

JFK's Hidden Record as President

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GR Editor's Note

It is important to assess the broader role of JFK and his administration and the fact that the underlying power structure was heavily divided. These issues are not addressed by the author.

Amply documented, JFK was “at war” with US intelligence and the top brass of the military including the joint chiefs of staff who were pressuring JFK to invade Cuba.

Moreover, in 1961 there was a debate within the US military. JFK had opposed the decision to deploy ground forces in South Vietnam. In 1963, in the months preceding his assassination in November 1963, JFK had “ordered a complete withdrawal from Vietnam”.

It was only under the Johnson administration in March 1965 following the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Incident of August 1964 that US ground troops were sent to Vietnam.

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John F. Kennedy's legacy sees numerous streets, buildings and statues emblazoned with his name across First World nations. Such unquestioning glorification has shielded much of the reality from public eyes, while reinforcing elite Western power. The successful results suggest one obvious thing — how remarkably successful propaganda can be, even when aimed at highly educated, privileged societies.

To begin with, Kennedy's [outright invasion](#) of South Vietnam in February 1962 — hundreds of US air raids since initiated — would later result in the greatest loss of life in the post-World War II period. Up to four million Vietnamese died, as the invasion further spread to the rest of Indochina: Cambodia and Laos. The 50th anniversary of Kennedy's attack slipped by in 2012, with virtually no mention of the invasion in the mainstream press.

The war against Vietnam had been building in the preceding months. In late April 1961, Kennedy began beating the war drums when declaring to the nation's press that “we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy.” If this was realised in places like Vietnam and Laos, “the gates will be opened wide.” The US population accepted this unqualified scaremongering, with protests at the time being almost non-existent.

In May 1961, the Kennedy administration sent around 500 US troops to act as “special advisers” to the South Vietnamese army. Late in 1961, further hundreds of US soldiers were flown to South Vietnam, where 80 per cent of the Vietnamese population lived at the time.

The principal US aims were concealed from the public domain. It was to defend the brutal US-backed dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem against a population threatening to overthrow it. By doing so, the US would prevent independent nationalism occurring, while further ensuring it would not spread to nearby countries.

Senior Kennedy aide Maxwell Taylor remarked to the president in October 1961 that,

“if Vietnam goes, it will be exceedingly difficult to hold south-east Asia.”

This part of Asia was viewed as one of the Earth’s crucial resource regions.

In early 1962, leading columnist James Reston wrote in the New York Times that “the US is now involved in an undeclared war in South Vietnam.

“This is well known to the Russians, the Chinese Communists and everyone else concerned, except the American people.”

The Kennedy administration made another fateful decision in 1962 when shifting the mission of the Latin American military from “hemispheric defence” to “internal security.” This, in effect, meant war against Latin America’s domestic populations.

The results were outlined by the US State Department official Charles Maechling, who led US counterinsurgency from 1961 to 1966. Maechling [wrote that](#) Kennedy’s decision to alter US policy from acceptance “of the rapacity and cruelty of the Latin American military” led to the “direct complicity” of the US in the crimes themselves.

As Maechling put it, the US was now supporting “the methods of Heinrich Himmler’s extermination squads.”

While these policies were serious enough, Kennedy’s hegemonic demands during the Cuban missile crisis became a genuine threat to global security.

The missile crisis occurred over a 13-day period in October 1962, and finally resulted in the Soviet Union removing its weapons without bothering to consult the Cuban government.

The official history of the incident is like most Western analyses, fabrications concocted to avert prying eyes.

The months before and after the crisis bore witness to widescale murderous assaults on Cuba.

Fidel Castro’s government, which ousted the US-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in 1959, was an example of successful defiance against the superpower. It also occurred within “our hemisphere,” as Kennedy himself put it.

In April 1961, the Kennedy government launched the Bay of Pigs invasion, which ended in a Cuban rout of US-led forces.

Shortly after this embarrassment, a devastating embargo was implemented against Cuba

that was to last for decades. The economic strangulation was so severe that any nation found using Cuban-produced goods would be banned entirely from international commerce.

As punishment for thwarting the Bay of Pigs landing, the “terrors of the Earth” were to be directed against Cuba. Robert Kennedy, following his brother’s orders in perpetrating the terrorist acts, [told the CIA](#) that the Cuban issue is “the top priority in the United States government.”

Indeed, “no time, money, effort or manpower is to be spared” in toppling the Castro government.

The “terrors of the Earth” against Cuba included: “The bombing of hotels and industrial installations, the sinking of fishing boats, the poisoning of crops and livestock, the contamination of sugar exports.”

The assaults were to culminate in a “final success” that “will require decisive US military intervention.”

It was pencilled in for October 1962 — the precise period that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev placed ballistic missiles on Cuban soil.

At the same time, the US had missiles of its own directed at Russia and China, virtually on their borders. Yet this is seldom ever discussed.

The Kennedy brothers further expressed concern that missiles in Cuba could deter a planned US attack on Venezuela. What followed was “the week the world stood still.”

General David Burchinal, a high-ranking Pentagon official, said

“Kennedy took chairman Nikita Khrushchov right to the brink of nuclear war, and he [Khrushchov] looked over the edge and had no stomach for it.”

Harvard University’s Graham Allison, writing in the US political journal *Foreign Affairs*, outlined that Kennedy “ordered actions that he knew would increase the risk not only of conventional war but also nuclear war” — perhaps by a likelihood of 50 per cent.

Kennedy had declared the highest nuclear warning short of launch, Defcon 2. This authorised “Nato aircraft with Turkish pilots [or others] to take off, fly to Moscow, and drop a [nuclear] bomb.” US Major Don Clawson was one of those non-Turkish pilots, and concluded that “we were damned lucky we didn’t blow up the world — and no thanks to the political or military leadership of this country.”

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This article was originally published on [Morning Star](#).

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