

Document A

President Kennedy dedicated himself to making it clear to Khrushchev by word and deed... that the United States had limited objectives and that we had no intention of accomplishing those objectives by adversely affecting the national security of the Soviet Union or by humiliating her...

During our crisis he kept stressing the fact that we would indeed have war if we placed the Soviet Union in a position she believed would adversely affect national security of such public humiliation that she lose the respect of her own people and countries around the globe. The missiles in Cuba, we felt, vitally concerned our national security, but not that of the Soviet Union.

This fact was ultimately recognized by Khrushchev, and this recognition, I believe brought about this change in what, up to that time, had been a very adamant position. The President believed from the start that the Soviet Chairman was a rational, intelligent man, who if given sufficient time and shown our determination, would alter his position. But there was always the change of error or mistake, miscalculation, or misunderstanding, and President Kennedy was committed to do everything possible to lessen that chance on our side.

From Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days, A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Norton, 1973) p. 96

Document B

The fate of Cuba and the maintenance of Soviet prestige in that part of the world preoccupied me... We had to establish a tangible and effective deterrent to American interference in the Caribbean. But what exactly? The logical answer was missiles. We knew that American missiles were aimed against us in Turkey and Italy, to say nothing of West Germany...

I had the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out if they were there until it was too late to do anything about them...

I want to make one thing absolutely clear: when we put our ballistic missiles in Cuba, we had no desire to start a war. On the contrary, our principal aim was to deter America from starting a war...

The climax came after five or six days when our Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, reported that the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, had come to see him on an unofficial visit. Dobrynin's report went something like this:

'Robert Kennedy looked exhausted...He said that he had not been home for six days and nights. "The President is in a grave situation," Robert Kennedy said, "and he does not know how to get out of it. We are under very severe stress...from our military to use force against Cuba... We want to ask you, Mr. Dobrynin, to pass President Kennedy's message to Chairman Khrushchev through unofficial channels. President Kennedy implores Chairman Khrushchev to accept his offer and to take into

consideration the peculiarities of the American system...if the situation continues much longer, the President is not sure that the military will not overthrow him and seize power. The American army could get out of control."

I hadn't overlooked this possibility. I knew that Kennedy was a young President and that the security of the United States was indeed threatened.

We sent the Americans a note saying that we agreed to remove our missiles and bombers on the condition that the President gives us his assurance that there would be no invasion of Cuba by the forces of the United States or anybody else. Finally Kennedy gave in and agreed to make a statement giving us such an assurance.

I had been, to say the least, an interesting and challenging situation. The two most powerful nations in the world had been squared off against each other, each with its finger on the button...it was a great victory for us, though...The Caribbean crisis was a triumph of Soviet foreign policy and a personal triumph in my own career....We achieved, I would say a spectacular success without having to fire a single shot.

From Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs, *Khrushchev Remembers*, (Andrew Nurnberg, Associates, 1977)

Document C

...We and you ought not to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter the knot will be tied. And then it will be necessary to cut that knot, and what that will mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose...I have participated in two wars and know that war ends when it is rolled through cities and villages everywhere sowing death and destruction. For such is the logic of war; if people do not display wisdom they will clash like blind moles.

In a letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy dated October 26, 1962, quoted by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in the television documentary, *The Fog of War*.