

THE NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE

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RECENTLY DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTATION REWRITING HISTORY OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE PLAYS KEY ROLE

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Long-held understandings about the Cuban missile crisis are undergoing dramatic revision as newly declassified documents expand and reshape our knowledge and interpretation of events. The National Security Archive, as collector and repository of these documents, has played a key role in enabling scholars, policymakers and journalists to reevaluate the events of 1962.

Scott Armstrong, Executive Director of the National Security Archive, will be in Moscow from January 24-30 with a delegation of U.S. scholars and former officials to meet with their Soviet counterparts to discuss the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Accompanying Armstrong will be Philip Brenner, Professor at American University and a member of the Archive's board, and Laurence Chang, Analyst for the Archive's Cuban Missile Crisis Project.

In addition, U.S. conference participants include Kennedy Administration officials McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, Theodore Sorenson, Pierre Salinger and Raymond Garthoff, as well as Senator Edward M. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Jr., and senior American scholars. The Soviet delegation comprises eleven Khrushchev Administration officials, including Andrei Gromyko, Anatoli Dobrynin, Aleksander Alekseev, Georgi Kornienko and Fyodor Burlatsky. In addition, Sergei Khrushchev, son of the late Chairman, will attend. Secretary Gorbachev is expected to close the final day of the conference (and only portion open to the press) with a major address.

Conferees will concentrate on two major agenda items: the remaining factual questions surrounding the crisis and the "lessons" of the crisis. To aid in this process, the U.S. delegation will bring significant documents to the conference, including 15,000 pages of declassified and unclassified U.S. government material collected and indexed by the National Security Archive. Soviet officials have indicated that significant, official documents from their own archives may also be made publicly available for the first time.

"This is a ground-breaking meeting," said Armstrong. "For one thing, it will allow Soviet, Cuban and American officials to understand -- in many instances for the first time -- the operating assumptions and attitudes of their peers in the other governments during one of the most dangerous world crises in history."

"Second, the participation of officials from such senior levels of the Soviet and Cuban governments gives us reason to hope that their official archival materials may become available to researchers in the near future. Finally, the Soviets may use this occasion to make available for the first time both oral accounts and previously sealed records of this extraordinary period. I am proud that the National Security Archive has been able to contribute to this valuable process by structuring the discussion with details of American decision-making."

The Moscow conference is the third in a series of retrospective meetings concerning the missile crisis which have been organized by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University at Harvard University. The first was the March 1987 Hawk's Cay conference which brought together academics and senior Kennedy Administration officials. It was followed by a meeting of both Soviet and U.S. participants at the Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts in October 1987 which laid the groundwork for this week's major conference in Moscow.