Spring 2006

In The Shadow Of Nuclear War: Montana's Reaction To The Cuban Missile Crisis

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This thesis has been approved for honors recognition for the Department of History.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents David and Lynn Thompson, for all the help they have given me the past year: to my mother for helping type the pages and pages of this thesis, to my father for driving me all over the state so I could conduct my research and for his technical assistance, and to them both for all of their assistance in every aspect of this thesis. Thank you so much!

I would also like to thank each of my interviewees for granting me time out of their busy schedules to answer my questions and further my research. First, thank you to my grandparents Joe and Barb Stroup for both granting me interviews and for giving me plenty of support and encouragement for my thesis. Thanks also to Sunny Ray Mandeville, Lori Balcerzak, Mary Lamb, Tom and Kathy Miller, Dr. Philip Pallister, Father William Greytak, Guido Bugni, and my mother Lynn Thompson, for all your help.

Thank you to both Mary Lamb and Dr. Erik Pratt for allowing me to take pictures of their civil defense paraphernalia. They really added another
dimension to my research. Also, thank you to Pearl Pallister for her help in editing the illustrations.

Thank you to the people of the Carroll College Corette Library, the Montana Historical Society, and the K. Ross Toole Archives of the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana, for all their assistance in locating my research.

Finally, thank you to all of the professors who have aided in the completion of this thesis. Dr. Robert Swartout, Jr., thank you for agreeing to be my director. Also, thank you for keeping me in line and helping me get this thesis done in time. Thank you to Dr. David Messenger and Nathalie Caulliez for agreeing to be my readers and helping make this thesis the best it can be.

Thank you everyone!
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INTRODUCTION

On a cool Great Falls, Montana, morning in October 1962, Barbara Stroup, wife of Air Force Tech Sergeant Joseph Stroup, left her house to attend a “coffee klatch” at her friend Exie Evan's house. Not thinking anything of it, she turned onto Gumwood Street between a military vehicle and what she thought was a moving van. Barb drove through the main gate into Malmstrom Air Force Base and guided her 1960 black-and-white Plymouth Fury to Cedar Street, where her friend Exie lived. She stopped in front of Exie's house, gathered her purse and coat, and reached for the car door. Barb jumped when she saw several Air Force Police Officers peering at her over the barrels of their guns.1

The officer on the driver's side motioned to her to roll down the car window, which she did with shaking hands. The officer demanded her identification and then asked her if she knew what she had done. Still unnerved by the multiple guns pointed at her, Barb nervously answered no. The officer informed her that she had interrupted a missile convoy on its way to the base. Shocked, Barb cooperated as the officer interrogated her as to her purpose. After the officer ascertained that she had not been trying to sabotage the Minuteman missile that the convoy had been transporting, he and his fellow officers stayed their guns, climbed into their vehicle, and drove off. Barb sat for a moment, then grabbed her purse and fled into Exie's house.2 Normally, the grave manner in which the officer handled the situation would have seemed excessive. But this day was different; the Cuban Missile Crisis had started just one week earlier.
INTRODUCTION NOTES

1 Barbara Stroup, interview by author via telephone, October 23, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording; and Lynn Thompson, interview by author, October 23, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording.

2 Ibid.
CHAPTER 1

DESTINED FOR CONFRONTATION: THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION, AND CUBA

On October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy announced to an unsuspecting public that Soviet missiles had been discovered in Cuba. After demanding a Soviet removal of the weapons, Kennedy informed his audience that an American blockade would be placed around Cuba to halt any further missiles from reaching the insular communist nation. Montanans, like millions of other American citizens, braced themselves for an unprecedented Cold War showdown. Although thousands of miles from Cuba, Montanans knew they could not escape the shadow of nuclear war.

Kennedy had known about the missiles six days prior to his address to the nation. The tension between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba had been brewing for several years. Occasionally, eruptions occurred, such as the gunning down of an American U-2 spy plane by the Soviet Union in May 1960; the multiple American assassination attempts on the Communist leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro, known as Operation Mongoose; and the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961.
Beginning in November 1961, a mere seven months after the embarrassing Bay of Pigs, Kennedy implemented Operation Mongoose*. The operation was designed to oust Castro and end communism in Cuba. Millions of dollars were spent on assassination attempts on Castro and economic warfare. Backers of Operation Mongoose wanted a reason for an American invasion of Cuba; and when the day came, Operation Mongoose and the CIA would be ready. One of the active backers was Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who actively supported and worked on Operation Mongoose. It was likely his persistence and near obsession with the project that kept the operation active. Operation Mongoose continued through the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis.³ Although clandestine, Operation Mongoose helped lead the Cuban Missile Crisis, as America’s leaders became increasingly determined to oust Castro rather than learn to accept and work with him.

Tensions started to climb in 1962. China was challenging the Soviet Union for the dominant role in the Communist world. The Soviets needed an opportunity to show their toughness, and that opportunity presented itself in Cuba. The small island nation, which had become communist under Castro in 1959, appeared to be an ideal spot for the Soviet Union to prove to Communists around the globe that it was not being too soft on the West. In the spring of 1962, the Premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, decided to begin secretly

* Called after a cobra-killing mammal found in Southeast Asia.
shipping missiles to Cuba. The first step toward the Cuban Missile Crisis had been taken.4

Unaware of the Soviet transportation of missiles to Cuba, Kennedy announced on September 13, 1962, that the United States would do whatever it needed to do to protect itself and its allies. Implied in this statement was an American intolerance of Soviet missiles in Cuba, which would come back to haunt Kennedy in October when the missiles were discovered. The increasing friction between the three nations was evident to the American public. Many Americans believed that the Soviet Union and Cuba were threatening the national security of the United States, and were flagrantly challenging America’s supremacy in the Western Hemisphere. These thoughts were embodied in a cartoon that ran in the Independent Record of Helena, Montana on September 16, 1962, that displayed Castro and Khrushchev lighting the former’s signature cigar with a flaming copy of the Monroe Doctrine.5 (See Figure 1)

Another factor in leading up to the crisis was a city thousands of miles away from Cuba, Berlin. Deep in Soviet-controlled East Germany, Berlin’s welfare was of considerable concern to the Kennedy administration. Khrushchev and Kennedy had been at odds with each other about Berlin since the Vienna Summit in June 1961, but after the closure of East Berlin to the West on August

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*This plan was known as Operation Anadyr. The name was meant to mislead, the Anadyr region was a far cry from tropical Cuba. It was a frigid area of Siberia in the Soviet Union.
Figure 1 - Cartoon featured in the Helena Independent Record that mirrored the feelings of many Americans. Reprinted from the *Helena Independent Record*, September 16, 1962, 24.
13 and the building of the Berlin Wall thereafter, the tensions between the two escalated. These tensions colored Kennedy’s actions up to the crisis and his handling of the crisis itself. It was noted that “Kennedy was convinced that Khrushchev’s October 1962 move in Cuba was the first step in a Soviet plan to threaten nuclear blackmail over the Berlin issue; some advisers worried that he was ‘imprisoned by Berlin, that [was] all he [thought] about.”’6

On the Soviet side, Berlin was also a concern, but there was another area that caused much unease for Khrushchev and the Soviets. This area was Turkey. The American Jupiter missiles in Turkey were within quick striking distance of the Soviet Union. This gave the Americans an advantage, because the Soviets had no missiles in the Western Hemisphere to offset the American threat. Constructing missiles ninety miles off the coast of the United States would give the Soviets a foothold in the western hemisphere, and keep the Americans from invading Cuba or firing nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union.7 Although the two areas of concern were an ocean away from the small island of Cuba, the combination of the American fear of losing Berlin and the Soviet discomfort with the missiles in Turkey pushed the two countries into the Cuban Missile Crisis.

There would be no Cuban Missile Crisis if Cuba did not have its own reasons for allowing the Soviets to construct missiles on its territory. An obvious reason was that Castro believed that Cuba’s national security was at risk and that the presence of the Soviet missiles would deter an invasion from other countries,
especially the United States. The Bay of Pigs invasion and Operation Mongoose were two of the main reasons why Castro decided to let the Soviets build the missiles to aid the Communist movement in the western hemisphere. Castro claimed it was "to reinforce socialism at on international level." Both of the above reasons brought Cuba into the fray and helped to lead the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Throughout the summer and into the fall of 1962, the Soviets secretly shipped missiles to Cuba. On Sunday, October 14, American U-2 spy planes discovered and photographed the missiles. The news reached Washington, D.C., and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy the next day. Instead of going immediately to the president, Bundy held the shocking evidence overnight. The following morning, Bundy presented Kennedy and his advisors with the damning photographs. Kennedy and the majority of the ExComm\(^1\) realized what the photographs represented, even though they could not identify the individual missiles. The photographs stunned Kennedy and the ExComm; they immediately began brainstorming to figure out how to respond to this threat.\(^9\)

Over the next few hours, Kennedy and his advisors hashed out several possible reactions to the Soviet buildup of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Six options surfaced from these discussions: no reaction, use the foreign policy channels to put pressure on the Soviets, leave the Soviets out of negotiations and talk with

\(^1\) Executive Committee of the National Security Council.
Castro secretly, invade Cuba, remove the missiles via an American air strike, or create a blockade around the island.\textsuperscript{10}

The first option was considered because of the fact that missiles in Soviet territory could already hit the United States, therefore making the missiles in Cuba technically irrelevant. The fate of Berlin also factored into this option, as the Soviets would likely retaliate if the United States responded explosively to the missiles in Cuba. This option was never a high-ranking choice, however, because public opinion and political pressure on Kennedy would not allow him to watch the Soviets construct missiles and not do anything to halt it.\textsuperscript{11}

The second option, diplomatic pressure, both secret and public, was only slightly more viable than the previous option. The United States was not willing to trade both the Guantanamo Marine base in Cuba (also known as Gitmo) and the American missiles in Turkey for the missiles in Cuba, especially not publicly. Also, approaching Khrushchev secretly could have backfired, as he might have forced an agreement on the United States, rather than the other way around. The sole voice of Adlai Stevenson, the American representative in the United Nations (UN), called for the removal of American missiles in Turkey as a trade for the Soviet missiles in Cuba, a suggestion that Kennedy and his other advisors rebuffed.\textsuperscript{12}

Kennedy disagreed with Stevenson about the removal of the Jupiter missiles on the basis that if the United States tore down the missiles in Turkey it
would appear that the American government had given in to Soviet pressure. Ironically, Kennedy had originally wanted the missiles removed from Turkey due to the fact they were obsolete, but with the discovery of the Soviet missiles in Cuba, there was no way Kennedy could remove the missiles without losing face. This was something Kennedy simply could not do.

The third option, speaking with Castro in secret in order “to divorce Cuba from Soviet Communism,” was also an unrealistic choice.”¹³ Many problems would arise with this option, as it was unlikely Castro would negotiate with the American government. Also, if the Soviets discovered the secret negotiations, the Americans might then be forced to accept an agreement with the Soviets, such as in the previous option, rather than delivering an ultimatum.¹⁴

The fourth option, invading Cuba, was the most likely option to lead to nuclear war with the Soviets. An invasion appealed to high-ranking American officials, due to the fact it could remove the man who had irritated the United States since his rise in the late 1950s, Fidel Castro, and it would also destroy the Soviet missiles assembled in Cuba. Unfortunately, like many other options, this option risked Berlin. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stated, “It [an invasion] may well be worth the price . . . perhaps we should pay that.”¹⁵ This option was also the alternative the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred. Unlike the previous options, this one stayed as an alternative for quite a few days during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
The fifth option, an air strike, was also a viable option for dealing with the crisis. If American bombers carried out a successful strike and took out the missiles, then both the Soviet and Cuban threats would be neutralized. Kennedy, however, had reservations about a general air strike. The president did not want to attack Havana and other populous areas. He preferred a limited strike that would take out the missiles and the surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites. Kennedy did not rule out a general strike, but he was more willing to move forward with a limited one. Several risks were involved with even a limited strike. The Soviets could retaliate with nuclear weapons or with an attack on the United States from Cuba, Soviet personnel could be killed in an air strike, the Soviets might take Berlin or fire on Turkey, or the Soviets might simply choose to reconstruct the destroyed missiles. This option played heavily on Kennedy’s mind the week before he announced the presence of the missiles to the nation.

The sixth and final option was a blockade placed around Cuba. If the American Navy placed an effective quarantine on Cuba, then the Soviets would be unable to continue to ship missile parts to the island. As with the previous options, the blockade could produce a negative Soviet reaction. The Soviets could respond by refusing to yield to the blockade, which would likely result in a naval battle in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. Also, the Soviets might reciprocate with a Soviet blockade of Berlin. Another problem was whether or not the blockade would be effective enough to bring about a removal of the
missiles in Cuba. In his memoirs, Robert Kennedy recalled, "The missiles were already in Cuba, and all we would be doing with a blockade would be 'closing the door after the horse had left the barn.'"17 The blockade was also considered for use as a warning to the Soviets and Cubans before an American assault on the island. After the first day, this option, as well as the air strike and the invasion, appeared to be the most likely reactions to the missiles in Cuba.18

The next few days, President Kennedy and his ExComm advisors debated between the various options they had discussed. The Joint Chiefs supported the full military invasion, rather than the blockade and the air strike. McNamara explained to Kennedy that even a surgical strike would not necessarily take out all the missiles or the missile sites and that an invasion had a better chance of succeeding. Kennedy was not convinced that the invasion was the best route. The blockade was also evaluated. The president’s brother, Robert Kennedy, did not initially support the blockade. He stated, "... the argument against the blockade is that it’s a very slow death, and it builds up, and goes over a period of months, and during that period of time you’ve got all these people yelling and screaming about it, you’ve got the examination of Russian ships, shooting down the Russian planes that try to land there. You have to do all those things."19 Although the blockade was not the most popular option with the Joint Chiefs, it remained among the top choices for President Kennedy.
Throughout the crisis, Berlin remained a key worry for the president. Almost every action the United States took could lead to a Soviet retaliation against the European city. Throughout the Thursday, October 18, discussions, Berlin played a prominent role. Later in the day, Kennedy and Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko discussed Cuba and Berlin. Neither side gave any hint of knowledge of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Gromyko evaded Kennedy when the latter prodded him about and warned him against offensive weapons on the small island. The diplomatic dance that occurred during the meeting upset Kennedy greatly, and he began calling Gromyko “that lying bastard.”

Thursday ended on a frustrating note for the president.

The next day, Kennedy and his advisors bickered about which action should be taken in response to the missiles. One of the Joint Chiefs, General Curtis LeMay, declared, “ . . . I see not other solution [than taking military action]. This uh . . . uh . . . blockade and . . . political action I see this leading into war . . . It will lead right to war. This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich.” LeMay then called for immediate “military intervention.” Kennedy ignored this provocation and continued debating reactions. The Joint Chiefs continually pressed Kennedy on the advantages of an invasion, but the president managed to evade being forced into a hasty decision that would lead to military action.
Later that day, Kennedy left Washington, D.C., to attend a series of campaign rallies for the upcoming congressional elections. After the first rally, however, he commanded the White House physician, Rear Admiral George Burkley, to announce to the public that Kennedy had a cold, so the president could return to Washington, D.C., to deal with the crisis without causing public alarm. No one doubted Kennedy’s illness; newspapers across Montana and the nation ran stories on Kennedy’s cold.22

Politics may have greatly influenced Kennedy’s decision on when and how to deal with the Cuban Missile Crisis. The 1962 congressional elections were less than three weeks away when Kennedy learned of the missiles, and the elections might have influenced how he dealt with the crisis. “Given the pronounced public support for the blockade compared to more violent options, the blockade was the ideal response in terms of satisfying public opinion.”23 Positive public opinion would have aided the Democrats in November.

On the other hand, choosing to deal with the missiles in Cuba prior to elections could have backfired on Kennedy, as there was no way to predict how the public would react to the news or Kennedy’s solution to the crisis. The Democrats could not risk losing seats on a huge political gamble. Politics and the election might have had some influence on Kennedy’s decision, but they were far from the primary cause.24
On Saturday, October 20, the hawks (pro-military action) and the doves (pro-blockade and negotiations) presented their respective sides to the president. McNamara, who had wavered on his stance in the group, proclaimed his support for the blockade. Robert Kennedy vacillated between the blockade and air strikes, but in the end he came out a dove. The discussion between the two sides became extremely heated and the hawks pressed President Kennedy to side with them and go forward with an invasion, air strikes, or both. This pressure backfired on the hawks. By the time the meeting had concluded, President Kennedy clearly supported a blockade. This, however, did not satisfy the doves either, as Kennedy also had refused to negotiate. At the end of the day, Kennedy ordered Theodore Sorensen, Special Counsel to the President, to write a speech announcing a blockade of Cuba to the American public.25

By mid-Sunday, Kennedy had officially decided on a quarantine of Cuba. He had realized that there were too many nuclear risks involved with an invasion and air strikes. The rest of Sunday was used to discuss possible Soviet reactions to the blockade and American justification of the quarantine to the world. Next, Kennedy decided it was time to inform America’s allies of the missiles in Cuba and of the American blockade around the island. He then dispatched messengers to each North American Treaty Organization (NATO) country. Later, the president learned that both the Washington Post and the New York Times planned to run stories the next day about the Soviet missiles
discovered in Cuba. Kennedy managed to convince the two newspapers to hold their stories until after his Monday presidential address in the interest of national security.\textsuperscript{26} The day ended on a relatively positive note for the Kennedy administration.

On Monday, October 22, was a flurry of activity for President Kennedy and his administration. Kennedy’s speech that night required some fine-tuning, and Adlai Stevenson and the American delegation to the UN needed a plan of attack for the approaching debate. Also, military issues around the world such as European defense (if necessary) and the Jupiter missiles in Turkey had to be sorted out. Kennedy did not want any rogue military personnel firing missiles on the Soviet Union. It was discovered later that Khrushchev had given similar orders to Soviet personnel. On Monday afternoon, the Joint Chiefs moved American forces to DEFCON 3\textsuperscript{2} and the military prepared itself for the blockade that was less than forty-eight hours away.\textsuperscript{27}

On late Monday afternoon, Kennedy briefed his cabinet and leaders of Congress in separate meetings. He showed pictures of the missile sites in Cuba. He then revealed his plan to blockade Cuba, which although considered an act of war, it was unlikely to provide a militant, possibly nuclear response from the

\textsuperscript{2} DEFCON, which was short for Defensive Condition, was an alert for American military forces. DEFCON ranged from DEFCON 5, which was simple preparedness, to DEFCON 1, which was the most serious alert of all, the DEFCON for war. The DEFCON level was elevated when the President and his advisors believed American national security was at risk.
Soviets and Cubans. Kennedy then defended his choice from interrogations by various senators, especially from the vigorous attack of Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.²⁸

After the meetings, the Soviets received a copy of the president’s upcoming speech from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, as well as a letter to Kennedy from Khrushchev. Kennedy stated in his letter, “I must tell you [Premier Khrushchev] that the United States is determined that this threat to the security of the nations of this hemisphere be removed. . . . I hope that your Government will refrain from any action which would widen or deepen this already grave crisis and that we can agree to resume the path of peaceful negotiation.”²⁹ Less than an hour later, Kennedy went public with the American blockade of Cuba, which would go into effect on Wednesday, October 24, 1962, at 10:00 a.m.

In his speech, Kennedy briefed the nation about the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Kennedy made no attempt to cushion his words; instead, he utilized stark phrases to describe the situation in Cuba. He revealed the extent of the missiles in Cuba and how far from the island the missiles could reach if fired. Kennedy reminded the public that the Soviets had lied about their missile capabilities both inside and outside the Soviet Union. He then vividly illustrated the horrors of nuclear war and the fears of living in a world where nuclear war was always possible.³⁰
Next, Kennedy outlined the American response. He explained the blockade and how it would be implemented. He also described the military buildup and military reinforcement of Gitmo. Kennedy stated that a missile launch from Cuba would bring about an American retaliation. He then announced that the United States would be seeking the support of both the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS). He pleaded with Khrushchev “to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations.” Kennedy warned the American public about the treacherous road ahead, and then he concluded by calling for freedom and peace.31 The entire world was now aware that the United States and the Soviet Union were coming alarmingly close to nuclear war.

The next day, October 23, 1692, newspapers across Montana reported on Kennedy’s speech. Montanans immediately began to rally around the president. Residents in Billings were some of the many Montanans who proclaimed their support for Kennedy and his actions. One woman stated, “It’s kinda scarey (sic). We’re doing the right thing. There’s no sense shying away from it.”32 Fear blossomed in the hearts of many Montanans after they learned of Kennedy’s announcement of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This fear would light a burning drive within many Montanans for an increase in civil defense and shelter building, a drive that would lead to almost a decade of intense civil defense planning.
CHAPTER 1 NOTES


4 Brands, The United States in the World, 259; White, Missiles In Cuba, 30; and Max Frankel, High Noon in the Cold War: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Presidio Press, 2004), 13.


7 Stern, The Week The World Stood Still, 18-19; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 21-22.

8 White, Missiles in Cuba, 46-7.

9 Frankel, High Noon in the Cold War, 39-41; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 59.


12 Ibid., 114-15; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 93.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 79.


18 Stern, The Week The World Stood Still, 43.

19 Ibid., 55-56; and May and Zelikow, eds., The Kennedy Tapes, 138.


21 Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 123.

22 Frankel, Hign Noon in the Cold War, 102-03; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 124-28.


25 May & Zelikow, eds., The Kennedy Tapes, 189-203; and Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 132-36.

26 Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 137-40; and Frankel, Hign Noon in the Cold War, 108-10.

27 Stern, Averting the ‘Final Failure,’ 140-44; and Stern, The Week The World Stood Still, 79.


31 “Radio-TV Address of the President to the Nation from the White House, October 22, 1962,” in *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, eds. Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, 159.

CHAPTER 2

POPULAR FRENZY: THE ESCALATION OF FALLOUT SHELTER BUILDING IN MONTANA

In the decade prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, fallout shelter building escalated. The advent of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, combined with the newly acquired fear of a nuclear holocaust, frightened the American public. Many searched for a way to escape the potential Armageddon, and they thought a shelter provided that safe haven. Although the Cuban Missile Crisis reheated the frenzied shelter construction in the nation and in Montana, people began preparation for nuclear war long before the crisis and would continue for several years after it.

Montana’s Office of Civil Defense began asking the national government for assistance as early as 1955. Hugh K. Potter, Montana’s Director of Civil Defense in 1955, wrote United States Senator Lee Metcalf to request aid for Montana. He explained to Metcalf that Montana was not prepared for an emergency and would not fare well if such an emergency came. He also expressed some of the fears held by many Montanans when he stated, “In a State of our population we do not seem important in the National picture should [an]
attack come, but a strike at Great Falls would be just as horrible to our people as would a strike be to the residents of a more thickly populated state.”

Potter continued to write Metcalf letters for aid in civil defense. In March 1957, Potter asked Metcalf to support bills that would give more financial aid to Montana. One of the bills was the Holifield bill, named after its creator, Chet Holifield, a Democrat from California. The bill called for the creation of several committees, including a Military Liaison committee, a Scientific Advisory Board, and a Civil Defense Advisory Council. It also suggested a national plan for a civil defense. Potter supported it due to the fact that he believed it would aid Montana’s civil defense.

Senator Lee Metcalf tried to keep Montanans informed about civil defense matters. In one radio address on June 14, 1957, Metcalf explained to Montanans about nuclear fallout. He described the effects of radiation on the human body, even through indirect exposure to atomic fallout. Metcalf stated, “There is NO way to get rid of this internal radiation - which may cause bone cancer, or leukemia, or it may make drastic changes in the reproductive cells, changes which won’t appear for a generation or two.” In another radio address on January 24, 1958, Metcalf described a $550 million bill of which Montana would receive over $38 million, the second highest amount given to any state in the bill. The majority of the money was designated for Malmstrom Air Force Base (AFB) and Glasgow AFB, to help build up the defense of the two areas. Metcalf did
not attempt to cushion his words when he informed Montanans on this serious topic.

Montanans sent many letters regarding civil defense to United States Representative Arnold Olsen. Superintendent J.H. Eslick of Bigfork wrote Olsen asking for instruction regarding the construction of a fallout shelter in a new school in Bigfork. Olsen received a similar letter from the superintendent of Belgrade schools, A.L. Comer. Both superintendents were not sure how to interpret the new Civil Defense Program put out by Congress, which stated, “The Federal Government will join with states and communities . . . to help create fallout shelter[s].” The men were uncertain if the legislation applied in their situations.\(^5\) The language of such documents was often vague and difficult to discern when the documents could be applied. Both Olsen and Metcalf were asked by many Montana constituents to explain legislation and find out if it was applicable to each person’s respective situation.

Both Senator Metcalf and Representative Olsen received numerous letters from Montanans, especially Butte citizens, petitioning then to have the Regional Office of Civil Defense established in Butte. The Young Democratic Club presented Olsen with four reasons why the new office should be created in Butte. They included: Butte had a stellar civil defense program already in place; the town’s miles of tunnels would be excellent for storage and shelters; it had a very efficient transportation system; and the town’s people were in dire need of the economic boost that would come from the establishment of the office there. Mr.-24-
Carroll College in Helena, Montana, also tried to prepare its students and its campus for a nuclear attack. The St. Charles Building was designated as a fallout shelter for the campus. According to Father William Greytak, who started teaching history at Carroll in the 1950s, "what typically happened was . . . [that] we found big buildings and we designated them in the event of a problem." Carroll did not hold drills to practice evacuation of the campus into the shelters. It also had little or no supplies stocked up in case of an attack prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Carroll had some civil defense plans, but they were far from extensive.10

Many spots in Helena were also designated as fallout shelters. Some of these spots included Helena High School, the Civic Center, and Helena Junior High School. Not all of the shelters followed the same design. A typical set-up included walls covered with bunk-style beds, but instead of two levels of beds, there were at least three to four beds on top of one another on the wall. The walls were often made with concrete blocks. The food and water supply was kept in a different area, away from the sleeping quarters. The water was stored in large, metal, Teflon-lined barrels that could later be used as waste receptacles (See Figure 2). Water was also stored in small metal cans similar to the cans used to store food (See Figure 3). There were special chimneys that allowed the air in the shelter to escape and fresh air to be filtered in, but did not let radiation seep in with the outside air.11
Figure 2 – Teflon-lined barrel used to hold water safely for shelters in case of a nuclear attack. The barrel gave instructions on how to fill, dispense, and use as a commode. Photograph of Teflon Barrel from private collection, taken by author.
Figure 3 - Can used to safely store water in case of a nuclear attack. Photograph of U.S. Aqua Can from private collection, taken by author.
Individual Montanans also had their own plans for civil defense. Philip Pallister, M.D., built a fallout shelter in his house in the 1950s, after the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union began to escalate. His shelter included its own sewer system, water and food supply, air system, radiation detector, and solid eight-inch concrete walls encased with one inch of lead.\textsuperscript{12}

In his shelter, Dr. Pallister had a freezer to keep a stockpile of meats and tanks of water. He also had a fifteen thousand-watt generator to run the shelter. Dr. Pallister began learning about radiation and its effects on certain types of plants and animals. Goats, for example, were one of the best animals for surviving and recovering from a nuclear attack. He also studied how to remove radiation from the soil, so crops planted would grow to feed the survivors of a nuclear holocaust.\textsuperscript{13}

Although some Montanans chose to fortify their homes and implement their own civil defense plans in the same manner as Dr. Pallister, many practiced much simpler civil defense. Mary Lamb, a senior at Helena High School during the crisis, stated that her family, which lived up in the mountains around Helena, had planned on evacuating to one of the caves near her home. Mary recalled that she had friends whose parents were building bomb shelters and that several shelters were being built within the Helena city limits at the time. Her main concern was not being able to find shelter if she was in the city when a nuclear bomb hit.\textsuperscript{14}
When she was younger, Mary participated in drills designed to prepare the students for a nuclear attack. She attended a one-room country school, which had a wall made entirely of windows. The students practiced moving all of the desks against the wall opposite the windows and crawling behind them so that they would be shielded from flying shards of glass if a bomb went off and shattered the wall of windows.15

Barb Stroup, who lived at Malmstrom AFB with her husband, Tech Sergeant Joseph Stroup and their eight-year old daughter Lynn, stocked up her basement with bedding and food in case it needed to be used as a shelter. According to her husband, Joe, Malmstrom had no shelters to offer its servicemen and their families, so each family had to prepare on its own. On the other hand, Tom and Kathy Miller of Darby, Montana, had no shelter to flee to in the case of an emergency. They made no attempt to stock up on food and supplies, if the crisis turned nuclear.16

Lori Balcerzak, a junior in high school during the crisis, remembers that her town of Clancy had distributed maps to various places in the area that were to serve as fallout shelters. Her family’s destination was the Alhambra mine outside of Clancy. Other than knowing where their shelter was, Lori’s family did not practice any other form of civil defense. One question that plagued Lori and other Montanans during the midst of the civil defense frenzy of the 1950s and 1960s was what good would the fallout shelters do if there was nothing left of the world after a nuclear bomb hit? And would it be a life worth saving?17
Other Montanans had thoughts similar to those of Lori. One couple from Missoula, the Minnerlys, wrote Senator Metcalf in December 1961, asking him not to support an upcoming appropriations bill for civil defense and fallout shelters. They argued, “This is just a Maginot Line." Such construction would give us a false sense of security and an arrogant cocky attitude that we must avoid.”¹⁸ Constance Fischer of Missoula concurred with the Minnerlys and their feelings about civil defense. She stated, “I deeply believe that fallout shelter building serves to condition people to expect war and to feel an unwarranted security, an unreliable optimism about the results of thermonuclear war.”¹⁹ As Montanans grappled with their feelings, the shelter building continued across the state.

Montanans were not the only citizens who braced themselves for possible nuclear war. Shelter building escalated when the Cold War heated up in the 1950s. Many people put thousands of dollars into constructing shelters. Those who could afford it had veritable mansions underneath the earth’s surface. Homes such as the one Christopher Walken’s character, Calvin Webber, built in the film Blast from the Past were not as far from reality as one might think. Webber’s shelter mirrored his home on the surface and was complete with a dining room, kitchen, living room, bedrooms, fishery, grocery store, and garden. Not all shelters may have been as fancy, but there is little doubt that some were.

* The Maginot Line was a defense system built by France in the 1930s to keep out its enemies. It was very extravagant, but it failed to protect the French from the German invasion in World War II.

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Webber also employed an extensive lock system to keep others out that was a necessity in the real world as well. In Florida, after the owner of a shelter denied his neighbor access to the shelter, the neighbor replied, "... I think you’d rather be in there with me than on the outside looking in."\textsuperscript{20} 

The federal government also had contingency plans for a nuclear attack. If an emergency were to arise, President Kennedy and his advisors would be taken to a 434-acre super bunker at Mount Weather outside of Washington, D. C. The bunker included: "... twenty office buildings, a hospital, dining and recreation areas, sleeping quarters, reservoirs of drinking and cooling water, an emergency power plant, a radio and television studio hooked up to the Emergency Bunker System, ... a crematorium ... [and] the bunker was stocked with sedatives and included a padded isolation cell."\textsuperscript{21} 

In the movie \textit{Thirteen Days}, the government issued identification cards to the family members of high-ranking government officials, so they could get picked up by helicopters and taken to Mount Weather if the Cuban Missile Crisis turned nuclear. Unfortunately, the truth was very different. As Robert Kennedy’s character explained to Kevin Costner’s character, Kenneth O’Donnell, the identity cards were “for morale. Missiles only take five minutes to get here” [Washington, D. C.].\textsuperscript{22} It is likely the same situation was true for the actual Kennedy and his advisors during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Although Montanans had prepared some civil defense plans prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, intense preparations did not occur until after danger had
Figure 4 - This ad placed in the Independent Record of Helena illustrated how the Cuban Missile Crisis affected Montana. Reprinted from the Helena Independent Record, October 25, 1962, sec.1, 5.
County, the *Miles City Star* reported that the county could accommodate 9,720 people when the shelters were stocked in the near future. A newspaper article in the *Montana Standard* stated that for all of Montana, only 328 buildings had been selected for use as fallout shelters and these shelters could hold 100,000 people, less than one-sixth of Montana’s total population.²⁵

Less than half of Montana’s counties had made decent civil defense preparations. On October 25, 1962, Governor Tim Babcock ordered Montana’s National Guard to go and help these counties step up their civil defense work. The day before, Montana’s air bases were placed on alert, which included sending jet fighter planes from Malmstrom AFB in Great Falls to the airport in Billings. Other airports and reserve bases, such as the base in Missoula, readied themselves as well, even though they had not yet been put on alert.²⁶ At Malmstrom AFB, servicemen were ordered to place the Minuteman Missiles on alert. Kennedy’s “ace in the hole was ready to go.”²⁷

Individual cities began to implement civil defense plans and preparations after the onset of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In Great Falls, the local government instructed schools about what to do in case of a nuclear attack. Children who lived over ten minutes away from their school were supposed to stay in the structure, whereas children who lived under ten minutes away were instructed to evacuate to their homes. The local government in Billings issued “survival pamphlets” that instructed people on how to store and ration supplies and warned them on the dangers of nuclear fallout.²⁸
CHAPTER 2 NOTES


6 "Letter to Congressmen Olsen from Daniel W. Harrington," August 30, 1961, Folder 7, Box 3, Arnold Olsen Papers; and "Letter to Senator Metcalf from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ryan," August 24, 1961, Folder 8, Box 105, Lee Metcalf Papers.


8 Ibid.


10 Ibid.

11 Mary Lamb, interview by author, November 1, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording; Telfon-lined barrel, and Aqua Vista Can.

12 Dr. Philip Pallister, interview by author, October 30, 2005, Boulder, MT, tape recording.
13 Ibid.

14 Mary Lamb.

15 Ibid.

16 Barb Stroup, interview by author, September 18, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording; Joseph Stroup, interview by author, September 18, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording; and Tom Miller and Kathy Miller, interview by author, October 24, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording.

17 Lori Balcerzak, interview by author, November 1, 2005, Helena, MT, tape recording.


21 George, Awaiting Armageddon, 45.

22 Thirteen Days, prod. and dir. Roger Donaldson, 147 min., New Line Cinema, 2000, DVD.

23 “Helena Hardware Co.,” Helena Independent Record, October 25, 1962, sec. 1, 5; and “Helena Hardware Co.,” Helena Independent Record, October 26, 1962, 3.

24 “Super Save,” Missoulian, November 1, 1962, 19; and “Cuban Crisis Boosts Buying,” Billings Gazette, October 26, 1962, 8.

25 “‘Stand-by Alert’ Basis Designated for Montana,” Kalispell Daily Inter Lake, October 25, 1962, 1; “Fallout Buildings Selected in County For Emergency Use,” Miles City Star, October 25, 1962, 10; “Butte Fulfilling Its Role In Civil Defense,” Montana Standard and Butte Post, October 25, 1962, 1; and “Population of Counties in Montana, 1890 to 2000,” Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce and the United States Census -40-

27 Montana was the site for the first Minuteman missile field. The first missile was delivered to Malmstrom in July 1962. Although the missiles would not be officially completed until December 1962, the first missile was “placed on alert on October 26, 1962.” Molly Holz, “The Minuteman Missiles in Montana” (M.A. Thesis, Montana State University, 2003) 6, 15; and Joseph Stroup.


CHAPTER 3

CONFLICTING VIEWS: MONTANA’S DIVERSE REACTIONS TO THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

"Has the Cuban situation made you jittery?" asked Tracy’s Lounge in Helena, Montana. The business told people they could escape and “Forget it all at Tracy’s Lounge."¹ (See Figure 6) The Cuban Missile Crisis produced many different reactions in people and in government officials. For some the crisis created immense fear, whereas in others it wrought no reaction. Some people fully supported the president in his reaction and implementation of the quarantine, whereas other people believed that Kennedy had not responded forcefully enough and that he should have acted more aggressively. The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest the world ever came to all-out nuclear war and Montanans responded accordingly.

On Tuesday, October 23, 1962, newspapers across Montana were emblazoned with headlines about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Montana politicians at the national, state, and local levels all began proclaiming their support for Kennedy and his decisions regarding the crisis. One Billings Gazette headline
Figure 6 - This advertisement emphasized how much the Cuban Missile Crisis affected the lives of Montanans. Reprinted from the *Helena Independent Record*, October 26, 1962, 7.
stated: “Battin Says ‘Bravo’ On Kennedy Action.” The article recounted United States Representative James Battin’s comments after hearing Kennedy’s Monday announcement about the quarantine. Battin exclaimed, “I think it is incumbent upon all people regardless of their party to support the President in his determination and that of the country to eliminate the threat to peace and to our very homes from the Russian-dominated government in Cuba.”

Another headline from the Missoulian announced: “Montana Supports Kennedy’s Action.” In this article, Governor Tim Babcock proclaimed his support for President Kennedy and the quarantine. Arnold Olsen praised Kennedy in the article when he stated, “I am greatly impressed with his [Kennedy’s] patience and [even] more impressed by his resoluteness to halt communism.”

Since it was only a few weeks until the 1962 elections, many politicians, who were either up for reelection or contesting a new seat, incorporated the Cuban Missile Crisis into their campaigns almost immediately. In Helena, the Independent Record sported two headlines that stated: “Montgomery Tells GOP Rally Here He Will Support Kennedy’s Stand,” and “Governor, Four Congressional Hopefuls, Back Kennedy.” Wayne Montgomery, the Republican who was challenging the incumbent Arnold Olsen, promised he would support

* James Battin was one of the two United States Representatives from Montana, the other being Arnold Olsen. The two United States Senators from Montana were Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf.
Kennedy’s policies regarding Cuba, even if that meant more aggressive action. Montgomery stated, “If the President will lead the way against tyranny that threatens to engulf us, I will back him.”

Leo Graybill, Jr., the Democrat who was running against the incumbent Jim Battin, also praised Kennedy and the quarantine. Graybill said he appreciated the manner in which Kennedy handled the crisis, as it would hopefully allow the two super powers to avoid war, or even worse, nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis clearly played a significant role for politicians in their 1962 campaigns.

Unfortunately, with campaigning came mudslinging. Mel Engles, chairman of the Montana Republican Party, accused Democrat Lee Metcalf of having “his wires crossed,” because two days prior to the presidential address, Metcalf had proclaimed that Castro did not represent a threat. Engles stated, “Either he [Metcalf] does not enjoy the confidence of the President and Montana’s senior senator [Mike Mansfield], the majority leader, or he does not recognize a serious national threat when he sees one. In either case, Montana . . . could be far better represented.”

Not all politicians used mudslinging to display their support for Kennedy’s action during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Jim Battin ran advertisements in Montana newspapers for his reelection to Congress. One advertisement asserted, “He [Battin] supports the president on . . . not giving into the Russians.”
Arnold Olsen also utilized the crisis to promote his reelection on November 6, 1962. He ran several advertisements in Montana newspapers tied to the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. One such advertisement stated: “Olsen has worked to protect . . . a free economy – A workable system in America without the evils of the totalitarian economics of other countries. . . .” Another Olsen ad promoted Olsen’s stance for “National Defense and Satellite Programs.” 8 (See Figure 7)

Politicians also strived to keep the public informed on the most up-to-date news coming from the nation’s capitol. Originally, Senator Mike Mansfield, who was a ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was away from Montana and Washington, D. C., when he learned about the missiles in Cuba. Mansfield’s Florida vacation was cut short when Kennedy had him flown back for an emergency briefing. In a speech given the same day as Kennedy’s presidential address, Mansfield revealed that Kennedy had informed him and other members of Congress on the situation.9 Mansfield, who supported the president’s decision to blockade Cuba rather than invade the island, conveyed to the public after Kennedy’s presidential address that “he [Kennedy] alone had to make the decision [about the Cuban Missile Crisis] in the light of all the facts available.” Mansfield also reiterated that “We can do nothing else now that the decision has been reached but give our full support to the President of the United States who under our Constitution is charged with the awesome responsibility which is his.” 10
Olsen says, "It is the irony of our times that the preservation of peace is dependent on a preparation for war."

To deter war and to make certain no aggressor is ever tempted again, Olsen has supported strengthening the military might emphasizing missile, air and submarine striking power as never before in the history of the U.S.

He has urged the President to stand firm against the Communist brutes everywhere.

Olsen believes it is essential to our national defense that we dominate the heavens with our satellites. We cannot afford to let the Communists control space.

Congressman Olsen has given un-wavering support to legislation for space satellites. Our foothold in space was made possible with this legislation. Keep Congressman Olsen serving you and America.

Figure 7 - This advertisement displayed how politicians used the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis in their campaigns during the 1962 elections. Reprinted from the Missoulian, October 30, 1962, 9.
Mansfield addressed the Cuban Missile Crisis in several other speeches in the week after the presidential television announcement. In one statement, Mansfield stated that Kennedy was willing to make a more aggressive move against Cuba, even if he did not have the support of America’s key allies in the current situation in Cuba (the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). A move against Cuba, however, would only occur under the most dire circumstances.\footnote{11}

In another statement, Mansfield addressed the fact that Cuba was going to play a large role in the upcoming Congressional elections. Mansfield argued that Cuba should not be made an issue in them. He stated that every person, no matter what their party affiliation, had “a vital stake in the outcome of [the Cuban] situation, a life or death stake.” Due to the grave nature of the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was no “legitimate place for politics in it.” According to Mansfield, this was the hour of the United States to rally behind the president, as the situation was “deadly earnest” and “[w]e have an obligation, as Americans, to face up to it.”\footnote{12}

The day after the presidential address, October 24, 1962, the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake conducted a phone interview with Mansfield, in which he told the newspaper that he had seen the actual photographs of the missiles sites in Cuba. On October 27, Mansfield visited Billings, where he once again asserted his support for the president and stated, “By seizing the initiative, he [Kennedy] has made it necessary for Khrushchev to decide [w]hat the future course of world
history will be." In his speech, Mansfield maintained his unwavering support for Kennedy and his decisions about the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Throughout the crisis, newspapers across Montana kept Montanans informed on Mansfield’s statements and involvement on the national level in the Cuban Missile Crisis. One headline announced: “Mansfield hints at K, JFK meet,” where Mansfield stated Kennedy would not be against a meeting between himself and Premier Khrushchev. Other headlines included: “Senator Mansfield Says U. S. Hasn’t Let Down Guard,” “Mike on Crisis: Nikita Put on Hot Spot,” and “Mansfield Lashes Out at Those Saying Quarantine Is Political.”

Throughout the articles, several themes continually showed themselves: Cuba should not be used politically and Mansfield totally supported the president and his actions regarding Cuba.

Mansfield was not the only member of the Montana delegation who worked to keep Montanans informed as the crisis progressed. Senator Lee Metcalf attempted to assuage fears that the people might have about the missiles in Cuba. On October 26, he stated that he thought the Cuban crisis would be over soon, because the Soviets would fold to the Americans. In another article, Metcalf continued to try to comfort people, when he repeated that the Soviets would back down, as “Khrushchev [was] fully aware of American military strength.”

Representative James Battin also worked to inform Montanans on the crisis. When asked by the Red Lodge Chamber of Commerce on his position on
the crisis, Battin responded that he supported the blockade, but would support other options as well. Battin urged Montanans to be wary of the situation in Cuba, as he stated, “The U. S. has every reason to believe there are nuclear warheads in Cuba at th[e] time.” He also warned Montanans that Cuba already had intermediate range ballistic missiles that could reach places twenty-three hundred miles from Cuba, including Montana.16 At a rally in Billings, Battin asserted that he supported Kennedy’s action, he just thought that the federal government should have acted on the Cuban threat months earlier. He reasserted these sentiments to a crowd in Glasgow a few days later and he added that a “tough policy toward Russia” was essential in the handling of the crisis.17

Like Battin and the other members of the Montana Delegation, Representative Arnold Olsen strived to keep Montanans updated on the Cuban Missile Crisis. In Butte, Olsen informed the city’s inhabitants that he supported the quarantine of Cuba. Later in the week in Missoula, Olsen reiterated his support of Kennedy, but he also added that he “favor[ed] an all-out assault on Cuba.”18 Olsen did not receive as much press time as other national politicians, but he did try to inform Montanans on the day-to-day developments during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Local Montana politicians also got involved in the action. Governor Tim Babcock attended a meeting about the Cuban Missile Crisis in San Francisco, where he and others were briefed regarding the state of affairs in Cuba. At Babcock’s forty-third birthday party, he expressed his support for Kennedy and
his stance in Cuba.19 Regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis, there appeared to be a general consensus among Montana politicians.

Although Montanans appreciated the news their Montana and national government officials were giving them, it did not mean that Montanans waited placidly for information to come to them. Many people wrote their Senators both asking for information and giving it. They also wrote to commend and sometimes to condemn the actions of the nation. No matter the reason, Montanans did not hesitate to write their officials, during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Senator Lee Metcalf received several letters during and immediately after the crisis. The National Congress of American Indians stated that "In this hour of grave decision and action we stand united behind you."20 Other letters were not as supportive. Mr. and Mrs. John Ricks of Lima asked Metcalf why the United States had not dealt with Fidel Castro more forcefully before the crisis, therefore preventing the entire situation. They also questioned Kennedy’s actions in the crisis: "There was a time in our history that the U. S. government protected its citizens from murder, pillage, and kidnapping from men such as Castro. Why isn’t this the present policy of our government?"21

Senator Mike Mansfield also received a plethora of different letters from his Montana constituents. As a ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mansfield got more mail during the Cuban Missile Crisis than his other Montana counterparts. Mr. and Mrs. James Eakland of Fortine praised
Kennedy’s action and asked Mansfield to not allow a retreat from this policy. Leonard Bashor, the State Representative of Toole County from Kevin, Montana, concurred with the Eaklands in his telegram to Mansfield, where he “[u]rge[d] no retreat on present position” in Cuba. The American Legion of Harlowtown also expressed their full support in a telegram to Mansfield on October 27, 1962.22 During the crisis, Mansfield received numerous letters from Montanans informing him of their support of the government and its actions regarding Cuba.

Not all of the letters mailed to Mansfield were entirely supportive of Kennedy’s policy during and before the Cuban Missile Crisis. Martha and Frank Palssy of Rollins, Montana, expressed a mixture of feelings regarding the crisis. They asked Mansfield to “not let the president back down [as] he is doing a fine job for the first time . . . make him keep it up.”23 Mrs. Mervin Karr, on the other hand, was entirely negative about the United States Policy in Cuba. She expressed her frustration in her letter stating, “How long is our country [going] to be humiliated by two-bit pip squeaks like Castro? Castro, a communist, has robbed, tortured, imprisoned, and killed American citizens who should have been protected by their government and weren’t.”24

Other Montanans warned Mansfield and relayed their unhappiness with American policy in Cuba as well. Ben Middleton of Anaconda wrote Mansfield a letter in which he stated his concerns with the Soviet offer to take the nuclear missiles out of Cuba. He told Mansfield that he had a nagging feeling that
Khrushchev planned on replacing the missiles with nuclear submarines to prowl the Caribbean Sea. John Sheehy of Big Sandy begged Mansfield to not allow Kennedy to “trust the U. N.” He also warned Mansfield, “We won World War Two only to replace Germany and Japan with Russia.” He then called for the liberation of Cuba from the clutches of Castro and the Soviet Union.25

Many Montanans offered their advice to Mansfield to give President Kennedy regarding the handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Montanan Council of Churches pleaded with the president to accept the plan that U Thant presented at the UN. They also pledged their prayers to the president.26 Mansfield received numerous telegrams from Montanans who concurred with the Montana Council of Churches. Roy Anderson of Great Falls told Mansfield to “use the UN to its fullest extent in the Cuban emergency.”27 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Romanowski of Bozeman also urged Mansfield to agree to the UN proposal. They went a step further and stated, “We feel this present [sic] crisis significantly points to the urgent matter of world disarmament.”28

Reverend John Pfleiderer of Stevensville strongly requested Mansfield to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis, by a combination of “non military action” and acceptance of the UN proposal to supervise the Soviet removal of the missiles in Cuba. Harold Woodhouse of Power, Montana, also pushed for a “non violent resolution of the Cuban crises.”29 Montanans were very vocal with their opinions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Not all Montanans voiced their feelings to Montana politicians, but their range of emotions mirrored the letters and telegrams of their fellow citizens. Lori Balcerzak, then a junior in high school from Clancy, Montana, remembered being “scared that we were in trouble” and was afraid the confrontation might lead to nuclear war.\(^{30}\) On the other hand, Dr. Phillip Pallister of Boulder was not as concerned. According to him, the Soviet Union already had Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles that could reach the United States, so the missiles in Cuba “were no big deal as something new.” This is not to say that Dr. Pallister was not at all worried. He had simply accepted years before that a Soviet nuclear attack on America was possible; the missiles in Cuba were “just closer.”\(^{31}\)

Father William Greytak, who was teaching history at Carroll College in Helena at the time, recalled that the atmosphere was “tense, but no one really appreciated how serious the situation was.” Father Greytak remembered that he was relieved after the crisis was resolved and that he felt that “Kennedy and Khrushchev were to be commended for their statesmanship” during the crisis, as their “diplomatic negotiating [had] worked.”\(^{32}\)

Guido Bugni, a student at Carroll in the 1950s and a professor of the college after the crisis in the mid-1960s, stated that he was aware of the crisis, but was not following the day-to-day events of the crisis, as he was busy working on his Master’s degree. Looking back on the crisis, Bugni totally agreed with the stance taken by Kennedy regarding Cuba. He commented, “We were pretty lucky that we got out of it [without going to war].”\(^{33}\)
Joe Stroup, who was a Tech Sergeant stationed at Malmstrom AFB during the crisis, recalled that he was not scared while the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded. He was “confident that when we [he and his fellow servicemen] got the Minuteman missiles on alert, everything would be ok.” His wife, Barb, remembered feeling “nervous” and after the crisis was over she was relieved and she hoped that it would stay resolved. The most frightening moment for her was when she interrupted the missile convoy and had several guns pointed at her head. She stated that when that happened she almost “peed a puddle.”

Tom and Kathy Miller, who were teachers from Darby at the time the crisis erupted, were not at all worried about the missiles in Cuba. Tom stated that the people of Darby were “more concerned with the [upcoming] basketball game and the football team, they could [not] care less about the Cuban Missile Crisis.” After the crisis cooled down, Tom remembered that he was content with the path the United States had taken and he thought the quarantine was the most sensible choice. His wife, Kathy, was not content with the blockade, however. She wished that Kennedy had taken much more aggressive action and invaded Cuba.

Sunny Ray Mandeville, a sophomore at Helena High School during the crisis, expressed exactly the opposite sentiment. Unlike the nonchalant attitude of the Millers, Sunny Ray was terrified about the Cuban Missile Crisis. She stated that although the crisis was “magnified” by the loss of her father a year and a half earlier, it “sounded almost like a declaration of war,” which was “very
scary” for her. Sunny Ray was very relieved when the crisis was over and was grateful it had not escalated into nuclear war.36

Mary Lamb, a senior at Helena High School during the crisis, was also very frightened when the world was made aware of the crisis. She stated that at the time she did not think the blockade was a strong enough reaction. She thought that the United States “needed to bomb Cuba, [to] get them before they got us.” After the crisis had resolved, she regretted her earlier thinking and totally agreed with the actions taken by the Kennedy administration during the Cuban Missile Crisis.37 Other Montanans fell within this spectrum of being extremely frightened to barely registering the crisis as a cause for concern.

Many newspapers ran articles about Montanans and their reaction to the crisis. In its regular column, “Minute Interviews on Main,” the Lewistown Daily News asked people what their reaction was to President Kennedy’s decision to quarantine Cuba. All eight answers were the same. The interviewees all supported Kennedy’s action. Also, four of the men added they only wished Kennedy had done it earlier.38 Local groups such as the 40 and 8 of Bozeman also announced their support for Kennedy and his decision. Citizens in Billings rallied around the president. One stated, however, “It’s a calculated risk. . . . If we don’t stick with our statements, we’re sunk completely.”39 Although many Montanans may have wanted a response sooner than it came, they still supported Kennedy’s actions.
The Sunday after the Cuban Missile Crisis had been made public was an emotional day for many. Montanans went into Sunday, October 28, 1962, unsure of what the day might bring. Newspapers ran several ads on Sunday that urged people to go to church. Even before Sunday, the *Lewistown Daily News* reported on the increase in prayer services and church events in the town because of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Not all places felt the pull to go to church, however. Father Greytak recalled that although people at Carroll College were concerned, there was no rush to attend religious services.\(^40\) Still many people felt the pull to go to church when they saw church advertisements in the newspapers.

Many church ads did not directly mention the Cuban situation, but the serious undertones of the ads alluded to the missile crisis. One ad depicted a woman with her head in her hands, praying “Lord, help me.” Another ad in the *Billings Gazette* even included an illustration of a nuclear mushroom cloud and asked, “Can civilization survive the Cuban Missile Crisis?” (See Figure 8) The large number of religious advertisements added to the fear felt by many Montanans, causing people to rush to church to pray for the survival of humanity.\(^41\)
Figure 8 - This ad illustrated the fears held by many Americans during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Reprinted from the Billings Gazette, October 28, 1962, 30.
Montanans all over the state experienced a wide range of emotions during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The variety of reactions to the crisis was likely mirrored throughout the nation, as each day in the crisis triggered a new ripple of feelings in the American public. Montana’s reaction to the Cuban Missile Crisis had its own local flavor, but it very much represented the United States as a whole. The emotions of the nation and Montana reached a fever pitch as the crisis unfolded in that fateful week in October 1962. People watched and waited as Kennedy and Khrushchev danced precariously around nuclear war. The conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis in late October 1962 would bring enormous relief to the world, but the public would have to remain in suspense until the two superpowers diffused the situation.
CHAPTER 3 NOTES


7 “27 Good Reasons To Vote For ‘Big Jim’ Battin,” *Miles City Star*, November 4, 1962, 16.


10 Ibid.

11 “Statement by Mike Mansfield to Senator Hickey,” Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers, Collection 65, K. Ross Toole Archives, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT (Heretofore known only as Mike Mansfield Papers).

12 “Campaign, 1962,” Box 41, Mike Mansfield Papers.


21 “Letter to Lee Metcalf from Mr. and Mrs. John R. Ricks,” November 14, 1962, Folder 1, Box 119, Lee Metcalf Papers.

22 “Letter to Senator Mansfield from Mr. and Mrs. Eakland,” October 23, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers; “Letter to Lee Metcalf from Mr. and Mrs. John R. Ricks,” November 14, 1962, Folder 1, Box 119, Lee Metcalf Papers.

23 “Telegram to Mike Mansfield from Martha and Frank Palssy,” October 28, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

24 “Letter to Senator Mansfield from Mrs. Melvin Karr,” November 6, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

25 “Letter to Senator Mike Mansfield from Ben B. Middleton,” October 31, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers; and “Letter to Senator Mike
Mansfield from John M. Sheehy,” October 30, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

26 “Letter to President John F. Kennedy from Philip M. Widenhouse,” October 27, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

27 “Telegram to Mike Mansfield from Roy L. Anderson,” October 25, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

28 “Telegram to Senator Mike Mansfield from Mr. and Mrs. Robert D. Romanowski,” October 25, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

29 “Telegram to Senator Mike Mansfield from Reverend John Pfleiderer,” October 25, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers; and “Telegram to Sen. Mike Mansfield from Harold Woodhouse,” October 25, 1962, Folder 1, Box 37, Mike Mansfield Papers.

30 Lori Balcerzak.

31 Dr. Philip Pallister.

32 Father William Greytak.


34 Joseph Stroup; Barb Stroup, September 18, 2005; and Barb Stroup, October 23, 2005.

35 Tom Miller and Kathy Miller.


37 Mary Lamb.


39 The 40 and 8, formally known as La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux, which translates as the Society of Forty Men and Eight Horses, was a fraternal organization of American Legionnaires created in 1920 to honor United States veterans who fought in France in World War I. Bill Beaumont, “La Societe des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux,” http://www.fortyandeight.
org/(accessed December 5, 2005); “40 and 8 Approves Action of Kennedy,”
Bozeman Chronicle, October 24, 1962, 3; and “Billings Residents Back JFK In Naval
Blockade of Cuba,” Billings Gazette, October 23, 1962, 10.

40 “Cuban Crisis Moves Churches to Prayer,” Lewistown Daily News,
October 24, 1962, 4; and Father William Greytak.

41 “All One Gives to God,” Helena Independent Record, October 28, 1962, 2;
and “Billings Seventh-Day Adventist Church,” Billings Gazette, October 28, 1962,
30.
CHAPTER 4

ON THE BRINK: KENNEDY, KHRUSHCHEV, AND THE NUCLEAR TANGO

While Montanans braced for possible nuclear war, Kennedy and his advisors gathered to see if the Soviet Union would challenge the blockade set to begin October 24, 1962. They were unsure as to how the Soviets and Cubans would react to Kennedy’s Monday evening presidential address. On Wednesday, October 24, Kennedy and his advisors anxiously awaited news from the quarantine. The group restlessly watched as the clock approached 10:00 am.

Kennedy and his advisors knew that several Soviet vessels were in proximity of the Q-line,* and they were due to cross the line at any moment. Just then, John McCone, the director of the CIA, informed the president “that all 6 Soviet ships identified in Cuban waters . . . have either stopped or reversed course.”¹ Soon after, Secretary of State Dean Rush exclaimed, “We are eyeball to eyeball and I think the other fellow just blinked.”² Although these words captured the sense of relief that emanated throughout the Cabinet room, the fact remained that the United States, which had moved to DEFCON 2 at the same

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* Another name for the blockade or quarantine of Cuba.
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time the quarantine became active, was still at the brink, staring at the abyss of possible nuclear war. (See Figure 9)

The rest of the day, Kennedy and his advisors waited for any other news from the Q-line. No Soviet ships threatened to break the blockade, but Kennedy refused to allow a false sense of relief and security. As Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara told the president, "We can’t say exactly [how many Soviet ships were on their way to intercept the quarantine]. There’s a tremendous expanse of ocean that we are endeavoring . . . to watch – roughly from the Azores to Bermuda."3 Kennedy and his advisors spent the rest of Wednesday preparing contingency plans for possible Soviet responses to the blockade of Cuba.

Late Wednesday evening, Kennedy received a message penned by Khrushchev, in which he criticized Kennedy severely for the American quarantine. He claimed that the United States was “trampling upon the generally accepted norm of law” and that America “wish[ed] to intimidate us [the Soviet Union].” He also accused Kennedy of forcing terms on Khrushchev that Kennedy would never accept if the situation was reversed. Khrushchev concluded his letter stating, “. . . [We] shall not be simply observers of piratical actions of American ships on the high seas. We will . . . take the measures which we deem necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights.”4 As the letter threatened a possible violent Soviet response to the blockade, Kennedy and the ExComm immediately responded to the Soviet Premier. Kennedy chastised
Figure 9 - This “High Noon” cartoon represented the feelings of many people during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The comparison of the crisis to an old West gunfight was interesting as in these duels held at “High Noon,” only one party was left standing. Reprinted from the Helena Independent Record, October 29, 1962, 4.
Khrushchev for his negative reaction and asked for a return to calmer tempers and better relations. The Kennedy administration then retired for the evening.

Thursday, October 25, came without event and Kennedy and other ExComm members met to continue plotting the course of the United States for the days to come. They hoped that Khrushchev would accept the plea made by U Thant of the UN that proposed an inspection of the missiles sites by the UN. Kennedy and his advisors also discussed American responses to the possibility of a Soviet ship challenging the Q-line. They also needed to decide whether or not to stop every Soviet ship that approached Cuba. Not every vessel en route to Cuba carried missile-related cargo. One ship, the Bucharest, most likely did not have missile paraphernalia on board, so it would be wise for the Americans to let the ship pass.

Later on Thursday, Kennedy and his ExComm gathered in the Cabinet room to discuss the progress of Soviet ships nearing the blockade. The president learned that the Bucharest had been momentarily stopped at the line, but had not been boarded and had been allowed to pass without incident. McNamara also announced that the Völkerfreundschaft, an East German passenger liner, was drawing closer to the Q-line. The Ex-Comm members bickered back and forth as to whether to make a stand and stop the ship, or let it pass into Cuban waters unmolested. The quarreling continued until President Kennedy dictated that the ship would be allowed to cross the line without interference for two reasons. One, Kennedy wanted to push forward U Thant’s proposal for a decrease in
tensions. Two, according to Kennedy, "If you try to disable it, you’re apt to sink it. There are no guarantees when you try to shoot a rudder off, because you either sink it or have it catch fire." This was something Kennedy definitely did not want, especially with the UN Security Council meeting that was scheduled for that evening.

Adlai Stevenson, the American representative to the UN, was prepared to debate the Soviets on the issue of the missiles in Cuba in the UN meeting on the evening of October 25. When the Soviet representative to the UN, Valerian Zorin, continued to deny the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and accused the United States of bringing the world close to a nuclear catastrophe, Stevenson retaliated by announcing that the American government had proof of weapons in Cuba. He interrogated Zorin as to whether he was denying the existence of missiles in Cuba. Zorin attempted to sidestep the question by claiming he did not have to answer Stevenson, as they were not in an American courtroom. Stevenson pressed forward and blisteringly responded, "You are in the courtroom of world opinion right now and you can answer yes or no." Zorin once again tried to put off his question, but Stevenson refused to allow him. He exclaimed, "I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that is your decision." Stevenson then proceeded with his presentation of the damning photographs of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The evening ended on a high note for the Kennedy administration.
Friday, October 26, followed a similar format to Wednesday and Thursday; Kennedy and his advisors continued to work on contingency plans for Cuba. The ExComm realized that sooner or later the American naval vessels that were enforcing the quarantine would have to stop a Soviet ship, but it was still not positive as to how the Soviets would react. The discussions shifted to various topics, including a UN inspection, UN and OAS support of American initiatives, and the missile sites in Cuba. The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m. without having accomplished much.11

Unlike the day, the evening of October 26 was an exciting one for the Kennedy administration. A letter arrived from Khrushchev that proposed a cessation to the hostilities that had sprung up between the nations. In the letter, Khrushchev promised that if the United States would agree not to invade Cuba, the Soviet Union would stop shipping Castro weapons. The next day, however, Kennedy received a new letter from Khrushchev that stated that he would agree to the removal of the Cuban missiles in exchange for the removal of the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Confused, Kennedy and his advisors tried to reason why Khruschev had hardened his position overnight. They then immediately began to determine how to respond to these messages. Unfortunately, two events occurred before Kennedy could react.12 First, an American U-2 spy plane in Alaska had accidentally drifted out of American airspace and into the Soviet airspace, which the Soviets might have thought was gathering information for a
preemptive strike on the Soviets. Second, and just as alarming, a U-2 had just been shot down over Cuba.

On Saturday, October 27, Cubans under Soviet command fired upon an American U-2 spy plane. The pilot, Major Rudolf Anderson, who was on a reconnaissance mission to learn more about the progress of the missiles, was killed when a missile struck his plane and it crashed. The loss of Major Anderson deeply saddened Kennedy and his advisors, but a deeper issue bubbled beneath the surface. In his memoirs, Robert Kennedy recalled: “There was the knowledge that we had to take military action to protect our pilots. There was the realization that the Soviet Union and Cuba apparently were preparing to do battle. And there was the feeling that the noose was tightening on all of us, on Americans, on mankind, and that the bridges to escape were crumbling.” It appeared that instead of moving closer to peace, the two nations had inexorably moved apart.

The ExComm members met to discuss what action should be taken in response to the killing of Major Anderson. The members had to determine if the Cubans had been acting alone or with Soviet help and if the plane had been shot down because the Cubans thought it a threat (which they in fact did) or if they did so under Soviet, specifically Khrushchev’s, command. No matter what, Kennedy had to tread carefully, as one wrong move could lead to nuclear war. In the end, Kennedy decided to negotiate directly with Khrushchev and the
Soviet Union, leaving Cuba out of negotiations. In fact, the Cubans had not been party to the negotiations since the crisis had first erupted.15

Later Saturday evening, during the midst of the U-2 controversies, Kennedy decided to make a move for peace. Carefully ignoring Khrushchev’s second letter that called for a quid pro quo exchange of the missiles, on October 27, Kennedy accepted the terms of the first letter sent the day before. On October 28, Khrushchev responded to both Kennedy’s letter and to the U-2 problems. The Soviet Premier chastised the president for flying spy planes into both Soviet and Cuban airspace, but instead of using these incidents as a reason to negate his initial proposal, Khrushchev called for caution and rational thought to keep the two nations from taking up arms; with this, he was in fact accepting an end to the missile crisis. Kennedy responded that same day that he “welcome[d] th[e] message and consider[ed] it an important contribution for peace.”16

People flocked to churches Sunday morning, praying for an end to the tense situation. What they did not know was that the Cuban Missile Crisis was nearly over. Tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States had decreased substantially after the two countries reached an agreement about the Cuban situation. The agreement required the Soviet Union to dismantle and remove the missiles in Cuba and an American quid pro removal of the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. It also included an American pledge not to invade Cuba, which pleased Castro. Although there were still some minor issues to sort out, the crisis, in essence, was over.17
CHAPTER 4 NOTES

1 May and Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes*, 353.


3 Stern, *Averting the ‘Final Failure,’* 223.


9 *Ibid.*, 133; and *Thirteen Days*.

10 *Ibid*.


14 Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 73.


17 One of these issues was almost not so minor. On October 30, a miscommunication on the bridge of an American naval vessel almost led to that vessel firing upon a Soviet submarine. Although the mistake was immediately corrected, “[t]hat brief incident showed just how close we were to a human error that could have ignited the entire situation into an uncontrolled catastrophe.” Peter A. Huchthausen, October Fury (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), 215.
CONCLUSION

Not all people believed that the crisis would stay resolved or that the Soviets were really making a deal. A cartoon ran in the Independent Record of Helena on November 1, 1962, that depicted Premier Khrushchev handing the reins of a large horse entitled “Cuban Deal” to the Americans. It warned of a Trojan-horse situation, which may have reflected what many Americans felt at the conclusion of the crisis.¹ (See Figure 10) Cuba would remain a major concern for the American government and American public for years to come.

After the crisis cooled down, some Montanans wrote to members of Montana’s Congressional delegation to ask questions or give advice to their senators and representatives. Don Peterson of East Helena, Montana, wrote Senator Lee Metcalf, “Never before . . . has an American President allowed a foreign nation to . . . flagrantly flaunt the United States in this hemisphere. When are we going to stop backing down and take a stand? I pray that measures and severe measures will be taken to protect the security of the United States.” Dean Wilcox of Missoula, on the other hand, supported Kennedy’s action. He simply wanted the United States to keep firm on its policy with Cuba.²

Senator Mike Mansfield spoke to a crowd in Butte after the crisis had concluded. He reassured Montanans about the situation and reconfirmed his support of Kennedy’s decisions during the crisis. He stated, “It was a power decision by the President, approved unanimously by both Democrats and Republicans of the House and Senate. It took Khrushchev off balance, and I
Figure 10 - This cartoon represented how many citizens felt about the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The comparison of the Khrushchev deal to the Trojan Horse was particularly revealing of the feelings of many people. Reprinted from the *Helena Independent Record*, November 1, 1962, 24.
think also was indicative that President Kennedy took the Soviet premier’s measure.”

Although many members of Montana’s Congressional delegation worked on policy regarding Cuba, Representatives James Battin spent considerable amount of time dealing with the Cuban situation. Battin served as the chairman of the Special Subcommittee on Cuba and Subversion in the Western Hemisphere. The committee was created to study “past errors and present dangers” in American-Cuban relations. In an interim report presented to the House on May 20, 1963, Battin revealed that the number of Soviet officials still in Cuba had been drastically underestimated. On another day, June 24, 1963, Battin asserted that the American government needed to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in regards to the Soviet Union and Cuba. He thought that the goal of American policy in Cuba should be the “[t]ermination of Soviet intervention; [e]stablishment of conditions under which the Cuban people may freely exercise their right of self-determination; [and] [a]n end to Communist subversion, sabotage, and guerilla warfare against the people of the Western Hemisphere.”

In yet another committee report, Battin stated that the subcommittee had come up with seven recommendations to the American government regarding Cuba. They included: reactivating the Monroe Doctrine, defeating Communism in Latin America, isolating Communist Cuba, withholding diplomatic recognition of the Cuban government under Castro, aiding guerilla warfare performed by exiled Cubans, preventing of British Guinea from becoming

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communist, and distributing of American economic aid to other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Battin was very active in American affairs with Cuba after the crisis.

The Cuban Missile Crisis also reignited a civil defense frenzy across Montana. Several Montana counties issued “Community Shelter Plans.” Deer Lodge, Powell, Dawson, and Custer Counties all distributed similar booklets that included information about fallout, nuclear flashes, evacuation, public shelters, private shelters, and how to protect one’s family from nuclear fallout. They also included a checklist of shelter supplies, diagrams for basement shelter building, family emergency plans, and a map of available shelter space in each county. Cascade County began issuing annual reports regarding the area’s civil defense to assess the county’s readiness for a nuclear attack. The information included in the report were items such as available shelter spaces and plans for nuclear attacks. Civil defense remained a hot topic in Montana throughout the 1960s.

The Cuban Missile Crisis greatly affected Montana and the rest of the nation. It renewed the shelter-building frenzy that had swept the nation in the 1950s and helped to increase the number of civil defense programs in Montana. The crisis also helped to unify Montana politicians behind Kennedy in a bipartisan display of support for the president’s policy in Cuba. This bipartisanship helped to reassure Montanans that the crisis would not become a nuclear exchange. The efforts of Montana’s senators and representatives,
especially Mike Mansfield’s, in informing the state about the crisis kept Montanans aware of events in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The advent of the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the possibility of nuclear war into Montana. The missiles in Cuba were altogether too close in the minds of Montanans. In actuality, the missiles in Cuba were too far away from the Northwest to strike Montana, but that did not matter to the state’s inhabitants. Why, then, did the missiles in Cuba cause so much panic? The Cold War had been building since the late 1940s and the arms race had dramatically escalated in the 1950s. This resulted in an era of growing tension between the Soviet Union and the United States that left people on both sides believing they were vulnerable to a nuclear attack. Montanans were no exception to this. The shadow of nuclear war left many anxious and fearful; the Cuban Missile Crisis only multiplied the dread that filled the minds of many Americans. Montanans, although thousands of miles away from the small, insular nation of Cuba, realized that if the missiles were fired, they would not be able to escape the shadow of nuclear war.
CONCLUSION NOTES


4 *Congressional Record* - House, May 20, 1963, 8467, Folder 10, Box 634, Lee Metcalf Papers; and *Congressional Record* - House, June 24, 1963, 10795, Folder 10, Box 634, Lee Metcalf Papers.

5 *Congressional Record* - House, November 7, 1963, 20357-20359, Folder 10, Box 634, Lee Metcalf Papers.

6 "Fallout Shelter Plan of Custer County," Folder 4, Box 595, Lee Metcalf Papers; "Fallout Shelter Plan of Dawson County," Folder 1, Box 92, Lee Metcalf Papers; "Fallout Shelter Plan of Deer Lodge and Powell County," Folder 1, Box 92, Lee Metcalf Papers; and "Cascade County and City of Great Falls Civil Defense Annual Report - 1969 Summary," Folder 1, Box 92, Lee Metcalf Papers.
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