to a dissolution of U.S. alliances.²⁶ President Kennedy at one point during the Cuban Missile Crisis engaged in a long explanatory discussion with his advisers, laying out what he believed, at the time, were equally weighty concerns—the risks of taking military action that provokes Soviet reactions against U.S. allies in Europe, versus taking insufficient action, also potentially provoking Soviet reaction against U.S. allies in Europe.²⁷ Secretary Rusk noted that this dilemma was even more difficult since what mattered to allies was not just what the United States decided to do, but how it decided to do it: “... an unannounced, unconsulted, quick action on our part could well lead to a kind of allied disunity that the Soviet attack will capitalize upon very strongly.”²⁸ The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson II, highlighted the nuclear element of the dilemma as it related to allies, noting flatly, “To start or risk starting a nuclear war is bound to be divisive at best.”²⁹

By October 25th, however, cracks in the alliance were beginning to show as Prime Minister Macmillan told President Kennedy “I think that events have gone too far. While circumstances



may arise in which such action [by the U.S. military] would be right and necessary, I think we are now all in a phase where you must try to obtain your objectives by other means.”³⁰ Meanwhile, French President Charles de Gaulle signaled his support for U.S. actions whatever their nature.³¹ And, on the other side of spectrum opposite Macmillan, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany favored both bombing the Soviet bases in Cuba as well as a general invasion as he hoped that it would serve as a bargaining chip to eventually end the crisis.³² Inter-alliance solidarity became even more stressed when President Kennedy’s National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy, had to discourage Prime Minister Macmillan from making a separate diplomatic offer to the Kremlin to remove U.S. missiles from Great Britain to help solve the situation in Cuba.³³

Senior officials in the Kennedy Administration were acutely aware of allied concerns and interests throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis and often adapted their policy pronouncements and military actions to strengthen alliance solidarity, or, at the very least, reduce the causes for friction. The United States is only now in the early stages of recognizing that deterring the threats of opportunistic and coordinated aggression, and the parallel need for increased resources, is also equally challenging in the realm of allied assurance. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy Administration primarily focused on assuring allies in Europe; but today, the United States faces growing assurance requirements for both European *and* Asian allies.

Summary Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis and Conclusion

There are three summary lessons from the Cuban Missile Crisis that are especially relevant for U.S. policymakers today as they consider how to adapt U.S. policy and military forces to better counter the threats of opportunistic and coordinated aggression: the significant value of flexible and diverse military capabilities for risk reduction; how inadequate conventional capabilities can force leaders to consider potentially riskier strategies like nuclear first use; and, the how allies may pressure U.S. leaders during a conflict to adopt riskier strategies to end the conflict earlier on favorable political terms.

- 1. Flexible force generation capabilities provide valuable deterrence options for U.S. leaders that improve the ability to send tailored signals and reduce risks of misperceptions.*

Senior civilian and military U.S. officials took great care to tailor their deterrence messages, including deterring Soviet opportunistic aggression against Berlin, with a mix of signals of resolve and restraint. On October 22nd, for instance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered SAC to place one eighth of the available bombers on airborne alert, but to make it “quiet and gradual.”³⁴ Strategic Air Command’s ability in this instance to slowly raise alert levels achieved two goals simultaneously: improving military readiness and lowering the risk that the Soviet Union would perceive U.S. actions as a precursor to a major attack. Additionally, President Kennedy was impressed that NATO Supreme Commander, Gen. Lauris Norstad, had carried



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out his orders to increase his forces' readiness levels as quietly as possible to avoid unnecessarily inflaming international tensions.³⁵

This example indicates the value U.S. policymakers should attach to nuclear forces that can increase their readiness levels non-visibly or at least with few outward indicators. Such characteristics provide additional options to senior leaders who may want to prepare for the possibility of an attack, but without appearing to the adversary like a U.S. preemptive attack is imminent. Then-Commander of United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), ADM Charles Richard, testified about the need for a "low yield, non-ballistic capability that does not require visible generation" not currently in the U.S. inventory, a list of characteristics he indicated would be fulfilled by pursuing the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N).³⁶ Capabilities that do not require visible generation can also play a significant role in assuring allies during a crisis or conflict, especially when the United States may want to reduce the risk of adversary misperceptions that might result from a more visible force generation.

2. *Greater reliance on nuclear weapons in U.S. strategy, including the perceived need to employ them early in a conflict, may be the price to pay for insufficient conventional forces to deter and defeat opportunistic aggression.*

American civilian and military officials during the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis were quite open about the fact that the United States would likely employ nuclear weapons early in a conflict to defeat Soviet aggression in Europe due to a significant comparative disadvantage in conventional forces.³⁷ The Eisenhower Administration made a conscious decision to rely on nuclear weapons for this deterrence and warfighting task in Europe in large part because nuclear weapons were a cheaper alternative to conventional forces—a justification carried through to the Kennedy Administration.

Similarly, U.S. leaders today may be forced to rely more on nuclear weapons to make up for conventional inferiority in the face of opportunistic or coordinated aggression should they continue pursuing a "one major war" conventional force sizing construct.³⁸ As both the Congressionally-mandated and bipartisan 2023 Strategic Posture Commission and the 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission noted, a "one major war" force sizing construct is inadequate in the face of opportunistic and coordinated aggression.³⁹ The 2023 Strategic Posture Commission in particular noted that, "The threat of conflicts with China and Russia requires significantly increased U.S., allied, and partner investments in fielding and optimization of conventional forces; without these necessary enhancements to the conventional force, an increased reliance on the nuclear deterrent is likely."⁴⁰

What might increased reliance on nuclear weapons look like in U.S. defense strategy? In some instances, it may mean employing nuclear weapons to defeat adversary conventional attacks or shift the military balance in the U.S. favor.⁴¹ In other instances, increased reliance on nuclear weapons may be manifest in more frequent and more prominent deterrence signaling with nuclear forces, whether via changes in alert status, force movements, weapons uploading,



or other measures. While U.S. leaders would almost certainly prefer to deter and defeat adversaries' conventional attacks with their own conventional forces, the global nature of U.S. alliances and the reluctance of post-Cold War U.S. leaders to adopt a "two major war" force sizing construct for conventional forces necessarily forces the choice between three options: drastically reducing alliance commitments, right-sizing conventional forces to meet new threats, or increasing reliance on nuclear weapons.

3. *Internal and external factors may pressure U.S. leaders to adopt riskier warfighting strategies to end an ongoing conflict on favorable terms relatively early so that other adversaries contemplating opportunistic aggression are more likely to be deterred from attacking.*

Throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis, both domestic advisors and foreign leaders recommended President Kennedy adopt military courses of action against the Soviet bases in Cuba for two main benefits: first, larger military options would be more likely to prove decisive successfully and quickly, and second, a militarily decisive victory in one theater may improve the credibility of U.S. deterrence threats against opportunistic aggression in the eyes of adversaries in other theaters. Chief of Naval Operations ADM George Anderson and CJCS Maxwell Taylor agreed that taking overwhelming military action against the Soviets in Cuba would help deter the Soviets from taking Berlin in response.⁴²

What should U.S. leaders learn from this insight? First, they should understand, as the Kennedy Administration did, that U.S. deterrence threats and actions in one theater will likely have a significant impact on other leaders' perceptions, both adversaries and allies. When facing opportunistic aggression, U.S. leaders are almost certain to field calls from officials internally and allies externally that recommend adopting potentially riskier military strategies that prioritize decisive and early defeat of the adversary—potentially involving U.S. nuclear first use—in the first conflict, in a bid to improve the credibility of U.S. deterrence threats against opportunistic aggression elsewhere in the world. While U.S. nuclear first use could in some circumstances lead to an adversary's nuclear response and an escalatory spiral, escalation is not necessarily a given.⁴³ A U.S. nuclear first use, in fact, may decisively alter the potential opportunistic aggressor's decision calculus concerning his perception of U.S. capability and will to resist aggression on behalf of its allies. Neither outcome is certain, of course, but the point is that U.S. leaders may find the strategic logic behind nuclear first use as more likely to achieve the desired political outcomes than continuing a potentially doomed conventional conflict and risking the dissolution of the U.S. global network of alliances.

If U.S. and allied leaders view the deterrence of opportunistic aggression as a vital national interest, then U.S. leaders should consider adapting their non-strategic nuclear force posture to provide additional regional nuclear options.⁴⁴ These forces are especially important both for deterrence purposes and potentially for warfighting purposes because they are generally lower in nuclear yield than strategic forces; they allow strategic forces to be held in reserve to deter further escalation; and they can be employed selectively from within the theater of conflict, potentially providing an added incentive for the adversary to keep the conflict confined



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geographically.⁴⁵ The U.S. B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb as a non-strategic weapon is at a distinct disadvantage compared to Russia's nonstrategic nuclear arsenal and is not ideal for the ocean-dominated Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁶ While SLCM-N can make an important contribution to U.S. deterrence of opportunistic and coordinated aggression in this regard, a greater variety of non-strategic nuclear forces beyond the addition of SLCM-N may be necessary to improve the credibility of U.S. threats. That is, the United States and its allies may face such severe conventional and nuclear force imbalances in the geographically separate European and Indo-Pacific regions that adversaries believe the United States is unlikely to uphold its alliance commitments in multiple theaters simultaneously. In that case, major additions to the U.S. non-strategic nuclear force may be required to overcome the perceived advantages adversaries may see in opportunistic or coordinated aggression against an overstretched United States.

Conclusion

The Cuban Missile Crisis yields relevant lessons for U.S. leaders as they seek ways to adapt the military to better deter the threat of opportunistic or coordinated aggression: flexible military forces contribute to better tailored deterrence threats and the reduced risk of adversary misperceptions; inadequate conventional forces may incentivize U.S. leaders to increase reliance on nuclear weapons; and, U.S. political and military leaders will likely field recommendations, including from allies, to adopt riskier military strategies, potentially including nuclear first use, to conclude an ongoing conflict quickly and thus improve the credibility of its deterrence threats against adversary opportunistic aggression elsewhere in the world. Even granting that history is unlikely to repeat itself exactly, U.S. officials can still learn important and relevant lessons from the Cuban Missile Crisis that can inform their efforts in fielding the forces necessary to deter and defeat opportunistic and coordinated aggression.

¹ This *Information Series* is an edited version of Chapter 4 in Matthew R. Costlow, *Deterring the New Pacing Threats: Opportunistic and Coordinated Aggression* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, March 2025), available at <https://nipp.org/papers/matthew-r-costlow-deterring-the-new-pacing-threats-opportunistic-and-coordinated-aggression/>.

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³ Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 61.

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Probable Soviet MRBM Sites in Cuba, October 16, 1962," p. 2, chapter in, Central Intelligence Agency, *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1994), p. 141.

⁵ May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

⁷ Ibid., p. 168.



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⁸ McCone, "Memorandum for File, 19 October 1962," p. 3, chapter in Central Intelligence Agency, *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1994), p. 185.

⁹ May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 87.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 133.

¹² Ibid., p. 280.

¹³ *Strategic Air Command Operations in the Cuban Crisis of 1962, Vol. I* (Offutt AFB, NE: Strategic Air Command, 1963), Historical Study No. 90, Vol. 1, pp. 34-35, available at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/dobbs/SAC_history.pdf.

¹⁴ Curtis LeMay, as quoted in, Mark S. Watson, "LeMay says Cuba Crisis Taught Five Key Lessons," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 6, 1962, p. 16.

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¹⁷ May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, op. cit., p. 264.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁹ *Strategic Air Command Operations in the Cuban Crisis of 1962, Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁰ May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, op. cit., p. 347.

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²⁶ Ibid., p. 172.

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³⁰ Ibid., p. 393.

³¹ Lucius D. Battle, *Dean G. Acheson Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 4/27/1964* (Boston, MA: JFK Presidential Library, 1964), pp. 26-28, available at <https://static.jfklibrary.org/16jy54bi4rncv563u763ql7a4ja4033f.pdf?odc=20231115182924-0500>.

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³⁶ Charles Richard, as quoted in, "Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing: Nuclear Weapons Council," *STRATCOM.mil*, May 4, 2022, available at <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/Speeches/Article/3022885/senate-armed-services-committee-hearing-nuclear-weapons-council/>.

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⁴¹ For more on this topic as it relates to a Taiwan scenario, see, Greg Weaver, *The Role of Nuclear Weapons in a Taiwan Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: The Atlantic Council, November 2023), p. 12, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Weaver-Role-of-Nuclear-Weapons-in-Taiwan-Crisis.pdf>.

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⁴³ For additional analysis on the reasons why nuclear war might stay limited in some circumstances, see, Matthew R. Costlow, *Restraints at the Nuclear Brink: Factors in Keeping War Limited* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, July 2023), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/OP-Vol.-3-No.-7.pdf>.

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⁴⁵ For elaboration on these points, see, Matthew R. Costlow, "Deterring and Responding to Escalation: What the US Needs and Why," chapter in, *Relearning Escalation Dynamics to Win the New Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Hudson Institute, September 2024), pp. 12-16, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Relearning+Escalation+Dynamics+to+Win+the+New+Cold+War.pdf>.

⁴⁶ On Russia's advantages in non-strategic nuclear weapons, see, U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2018), p. 9, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2018/feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-nuclear-posture-review-final-report.pdf>.

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