

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

Presents

The Presidency in the Nuclear Age

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Panel Two:

Cuban Missile Crisis and the First Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

[VIDEO]

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Welcome. My name is Tim Naftali. I'm the Director of the Richard Nixon Library, and I am also an example of the perfect screening system that we have in the presidential library system. [laughter] The film has set up our discussion and the previous panel brilliantly set up our discussion. But, in some ways we didn't need the setup because I am privileged to have three gentlemen with me today, two of whom are participants, but they're participants who've thought deeply about their experience after the Missile Crisis and we'll be discussing the Test Ban Treaty; and, of course, Graham Allison whose book *The Essence of Decision* helped frame, in its first version, frame the questions. And then in its second version, updated those questions and added the new materials that have been coming out from the former Soviet Union and participants in the '90s, and even in this decade. So, we really are privileged to have Kaysen, Sorensen and Allison today.

I'd like to pick up and start with an issue that the previous panel just touched on, which is the setting- the political and strategic setting- when President Nixon comes to office.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Who?

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: President Kennedy comes to office. I wanted to see if you were listening. [laughter] You remember that '60 campaign? Anyway, in the campaign--

THEODORE SORENSEN: The only reason we're all here is that President Nixon was not in office at that time, in 1962.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Yes, he'd get his time later. In the 1960 campaign, Ted, in the 1960 campaign, what role did the missile gap play, and concerns about Soviet advance in intercontinental ballistic missiles?

THEODORE SORENSEN: The kind of question I'd expect from the Nixon Library. [laughter] The fact is that the missile gap was an expression not originated by John F. Kennedy and not a central issue in his campaign, as was said in the previous panel. It arose from three separate commissions that were appointed during the Eisenhower Administration, at least one, the Gaither Commission, I believe, was an official body. One was a Rockefeller Commission, which was unofficial. I've already forgotten the third. All assumed, or were told, that the Soviets had the capacity to build more missiles at a faster rate than the United States, but what they did not say was the Soviets had actually made good on that capacity. They merely assumed it.

It was picked up by a good friend of the President's, of John F. Kennedy that is, the columnist Joe Alsop, who wrote a good deal about it. He may have first referred to it as the missile gap. Two of Kennedy's competitors for the presidency, Johnson and Symington, who were very big bomber men, also talked a lot about the missile gap. Kennedy was running on a theme, "We can do better, we must do better. We cannot afford to let the Soviets get ahead of us in productivity, in any phase of life if we are to have a greater appeal to the undecided folks in the third world." And so he added missiles and military preparation to that list. But I would hardly say that it was the central theme of his campaign.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Carl Kaysen, you come into the White House as Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. What does your boss, McGeorge Bundy, think about the missile gap when you come in? What is the intelligence community telling you when you arrive?

CARL KAYSEN: Well, by the time I came in, which was in May of '61, the issue had essentially been settled. I'm not quite sure that I remember when we got the first reconnaissance satellite around, but by February we had some pictures and we knew how many missiles the Soviets had. The number was six or seven. We had many times that number deployed already in Atlases and we had several of the big program Polaris boats launched and at sea. The chap, as I remember him, who was at the CIA, Ed Proctor, who was in charge of sort of organizing and summarizing this information, had happened-- had been a student of mine at Harvard. And when I called him up, he was very eager to tell me all he knew. And it was perfectly clear, as I said, the missile gap was under way.

As I remember, Ted may remember this better, Roswell Gilpatric gave a speech some time in February, wasn't it?

THEODORE SORENSEN: I don't remember if it was that early. But the fact is-- Well, first let me go back just one step. Eisenhower claimed that by early-- Either U2 or maybe even the first satellite, had shown that the missile gap was actually in our favor and he was furious that Kennedy was even raising the issue. But the fact is that Kennedy became the presidential nominee who was briefed by Eisenhower and military leaders too late for that information about the missile gap being in our favor to have been acquired and conveyed to Kennedy in that briefing.

So, Eisenhower's anger was misplaced. Kennedy had not been told the secret information. Upon attaining office, yes, he did find out that the missile gap was the other way around and he felt that the United States government ought to say so. And he felt that the most low-key way to do that would not be an announcement by either the President or by the Secretary of Defense. And so the facts were contained, as Carl has said, in a very low-key speech by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Roswell Gilpatric.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: So low-key that the Russians heard it and scared them to death. Graham, did you want to say something?

GRAHAM ALLISON: It was in October of-- I was just checking-- was in October of 1961, ten months after taking office.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Before we move to how scared the Soviets got, let's talk about our concerns in the summer of '61. What effect, if any, do you think our confidence about the strategic environment, how did that influence how we handled the Berlin crisis in the summer of '61.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Again, and Carl knows it even better than I do, there has been a lot of talk in so-called histories and otherwise that Kennedy considered using the nuclear bomb at the time of the Berlin crisis. It's not totally surprising. The Soviets had a vast advantage in conventional forces, numbers of men equipped with conventional weapons. We had nuclear weapons that, of course, were vastly superior. Did Kennedy look at papers that came from the Pentagon urging this? Of course he looked at them. Did he weigh the possible use at some point? Of course he weighed it. That's what a President of the United States is supposed to do.

But did he ever authorize the use of nuclear weapons in the Berlin crisis? Never. In fact, in my opinion, one of the main reasons Kennedy-- and this is a follow-up to the previous panel-- one of the main reasons Kennedy ran for the presidency was because he thought the Eisenhower/Dulles massive retaliation doctrine under which we would use nuclear weapons if the Soviets set one foot on one inch of western territory, he didn't believe it. He didn't think the Soviets would believe it. He thought it was an invitation to nuclear war which was one of the main reasons he ran for president to avoid.

CARL KAYSEN: I remember hearing a story, events which I didn't witness, but Ted did, and he can tell us whether it was a myth. That one of the discussions of the Berlin situation, Dean Acheson was present, and there was discussion of what if the Soviets do

this? Well, we'll send an armored column up the Autobahn. And what if they meet the armored column with tanks? And Atchison said, "Well, we'll fire off a tactical nuclear weapon." And then the President said, "And then what?" And Atchison was sort of taken aback and said, "Well, I hope cooler heads will prevail." Is that true, Ted?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Yes, but not in the Berlin crisis. That was when Atchison was called in by the EXCOMM as we called it, during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

CARL KAYSEN: Oh, the Cuban Missile Crisis.

THEODORE SORENSEN: And that's precisely correct. He favored the option of bombing the missile sites. And I think it was Max Taylor, because it's all in my mind's eye. I'm sitting in this table, a round table, and Max-- I think it was Max behind him-- was the voice who said, "Then what will the Soviets do?" And Dean Atchison said, "Well, the Soviets will feel obligated to bomb the NATO missile sites in Turkey." "And then what will we do?" "Well, NATO, our ally's been attacked. We'll bomb missile sites inside the Soviet Union." "Then what will the Soviets do?" "By then we hope cooler heads will prevail." [laughter]

I've told this story before in this same auditorium. Some years later, Atchison, either in an interview or an article by him in *Esquire* magazine, shrugged off the U.S. success in the Cuban Missile Crisis saying, "The Kennedys were just lucky." And a journalist called me up and quoted that to me and said, "What is your comment?" And I said, after a little thought, "Yes, they were lucky. They were lucky they didn't take Dean Atchison's advice." [laughter]

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: So Roswell Gilpatric tries to calm-- Because to really set the stage, you have to understand that this was a major political issue in the United States. Many people who were fearful the Soviets were ahead, and we discovered we were way ahead. So we want to calm down. We want to calm down domestic politics, and the problem with doing that is that you reveal your hand to the other side. And the Soviets

were extraordinarily insecure, Khrushchev was extraordinarily insecure. And so you have the Gilpatric speech, and we now know, because of materials actually only released in 2003, the Russians, Khrushchev gets very upset. He's not getting what he wants over Berlin and he recognizes that in the international system, the strategic balance has a political content; it matters. If you're afraid of the other side, you could be coerced into doing something against your interests.

And so in early 1962, he gives this secret speech, another secret speech, this one state secret, though, for a while, where he says, "I'm going to put pressure on the United States. I'm going to get what I want. I'm going to get a Berlin agreement. We're going to get it." He tried in the '50s and Eisenhower had stood up, it didn't happen. He wanted to get it done.

And to set the stage for the Cuban Missile Crisis, let me ask you about concerns you might have had about Khrushchev's instability. Because it was clear, this was a man who loved crisis. He had created one when you were there, and he had created at least one when Eisenhower was in power. When you're coming into the summer of 1962, how concerned were you that there might be a ploy there? He might want to do something. He might want a second Berlin crisis, for example.

THEODORE SORENSEN: I'm not sure you can count the Berlin crises because it was one continuing crisis. But after the peak crisis in the summer with the wall and all of that, of '61, we had an extraordinary historic event, not so far from here in Hyannisport, Massachusetts, when Khrushchev's son-in-law who was the editor of *Izvestia*, paid a Thanksgiving call on the Kennedys for a long interview which appeared, I believe, word for word in *Izvestia*. I mix them up. *Izvestia* was news, *Pravda* was truth, and they used to say there's no *Pravda* in *Izvestia*, or the other way around.

But Khrushchev, impressed by that friendly exchange and that interview, sent a secret letter to Kennedy delivered by a very secret, almost Hollywood means, which we can talk about, and Kennedy responded. I worked with him on that, to the horror of the State

Department, and I believe they kept exchanging ideas about Berlin in a very intellectual, reasonable kind of way, testing out possible solutions. And meanwhile, the military threat over Berlin, this gradually subsided, so that the crisis was not over. The threat was still there in the summer of '62. But, I wouldn't say that we were focusing on an imminent attack or move of any kind by the Soviet Union.

When rumors first began to spread, publicized extensively by Senator Homer Capehart of Indiana, whose fat face I haven't looked upon, I'm happy to say, until that film appeared a few minutes ago. And many of these rumors were being spread by Cuban exiles, some very fine and intelligent people among those Cuban exiles. But they, with all due respect, didn't know the difference between a Surface-to-Air Missile and an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile. So at that time, there was no hard evidence that the Soviets had that kind of offensive weapons in Cuba.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: So let's talk about when there was hard evidence. Ted, when did you find out and can you recall for us the President's reaction?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Oh, yes. On the morning of Tuesday, October 16, it's the only week in my life where I can tell you what day of the week it was when something happened, the President called me in and told me that a U2 over flight of Cuba, which had been delayed by weather, had returned from the previous weekend's flight with photographs from that marvelous invention, invented by the CIA, by the way, and production supervised by the very man who ruined everything in the Bay of Pigs, Richard Bissell. So the CIA, we've got to remember, has its good points as well as its bad. "And," said Kennedy, "those pictures, as analyzed by the geniuses who work in the photo interpretation offices of the CIA, showed that there were the beginning of several," up to 15 it later turned out, "sites for the erection of intermediate range nuclear missiles." Intermediate range meaning those nuclear missiles could reach any part of-- Almost any part of the United States and the western hemisphere.

And because Kennedy had, through this secret correspondence that I had mentioned, received assurance from Khrushchev that nothing unusual was going on, he was angry that he had been lied to and that he had fallen for the lie. And was determined, here I contrast him with other presidents who when they get bad news of that kind, go off to the ranch to cut brush, Kennedy said he was calling a meeting that morning. And here's one of the interesting decisions that he made. It was not a meeting of the National Security Council, because the people who show up at a National Security Council meeting were determined by statute years earlier. And everybody who comes to a National Security Council meeting feels he has to show his importance by bringing his deputy. And pretty soon, there are too many people in the room to make the kind of crisp decision Kennedy liked to make, and too many people in the room to keep it secret. And he thought this was highly secret.

And so he said he wanted me to come to the meeting and to check what he had said at press conferences about the dangers that would arise if the Soviets ever put offensive weapons in Cuba.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Graham, you've looked at this decision a lot, with care. What were President Kennedy's options and how did he eliminate those options to choose the one?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Ah, that's the key word. Oh sorry, are you going to ask me or Graham?

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: I'm going to ask Graham, and then you can correct him.
[laughter]

THEODORE SORENSEN: I've done that before.

GRAHAM ALLISON: I say, it wouldn't be the first time. Ted has been one of my best sources and instructors for a long time.

Let me go back, Tim, I'll take 30 seconds on the earlier discussion, because it seemed to me we missed out something that I thought you were going towards. If you take the missile gap, I think there's no question that, as Ted said, the consensus judgment by assorted reports was that somehow the U.S. was significantly behind in missiles. The new Kennedy Administration discovered quickly that was not the case. But interestingly, the decisions made by the Kennedy Administration in the first budget, and continued right through the first budget and the second budget and the third budget, was for a rapid and significant increase in American strategic offensive nuclear missiles for attacking targets in the Soviet Union. If you look at the Minute Man--

THEODORE SORENSEN: Where did you get that last part of the sentence?

GRAHAM ALLISON: Sorry?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Missiles?

GRAHAM ALLISON: Missiles with nuclear warheads.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Nobody said they were-- To the best of my knowledge, they were for attacking the Soviet Union.

GRAHAM ALLISON: No, but their range and their capability in the context of the Cold War were, in first presumption, maybe the Soviet Union didn't have an exclusive on these warheads. So China or somebody else might have also been the target. But it would be quite--

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Antarctica.

GRAHAM ALLISON: So point one was we saw this big increase. And I would say that's historically American, to underestimate our capabilities and overestimate other

people's capabilities. You look at the discussion of China today, you can see the same thing in the same kind of--

Second point, that we did not, I think, do a good job, the U.S. government, of putting ourselves in the Soviet shoes and asking what in the world would this look like? And I think in retrospect, when it was reexamined, you look and you say, "I'm the strategic planner for the Soviet Union. I have to think about worst case scenarios. I'm looking at this huge spurt in American capabilities; I would be fearful, plausibly fearful. So it seems to me that in trying to get the context for how we get to the Missile Crisis appreciating that from a Soviet point of view, our actions might have led to calculations, might plausibly have led to calculations.

Now, there's another story, how important was that for them, what is the evidence about it. But I think there's a general lesson here that we have to think how might other people see what we do?

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Carl?

CARL KAYSEN: I just want to add a little to that. I think it was a very good point that Graham brought up. There was a lot of contention about the new missile construction program in the initial budget which had two elements. One, a great big buildup, rapid acceleration of the Polaris program of nuclear missile submarines; not an increase in their total number, but a big step up in the schedule of construction and launching.

And the other was the Minute Man, the new solid fuel missile which was going to replace the Atlas and how many of them we should build. And there were a lot of arguments about that. The Air Force had remarkable ideas. Tommy White, I think, once mentioned, the head of the Strategic Air Command, once mentioned 10,000 Minute Men. And there was a good bit of internal wrangling about that. I spent many sheets of paper on the subject. In the end, we ended up with a thousand and Bob McNamara told the President

that he thought a thousand was the smallest number that was politically salable to the Congress, given the historic background of the argument. Ted may want to add to that.

THEODORE SORENSEN: I wanted to say, lest Graham think that buildup was for potentially offensive use by Kennedy, it had been foreshadowed in his inaugural address-- I hope you'll remember his inaugural address-- with the line which was actually more important in terms of Kennedy's Administration than the couple of lines that are quoted more often. And that was-- I don't have it memorized-- but the line was something to the effect, "we must make certain that our arms are sufficient beyond a doubt in order to be certain beyond a doubt they will never have to be used."

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Let's go to the decision, President Kennedy's decision, how to handle this surprise, unpleasant surprise in Cuba. Graham, could you lay out for us his options?

GRAHAM ALLISON: The wonder of this crisis is that we survived. So, I would say if you look back at it and think back, it could easily have turned out differently. And the brilliance of the decision-making process that President Kennedy arranged that allowed a vetting of the whole issue is rare, extremely rare. In fact, I was trying to think about-- I don't know, we don't want to go there now-- but analogies with this seminar that President Obama is now holding, more or less in public, about Afghanistan. But so here in the Missile Crisis case, Kennedy, as Ted says, pulls together a very small group, in secret, and for a week deliberates all the options. And everything is on the table. Every issue is examined. Every assumption is picked up and looked over and taken over again. People feel comfortable to change their minds quite dramatically.

And for historians, you know vividly because of your work, the fact that these deliberations were secretly taped, so most of the people don't know, but actually a tape was running. And now we as historians can look and listen after the fact and be a fly on the wall and hear these deliberations. So I think the whole thing quite remarkable. As President Kennedy noted in the video that we saw, if the decision had had to be made in

24 or 48 hours, I think it's quite likely a different decision would have been made, quite likely. And initially, the impulse was to attack. And the consensus was to attack.

“Look at this terrible thing that's happened. He deceived us. We have the capability.” So when Stevenson, not the bad-- When Stevenson is dragged in, or enters the conversation two or three days in, he's absolutely persuaded the decision has already been made and we're going to attack and we're just doing the arrangements. I don't think that was correct, but I think the virtue of having five or six days in which a president was prepared to let the discussion go, in which people could challenge each other, in which you could go look for further evidence and look at different evidence, in which there was an opportunity to invent options that weren't obvious in the first instance, it is wonderful to behold.

And you say, “Well, where would a president have that opportunity today?” The answer is he wouldn't. When President Obama is trying to think about Afghanistan, every day in the *Post* and *Times*, I read exactly what happened at the Congress session yesterday. So the notion that you're having this private conversation for purposes of debate, I would say we should be thankful for this hermetically sealed bubble and for the people who participated in the conversation. One of Bobby Kennedy's comments afterwards, which I've always taken extremely seriously, was that he would imagine that if it had been a different composition of the people even in the EXCOMM, the decision might have turned out differently. So it's not just the President is the final decider, but the people who were exploring and deliberating and examining the assumptions and the options.

THEODORE SORENSEN: I agree with all that Graham said, and I might follow up his last comment by noting that Bobby himself and I were not members of the National Security Council, but quite active in those discussions. But on that very first morning, the meeting which I mentioned, Kennedy wanted to know from us all his possible options: diplomatic options, as well as military options. And combined military and diplomatic; even the possibility of doing nothing at all. He said, “Europeans are accustomed to sitting on the bull's eye of Soviet missiles. Maybe we'll have to learn how to live with it, too,”

even though he didn't think politically that would ever stand. But it was in that free-flowing discussion that other options arose.

And it was very next day that Bobby said, because there had been agreement on that first morning, pretty much a consensus, that a surgical air strike knocking out the missile sites was the best way to proceed, it sounded so clean and simple; turns out there's no such thing as a surgical air strike. But the next day, Bobby said, "A lot of innocent Cubans working at the sites will be killed and we'll go down in history as having committed Pearl Harbor in reverse, surprise attack from the air." And so there was some thought that we should send a notice and the plan was the President would write a high level secret note for a high level emissary to deliver personally to Khrushchev in the Kremlin. I was asked to draft that note and everybody began to weigh in. "Don't make it sound like an ultimatum." Of course, it was an ultimatum. "Don't make it complicated, Khrushchev will negotiate until the missile sites are ready." Well, of course it had to be complicated.

And I ultimately reported the failure to meet all those conditions, although I had tried my hand at a note saying, "Mr. Khrushchev, unless you pull those missiles out, we're bombing." And that later was circulated as the so-called second speech when in fact there was no second speech drafted for Kennedy to give.

But, we were almost divided into two groups within the EXCOMM; some for the air strike followed up by an invasion. And others were for the blockade, which we renamed the 'quarantine against offensive weapons' that was announced in the Kennedy speech, parts of which were shown in the film clip. So, it was as Graham says, extraordinary that a president didn't just take one option by a preemptive strike or invasion, and run with it. No, he wanted to know what all the possibilities were, and he wanted to know what the pros and cons were of each possibility.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Devotees of the show *Mad Men* will have seen now that people, at least at Sterling Cooper, the advertising firm, fictitious one, went home on Friday of that week concerned that they might not live through the weekend of October

27th and October 28th. For those of you in the White House, tell us about the anxiety and the relief.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Ah. First of all, just to back up one moment, our deliberations continued almost night and day through that first week after Tuesday the 16th. Finally after I was asked to draft a speech for the President on the quarantine and there was our group, the quarantine group, okayed it, and although some of the others were still holding out for the air strike and invasion, Bobby called the President in Chicago. Why was he in Chicago? Because he had said to us on that first day, "I want everyone to keep their schedules. If you have campaign commitments, keep those campaign commitments. I don't want word spreading that there's a crisis. There's a lot of secret White House meetings, a lot of limousines piled up around the White House." So he had kept his campaign commitment by flying first to Indiana where he had a few unkind words for Homer Capehart, and to Chicago where he was to speak the next day after Bobby called him and said, "I think we're reaching a consensus. Come back." The President flew back Saturday morning.

Pierre Salinger had the White House physician say the President had a bad cold. Wasn't quite the truth, but it wasn't totally a lie. And the President came back, there was a lot more about this in my book which you kindly mentioned. And that afternoon, Saturday the 20th, we met over in the Residence, interestingly enough, instead of in the Cabinet Room where we normally met, and that Adlai thought there ought to be a diplomatic dimension to our response, talking about peace and the United Nations and so on. JFK and I agreed with that. Sunday, he made one last interrogation of the Air Force to see whether, in fact, it was impossible to have the original idea of a truly surgical air strike instead of bombing the length and breadth of the island, which the Air Force said they would have to do. He also wanted to have one last talk to make certain that a blockade could be conducted in a way-- Halt a ship, board a ship, disable a ship by hitting its propeller, but not sinking the ship. He wanted to make sure the blockade didn't suddenly escalate into a shooting war. And then he went on the air Monday night after calling in the leaders of Congress who had been all across the country during the recess, and

briefing them on what he was going to do, and most of them expressed disappointment. They wanted something a lot harsher, harder than merely a blockade.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: I have to say, since you were mentioning schedules, because we want to talk about President Kennedy's Test Ban Treaty and the American University speech.

THEODORE SORENSEN: There's a connection.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: There's a beautiful connection. But I want to set up the Test Ban Treaty, talking about the anxiety that you must have felt in the White House and the relief when Khrushchev backed down.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Oh, yes.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: So just tell us about that and then--

THEODORE SORENSEN: Well, you talk about the television concern of the weekend of the 26th, 27th, 28th. Sometimes, when I talk about this subject, I have men about your age, Tim, who come up to me and thank me for making Kennedy's speech on Monday night the 22nd so scary they were able to convince their college sweethearts it was their last night on Earth. [laughter]

GRAHAM ALLISON: As I told Ted, I was a student at Oxford and it was a very powerful motivator.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: And I was the product of the nuclear anxiety.

THEODORE SORENSEN: In any event, I have been asked many times, was I scared? I didn't have time to be scared. Every minute, we were thinking, trying to come up with some solution. We had tried the Secretary General of the United Nations, we had tried a

continuing exchange of notes, we had tried a variety of other hints- nothing seemed to work. Nothing seemed to deter Khrushchev from this reckless gamble. And in those days, the Cabinet Room where we were meeting was not, although I understand it is now, in those days the Cabinet Room was not a reinforced concrete shelter. So, we knew sitting around that table if we made the wrong decision, if we simply provoked Khrushchev further, that it might well be our last weekend.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Khrushchev's decision to back down, this reinforced the sense that we were on a precipice. Let's watch as President Kennedy changes the tone and tenor of the rhetoric of international affairs and brings us to a Test Ban Treaty, the first serious arms control treaty between the two super powers. Let's go.

[VIDEO]

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: McGeorge Bundy once told me that the Cuban Missile Crisis made the American University speech possible.

THEODORE SORENSEN: Of course. There's even an indirect reference in the American University speech to "We must never back someone into a corner where his options are submission, surrender or escalation." I don't remember the exact words. But, I've often said that both Kennedy and Khrushchev, having peered down a nuclear gun barrel at each other, decided there had to be better ways to resolve their conflicts.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Carl, you were in Moscow. Tell us about negotiating the Test Ban Treaty?

CARL KAYSEN: Well, I think it's clear, as Ted has already indicated that both sides wanted a treaty, that they were sufficiently sobered by the experience of the Missile Crisis to want a treaty. I want to boast that I made a fairly important contribution to that treaty by suggesting that Averell Harriman be our negotiator. I think the Secretary of State's preference would have been George Ball. And with all due respect to George, I

think he might have found a way to make things more complicated than they had to be. And I had something specific in mind. The Russian side, Soviet side, raised the question of discussing a non-aggression pact between the Warsaw Pact nations and NATO in combination with working on the treaty.

This would have been a diversion of interest and energy that would have involved a dozen other nations and would have made the whole process stop. I think that I saw, I should say, not I think, I saw how skillfully Averell evaded this question. The negotiation as such was fairly straightforward because both sides wanted the treaty. There were some technical issues. We didn't recognize East Germany, how would we deal with the question of East German adherence to the treaty, and we agreed there'd be two depositories, Moscow and Washington, and so on.

I think on one of these technical issues, I remember I had the pleasure of adjourning and calling Washington. I said to Harriman, "I ought to go back to the embassy and call Washington." He said, "Nonsense. They tap the phones in the embassy. Call them right here." [laughter] And I got a hold of Bundy and got the President's agreement to this technicality on the way East Germany was dealt with. And so the negotiation went very well.

And then if I can take the time, Tim, to tell a little story afterwards which was illustrative of Khrushchev and his most characteristic-- To kind of observe the success of the negotiation, there was a big dinner at the Kremlin. And the American delegation, the American ambassador and the Soviet delegation and various Soviet dignitaries were invited to dinner. And I, I say Harriman and Floyd Culler, who was our ambassador in Moscow, and I walked over from the place in the Kremlin where we had been sitting and working on the treaty, across the open space of the Kremlin to Empress Catherine's Hall, which is where the dinner was to be. And Khrushchev was bubbling over pointing to the crowd. The Kremlin was open, and maybe selected people were admitted into the garden there. Pointing to Harriman and say, "I'm giving Comrade Harriman a dinner. He deserves a dinner because we just negotiated the treaty." And so on. And that went on.

And then, Khrushchev told the following story to Harriman and Alex Sokolovsky, who was our interpreter, kind of drifted back and forth between Khrushchev and Harriman and three paces ahead, and Kohler and myself behind keeping his car (?). And here's a story Khrushchev tells Harriman. "That in the old days when we walked here, I had guards. I don't know whether they were protecting me or observing me. But one walked ahead of me, and one walked behind me. And one day I said to the one walking behind me, 'Comrade Guard, why don't you come up and walk by my side? I just finished dinner. I might fart, and that would embarrass us both.'" And as I say, that was perfectly characteristic.

In the dinner, we sat in small groups around tables in the big hall and Khrushchev went around from table to table raising his vodka glass and toasting us and being very jolly and ebullient.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Graham, President Kennedy was concerned about the spread of nuclear weapons, wasn't he?

GRAHAM ALLISON: Indeed. I think the line that you've drawn between the Missile Crisis and the Test Ban Treaty and concerns is precisely right. And if I just pick up where Ted left off, the experience of peering over the nuclear precipice, the existential experience, left Kennedy himself and the people who had felt that danger feeling different about the world and about what mattered. And I think Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s account of it captures the main idea. And let me give you a very short quote. He says, "As for Kennedy, his feelings underwent a qualitative change after Cuba. A world in which nations threatened each other with nuclear weapons now seemed to him not just an irrational, but an intolerable and impossible world." I think that's what Ted was saying. I think if we try to make it in terms we can understand, it's like a person has a near-death experience and then they behave differently after.

One of the things there followed then, in effect a surge of activities aimed at transforming the situation so this wouldn't happen again. And as we saw on the video, one of the concerns was that by 1975, there were going to be 25 nuclear weapon states. Now, I actually looked at that forecast when he made it and looked back at the commentary about it. So the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* took that as yeah, okay. Because the presumption was as rapidly as states acquired the technical capability to make nuclear weapons, they would make them. They were good for the super powers, why are they not good for the others?

But I think as Kennedy appreciated rightly, if that were the case, then you would see local nuclear wars, as the Cuban Missile Crisis almost came to be a general nuclear war, and one would see nuclear weapons lost out of control, and nuclear terrorism would become a concern. So, there followed from that, then, a number of initiatives, only one of which was this Limited Test Ban. That was really the place to start.

And I think with respect to the Limited Test Ban, if I just add one point to Carl's point, among the very interesting features of it was the way in which Kennedy set it up. So, he announced that we were not going to test unilaterally. We were going to have a moratorium on tests and seek to negotiate an agreement not to have future tests. If we were unable to reach agreement, well then all bets are off, but for the time being. So his proposition was to-- He said looking towards an early agreement on the comprehensive test ban, this is President Kennedy, the U.S. would conduct no atmospheric tests so long as other states did not do so.

So I think the Test Ban Treaty was one of the steps that got set in motion that were all ultimately part of arms control, as we came to know it, with strategic arms limitation talks. And then ultimately the Non-Proliferation Treaty. So, seeing the Missile Crisis as a pivot with respect to nuclear danger, I think is correct.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: It was a pivot for the Soviets as well, and from recently released Russian materials, we can see this. The Soviets were very concerned about the

West Germans getting nuclear weapons and are very interested in tying them, just as we are interested in tying down the Chinese. And to some extent, the Soviets were also worried about the Chinese. When you talk about proliferation, there was a wonderful side story to the Cuban Missile Crisis that again we only learned, those of us who plow these fields, just a few years ago. The Soviets intended to give the Cubans nuclear tipped tactical missiles. That was the original plan. And when we were talking about the possibility of a landing, we didn't emphasize the fact that besides the rockets, the Soviets also sent tactical missiles, battlefield nuclear missiles. And the Soviets were trying to give the Cubans these missiles.

And after Castro misbehaved, in the view of the Soviet Union when he wanted the Soviets to use their missiles at the height of the Crisis against the United States, Khrushchev realized, "Oh my God, the last thing I want to do is give this man tactical nuclear weapons." And so the Soviets also withdrew those. But for the Soviets, the concern about uncontrolled nuclear weapons was a real issue also in the Cuban Missile Crisis and influenced their willingness to talk to us and to engage in serious arms control.

One other point I'd make, because this sets up what'll happen later this afternoon, the Soviets really wanted arms control, but they were afraid of verification. You see, if you're the weaker state, there's a disincentive to allowing the greater, bigger, more powerful state to see how weak you are. And there were real debates in the Soviet Union over how much to open our country to U.S. intelligence. And at one point, the Soviet military, General Marshal Zhukov in the '50s, wanted to accept President Eisenhower's Open Skies Proposal because the Soviet military was afraid of a surprise attack from the United States, because we were the more powerful country. The Soviet military wanted to support this. Zhukov lost his job over this. Khrushchev said to him, "You are out of your mind. You are going to give--" He didn't say Curtis LeMay, but that was the point—"You are going to give American generals the evidence they need to know how weak we are and then they will launch a first strike."

So the problem that really held up major arms control, deep arms control, until the 1980s, was the unwillingness of the Soviets to permit real verification, and the unwillingness of an American president to sign a treaty that couldn't be verified.

GRAHAM ALLISON: Let me add a small point to that. When we went to Moscow, it was the President's hope that we would have a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, not just a limited one, that covered underground as well as atmospheric, and so on. But it was clear from the first day that the Soviets weren't going to do that, that they wouldn't tolerate it. It was perfectly clear that the idea of the inspections that would be required to verify the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was simply intolerable to the Soviets.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: Thanks to our friends at the LBJ Library, we can watch President Johnson celebrate the signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty by over 55 countries on July 1, 1968.

[VIDEO]

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: I apologize. Because of this discussion, we don't have as much time for Q&A, but there is a question I'd like to-- We've got time for one question, and Ted, you wanted to add something. So let me just pose the question so that at least we get one question, and you can combine the two together, if you would. Which Bay of Pigs lesson, Ted, weighed significantly, if any, in the EXCOMM deliberations?

THEODORE SORENSEN: Oh, my. The Bay of Pigs, of course, also involved Cuba and it was a fiasco and Kennedy relied upon what the CIA and military had previously planned and decided. And therefore, the EXCOMM and the Cuban Missile Crisis began to look at all options. And by then, there had been some changes in personnel as well as policy.

But I did want to add to Graham's list that Kennedy and Khrushchev, after the Missile Crisis, also agreed because Kennedy by then had already begun a major outer space

development program for the race to the moon, and so on, to ban weapons of mass destruction from outer space and that may well be a question that the Obama Administration is going to have to reexamine because efforts were being taken by Obama's predecessor to re-arm outer space, which I think would be a disastrous mistake.

TIMOTHY NAFTALI: I also think it's worth mentioning that John F. Kennedy was the first president to ever ask the intelligence community to assess the possibility that nuclear weapons could be moved in suitcases. He was very concerned, because of the difficulty in determining whether the Cubans themselves had any warheads, or any nuclear weapons. He wanted to know the extent to which nuclear weapons could be built small enough to put into suitcases. And unfortunately the CIA told him that it was easy to do. But then the CIA in a special national intelligence estimate that you can all read, it's been declassified, the CIA then said, "But we'd know the address of the person who sent that suitcase." A very telling comment then, but an even more frightening and telling comment now. There are many more addresses today.

I want to thank all of my panelists. I want to thank all of the panelists, I want to thank all of you. This was a wonderful session, and this is a wonderful conference, Tom Putnam, thank you. Thanks very much. [applause]

TOM PUTNAM: So we have boxed lunches for the audience. We ask that you exit the way you came in by the restrooms. Take a left through our store and down into the pavilion where you can buy your box lunch and leave the elevator lobby free for the speakers in order for the speakers to get to the elevators. We'll start promptly at 1:00. Caroline Kennedy will be here to open up the afternoon sessions at 1:00. Thank you very much.

END OF SESSION