

Critique of us counterintelligence efforts in the cold war



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Although many Americans hold a negative opinion about the United States' counterintelligence efforts, particularly in regard to the CIA and FBI, it is not clear that the facts will support this opinion. Much of the criticism of the CIA and FBI stems from abuses where these agencies engaged in illegal activities against citizens of the United States and other countries, such as wiretaps, illegal surveillance, and illegal searches. These excesses are not, of themselves, sufficient to offset the successes of counterintelligence agencies. During the Cold War, fear of nuclear war by both superpowers kept them from engaging in open, direct confrontations with each other. Instead, the two countries engaged in an unknown number of covert operations throughout the third world.

The United States and the Soviet Union figuratively, and sometimes literally, divided many countries, between themselves, using the countries and their citizens as pawns in the greater world chess game the superpowers played. Within this Cold War framework, thousands of operations, both covert and open, legal and illegal were staged. It is clear that there have been failures in the United States' intelligence community: the 1960 shooting down of Gary Power's U-2 plane, the Bay of Pigs in 1961, and the capture of the surveillance ship the Pueblo in 1968. It is these failures that receive most of the media coverage, Congressional attention and historical investigation. As a result, many Americans know a great deal about counterintelligence failures. It is also clear, however, that there have been successes.

These are not so well documented by the media and historians. It was the counterintelligence efforts that discovered the Soviet missiles being built in Cuba in 1961. It was the counterintelligence agencies that helped overthrow

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the Marxist Allende in Chile. It was the counterintelligence agencies that flew thousands of U-2 and Sr-71 spy planes that provided a great deal of information.

The difficulty is in determining with certainty whether the overall net value of counterintelligence efforts tips in favor of or against United States' counterintelligence agencies. This is for a variety of reasons: 1. By their very nature, many of these operations were top secret and until recently, were largely unknown to the general public. 2.

In hindsight and today's sensibilities, what was then viewed as a success, may now be viewed as a failure. An example is the overthrow of the Iranian premier Mohammed Mossadeq in 1953 which was supported by both American and British intelligence agencies. At the time, it was viewed as a success. Given subsequent events such as the 1979 overthrow of the Shah and the holding of American hostages, this evaluation may be called into question. 3.

Even if all information about all the operations were known, and it is slowly being declassified, it is difficult to calculate the net score of the intelligence community. Does the success of the intelligence gathering in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 offset the failure of the Bay of Pigs Operation in 1961. Does the failure to oust Sukarno of Indonesia cancel the positive effect of removing Allende from power in Chile? Is the net good from all of the operations greater than the net evil? Does the cost in human life, money and property justify these actions? These questions are extremely difficult, if not

impossible to answer. This isn't something that can be quantified like an accounting balance sheet or a mathematical equation.

Perhaps, the best indication that overall the counterintelligence efforts were successful and worthwhile is that the Soviet Union no longer exists, while the United States does. Synopsis of the Cuban, Soviet and US Intelligence Services Compared to published information about the CIA and other United States intelligence service, very little is written in the United States about either the Soviet or the Cuban intelligence services during the 1961 Cuban Missile Crisis. This isn't to say they were inactive. While the KGB was more generally more active in Europe, particularly in Germany, they were closely linked to Cuba's DGI. The DGI was styled after the KGB and much of the training and resources the DGI received was from the KGB. The role of the KGB, then was largely a support role during the during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Although the biggest reason for failure of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, was the lack of support by President Kennedy, it was information provided by the Cuban intelligence agencies that allowed the Cuban military to be ready to respond quickly and decisively against the invasion. After the invasion failed, the CIA launched Operation Mongoose. Mongoose included a variety of efforts to do severe damage to Castro's Cuban regime, including numerous attempted assassinations of Castro. These efforts failed because the DGI was able to anticipate the covert actions of the CIA and make sure adequate security was provided.

The CIA had been very active in Cuba from the beginning of the Cuban revolution and the assumption of power by Castro. Innumerable operations were planned and undertaken. Despite this, their awareness of the placement Soviet missiles in Cuba was very limited and rather late, almost too late. Although the Director of the CIA, John McCone wrote a memo to President Kennedy in August 1961 suggesting that the Soviet Union might be preparing to install nuclear missiles in Cuba, it was not followed up on and nothing was done until much later.

On October 9, Kennedy finally approved high-level U-2 flights over Cuba. These were delayed until October 14 due to weather. When the pictures taken by the U-2 were developed, it was clear that installation of the missiles was well underway. The question can't help but be asked, why hadn't the CIA anticipated this? Why hadn't they known when the Soviet Union began sending more troops and equipment to Cuba? Due to the United States counterintelligence agencies' inattention, the Soviet Union was able to not only begin the installations, but real progress toward completing them. Concrete footings and launch pads were poured and finished. That doesn't happen over night, but would have taken weeks.

Why didn't the CIA know what the Soviets were doing. The more complete the installations were, the more difficult it would have been for Khrushchev to have pulled them out without losing more of his reputation than he did. It is clear that the CIA was distracted from its intelligence gathering function and putting more time in trying to remove Casto from office. This nearly led to nuclear war. The United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the world were very fortunate to have escaped a very real threat of a nuclear war.
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Lessons Learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis There are many lessons that can be learned from the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis (CMC).

What is learned depends to a great deal on who is learning. A hard line military person will learn much different lessons from someone who doesn't automatically look for a military solution. Hard line military people look at the CMC and conclude that what was learned was that a tough, approach, with a superior military and determination forced the Soviet Union to back down from the United States in the CMC. The current presidential administration seems to have this view.

Repeatedly President Bush has offered ultimatums to Saddam Hussein. The result has been that the United States is now engaged in a protracted war. What such people fail to see is that aggression will lead to aggression. The aggression of the United States towards Cuba through its operation at the Bay of Pigs, Operation Mongoose and other covert acts including numerous attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro are the primary reasons Cuba sought help from the Soviet Union.

Cuba feared an invasion from the United States. This was not an irrational fear. It was the hard line military attitude against Castro that helped provoke the introduction of Soviet missiles into Cuba. A primary lesson that should be learned from the CMC is that the importance of accurate, documented intelligence cannot be underestimated. If it were not for the U-2 flights over Cuba, it is likely that the United States would have been unaware of the Soviet missile installations until they were completed and operational.

As it happened, the missile launching facilities were discovered fairly early before they were completed and the United States was able to negotiate their removal. Had the facilities been operational, it would have been more difficult for Kennedy to have persuaded Khrushchev to remove the missiles. It is important the intelligence be both accurate and documented. Prior to the United States invasion of Iraq, President Bush assured the country that the intelligence indicated that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. This proved to be false.

The intelligence must be evaluated properly. It must be impartial and report the facts. If the intelligence community seeks to find information that supports a particular viewpoint, it can be found, but the results can be disastrous. The President and his advisors must use the intelligence to draw the correct conclusion, not to support a conclusion that has already been made without evidence. Another lesson one can learn from the CMC comes from the procedure President Kennedy used to study the data. He had the opportunity to make full use of his advisors.

They met, discussed the problem and when they had found a solution that met with universal support within the group, presented the option to Kennedy. During this process, they were forbidden from discussing the issue with anyone not in the group selected by Kennedy. This process led to the very workable plan of a naval blockade of Cuba. At least two lessons can be learned from this procedure.

First is that the president, or any leader for that matter, should make full use of his advisers and let them do the job for which they were selected:

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consider the issues and advise the president. Often it appears that presidents rely on a selected few of their advisors and friends and don't take into account the opinions of other members of their staff. An excellent example of this is President Nixon's reliance on a few of his advisors: John Erlichman, H. R.

Haldeman, John Dean and John Mitchell. This was particularly true during his second term of office with regard to the Watergate Scandal. A second lesson to be learned from this procedure is the need for secrecy during moments of crisis. The idea that a president needs to work secretly is not a popular view today, but if the Cuban Missile Crisis had been covered in such detail as even an ordinary story is covered today, the result may have been very different. Today, with a number of twenty-four hour news broadcasts that are always looking for news, it would be difficult for the president to isolate himself and his advisors without constant scrutiny from the media.

Had the media known and reported what was going on during the CMC, the result would have been much different. Kennedy and Khrushchev were able to exchange letters and information secretly without the media broadcasting the information. If every detail of the negotiations had been public, the ability for Kennedy to offer Khrushchev a graceful way to withdraw without losing too much face. If these negotiations had been publicly broadcast, both leaders may have been forced by public opinion to maintain a hard line which would have precluded compromise. Another lesson that should be learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis is that leaders need to treat their adversaries with respect. Leaders need to offer their adversaries a way to save face gracefully.

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If you issue an ultimatum and offer your opponent no easy way out, they are less like to agree to a negotiated settlement instead of resorting to force.

Kennedy offered Khrushchev an alternative to nuclear war. By offering to remove the United States missiles from Turkey and pledging not to invade Cuba, Kennedy had given Khrushchev a way to save some face. Khrushchev had risked a lot by putting missiles in Cuba. If there had been no choice, but to back down completely, it is much more likely that a nuclear incident, perhaps even a nuclear war would have occurred. A very important lesson to be learned is that presidents and other leaders should be aware of the long term consequences of the acts they plan.

Ultimately, Kennedy and Khrushchev decided to avoid war because they realized what the consequence might be: the death of millions, perhaps the end of civilization. If they had made their decision based only on the immediate issue of the missiles, without regard to the long term consequences, a less negotiated and more militant result might have occurred. This has been a problem with the foreign policy in the United States. Allies are made, supported and abandoned with amazing quickness. Since helping the Shah of Iran overthrow the government, Iran has been our ally, our enemy, our quasi-ally and now is on the way to becoming an enemy again.

Crises should be met with flexibility and caution. Information should be evaluated carefully to make the right decision, it should not sought to reinforce a decision that was prematurely made. Presidents need to be careful not to draw a line in the sand and dare an adversary to step over it as if the crisis were a fight between two ten-year-olds on the playground. They

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must be flexible enough, honest enough, and have enough integrity to admit when they are wrong and adjust policies accordingly.