

Kennedy doctrine essay



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During John F. Kennedy's presidency the United States was seriously concerned with stopping the spread of communism throughout the world and there were hot spots that sparked the Kennedy administration's attention. Containment was the United States foreign policy doctrine that proclaimed that the Soviet Union needed to be contained to prevent the spread of communism throughout the world. This containment policy meant that the United States needed to fight communism abroad and promote democracy worldwide.

During President Kennedy's time in office he was faced with the Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961, the Berlin Wall Erecting in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the escalation of the United States involvement in Vietnam. Kennedy implemented his own version of the Containment policy with the Flexible Response policy. This Flexible response was the doctrine implemented and was used during political situations that occurred under President Kennedy's watch. "Flexible Response was no highly explicit theory written in a single authoritative source. Flexible Response was realistic in that nuclear weapons couldn't be used.

It tried to provide credible means to match non-nuclear escalation. The word "flexible" stressed the value of having "multiple options" available should a crisis arise. Having multiple options was thought to enhance the credibility of the U. S. deterrent (reassuring allies while deterring the opponent). At the same time, however, flexibility made it also improbable that the U. S. would want or need nuclear attack" (Nuclear Files, 2013). The Bay of Pigs was the first situation John F. Kennedy had to deal with as president. The Bay of Pigs

was an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Cuban government of Fidel Castro.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) trained a force of Cuban exiles to invade southern Cuba all with the support and encouragement of the United States government. The Cuban exile force was named Brigade 2506. The invasion happened in the first three months of President Kennedy's term in office. The CIA had trained the Cuban exiles in various facility locations in South Florida while guerilla training took place in Panama at Fort Gulick and Fort Clayton. Despite all the preparations that were done on this covert operation to succeed it failed miserably.

In the Time magazine article dated September 1, 1961 there was an article about how the invasion failed. The article went on to say that the main reason that it failed was because of no air support for the ground forces. “ In deference to these views, Kennedy made two separate rulings which were to contribute to the fatal dismemberment of the whole plan. First, U. S. air power would not be on call at any time. Second, the B-26s flown by “ our” Cubans could be used in only two strikes before the invasion—first on D-minus-two-days and again on the morning of the landing. (Time Magazine, Sept. , 1961).

On the morning of the attack after the the B-26's had bombed Castro's airfield and were able to destroy half of Castro's B-26's and some of his T-33 jets a call went out to have the U. S. S. Boxer to deploy planes to support for cover for the ground forces, but the support never came because the Secretary of State said that there would be no support. This resulted in a

major loss for the U. S. and the Cuban exile forces that were on the ground as Castro and his forces had sunk two transports and had driven off two others.

The failed invasion of Cuba was a means for Castro to project an even harder line towards the United States and capitalism while at the same time embracing the Soviet Union and communism. “ It also likely encouraged Castro to accept and the Soviets to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba as a deterrent to any future invasion” (Bentley, et al, 2008, pg. 641). Fidel Castro gave his approval to the deployment of nuclear missiles in his country and the Soviet Union wasted no time in quickly and secretly building launch sites.

This was the next situation President Kennedy would face and there would be a different outcome from the first situation, The Bay of Pigs invasion. The Cuban Missile Crisis was to be President Kennedy’s greatest moments of his Flexible Response Doctrine. On October 14, 1962, a U-2 reconnaissance plane got a photograph of evidence of the missiles in western Cuba.

President Kennedy met with his advisors in secret for several days to discuss the issue at hand. The president decided to place a naval blockade, or a ring of ships, around Cuba to prevent the Soviets from bringing in more supplies, and demanded the removal of the missiles already there and the destruction of the sites. [JFK in History: Cuban Missile Crisis (n. d.)].

The public was informed of the building crisis on October 22, 1962 while the world held its breath for what was to come next. The possibility of a nuclear war loomed over the U. S. and Soviet Union. If Khrushchev wouldn’t order the removal of the missiles then Kennedy was ready to launch an all out attack

on the Soviet Union and Cuba. On October 24, 1962 all of the Soviet ships that were headed to Cuba turned back from the blockade except for one.

This put the United States on alert for war. Kennedy received a letter from Khrushchev that proposed the removal of the missiles if the President would publicly announce that the United States would never invade Cuba. After a U-2 plane was shot down over Cuba on October 27, 1962 and on the same day another U-2 was nearly intercepted by Soviet fighters because it had ventured into Soviet airspace, President Kennedy responded to Khrushchev with a letter stating that the United States would not invade Cuba if the Soviet Union would remove its missiles from Cuba.

President Kennedy's stance on the Cuban Missile Crisis showed his belief in keeping the United States and the free world safe by administering his flexible response doctrine on the Soviet Union and Cuba. This allowed for the whole to take notice that the United States was a country not to be reckoned with when trying to engage in political or military tactics that involve the freedom of its citizens.