'ANNIHILATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION:'
CANADA, CUBA, AND PUBLIC INTELLIGENCE DURING THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

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Abstract
The photo intelligence captured by American U-2 spy planes during the Cuban Missile Crisis is often regarded as “incontrovertible evidence” of Soviet hostility. This work aims to complicate that narrative by arguing that the photos could never establish Soviet intentions, and were politicized by the United States in an effort to help them convince the international community to support whatever action the U.S. decided to take. Canada initially presented the most unique response to the U.S. claims of Soviet aggression by calling for U.N. inspectors to investigate the claims of the United States. Recent research continues to reveal the important role of the U.N. in helping to solve the impasse between the Cold War superpowers. This paper contributes to that position by demonstrating that the greatest contribution of the U-2 intelligence was that it demonstrated the need for a U.N brokered dialogue between East and West.

Resumen
La fotos de inteligencia que los aviones espía U-2 obtuvieron durante la Crisis de los Misiles se considera con frecuencia como una prueba irrefutable de la hostilidad Soviética. Este artículo tiene como objetivo complejizar esa narrativa al plantear que las fotos no pueden determinar las intenciones soviéticas, estas fueron politizadas por Estados Unidos en un esfuerzo por convencer a la opinión pública internacional y así lograr el apoyo mundial para cualquier acción que Estados Unidos decidiese llevar a cabo. Canadá inicialmente dio la respuesta más diferenciada al pedir que inspectores de las Naciones Unidas investigasen las acusaciones estadounidenses. Investigaciones recientes han revelado el papel importante que jugó la O.N.U para contribuir a resolver el impasse entre las dos superpotencias de la guerra fría. Este artículo contribuye a reforzar la posición que, el aporte fundamental de la información inteligencia que obtuvieron los U-2 fue que, demostró la necesidad de un dialogo este –oeste auspiaciado Organización de Naciones Unidas.

Introduction
When the United States attempted to persuade the international community of the necessity to invade Iraq in 2003, it did so through the use of image intelligence (IMINT) at the United Nations (U.N.). Despite the acceptance of the U.S. 'evidence' of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, Canada refused to join the U.S. - led coalition against Iraq without U.N. approval. During moments of heightened international tension Canada must balance its obligations to its allies against its own foreign policy objectives. One such moment was the Cuban missile crisis. Intelligence played an influential role in the missile crisis as historians and authors have recently acknowledged. But as yet historians have not addressed the United States’ public use of image intelligence both at the United Nations and in its consultations with its NATO allies, nor to the unique Canadian response to the crisis. Decades later, there has been little questioning of the ‘incontrovertible evidence’ of the U-2 photographs that were revealed to the public, or of the Kennedy administration’s motivations for their public use.

This paper will re-examine the Kennedy administration’s public use of intelligence as well as the Canadian response to it. It will begin by providing a brief introduction to the crisis. I argue that the American U-2 over flight photographs were part of a narrative constructed by the Kennedy Administration that presented the Americans as victims of Soviet aggression. While the photographs illustrated that a Soviet military buildup was underway in Cuba, and did serve their purpose in helping to
end the crisis, Soviet intentions could never be established from the photos alone. While the Kennedy administration and the intelligence community were initially perplexed by the Soviet Union's actions in Cuba based on the U.S.S.R.'s past actions, the U-2 photos ultimately became one of the most important ways for the U.S. to convince the international community that the Soviet intentions were aggressive and that a U.S. blockade of Cuba was needed.

I then examine the responses of NATO countries to U.S. IMINT and American calls for support against the Soviet military buildup in Cuba, paying particular attention to the Canadian response. While historians have noted the Canadian government's displeasure with the lack of consultation from the Kennedy Administration during the missile crisis, I argue that the Canadian reaction to U.S. calls for a blockade of Cuba was unique, because the Canadian government was willing to publicly challenge U.S. claims that offensive missiles were in Cuba (if only briefly) and to call for a greater U.N. role in the crisis. While the Canadians quickly tried to distance themselves from their initial proposal, recently declassified documents from the period reveal that while the U.N. was meeting to find a way out of the crisis, the Canadians were still trying to convince other U.N. members of their idea for a U.N. intervention in Cuba. The paper will assess why the Canadian government initially doubted the claims of its closest ally, situating the Canadian response among those of other key NATO allies such as the British, Germans, and French, and why it decided to reverse its public position and support the Americans. All of these allies expressed their support for Kennedy in order to not give the impression that NATO contained any divisions the Soviets could exploit. Privately, however, these allies all believed that little consultation took place, and any that did occur had little influence in determining the American course of action during the crisis. The Canadian government in particular was in a difficult position. Initially it publicly voiced its concerns with the U.S. unilateral strategy, but due to the realities of hemispheric geopolitics and its close relationship to the United States, the Canadians shifted their tactics to acting behind closed doors. While the crisis did illustrate that Ottawa believed it could advocate for a U.N. role in the crisis while still maintaining its commitments to NATO, the crisis also illuminated the realities of Canada’s trading partnership with Cuba and the precariousness of that partnership.

Demonstrations of Force

The U.S. was in the thick of the Cold War in 1961, and its leaders understood the United States to be the international leader in the fight against communism. This fight had involved the United States in military and covert operations well outside the Western 'sphere of influence' Roosevelt had envisioned following the Second World War. When the Kennedy Administration took power in January 1961 it faced a number of dilemmas. First, Kennedy inherited a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plan for an invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles. The Bay of Pigs operation came to be known as a 'perfect failure' in that the plan failed on nearly every level of planning and implementation. Shortly thereafter the Soviets constructed the Berlin Wall around West Berlin, closing it off from the rest of West Germany. In 1961 the Soviets also successfully detonated a 50-megaton bomb, Soviet Chancellor Khrushchev boasted that it was a 'demonstration of force.' This event prompted Kennedy to remark that the time was ripe to 'disabuse Khrushchev of his illusions regarding the military balance.' But despite Soviet actions around the world, the Kennedy administration remained fixated on Cuba. The American leadership became obsessed with the island and with the removal of its leader Fidel Castro. The White House believed that it was acting in the best interests of the Cuban people by trying to eliminate Castro and the communist threat he posed to the island. But perhaps more importantly, Cuba was a nation that had converted to communism and turned to the Soviet Union for trade. It could now serve as an important and strategic military ally to the Soviet Union, and it was located just 90 miles off the coast of Florida. Following the Bay of Pigs 'fiasco,' the Kennedy administration ratcheted up its attempts to remove the popular Cuban leader with the covert ops 'Mongoose' and 'Condor.' But while the Americans were preparing to launch Mongoose, the Soviets were planning to launch 'Operation Anadyr,' the code name for a military buildup in Cuba which included a plan to install medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles on the island.

On 12 April 1962 Khrushchev approved 180 SA-2 missiles for delivery to Cuba to establish a coast-to-coast air defense system over the island. In June forty land-based missile launchers, roughly forty-five
thousand soldiers, MiG-21 fighters, and IL-28 bombers were also approved for shipment. The Soviet shipments to Cuba became so large and so frequent during the summer of 1962 that the Americans learned of them through various CIA informants. Kennedy ordered U-2 over flights of the island in an attempt to establish the extent of the Soviet arms build-up. The U-2 plane was a highly effective reconnaissance craft. As David Lindgram states,

The U2s employed over Cuba carried a high-resolution panoramic camera, often referred to as the ‘B’ camera. This system held two rolls of panchromatic (black-and-white) film, each nine inches wide and over five thousand feet long… With a focal length of thirty-six inches, photos taken of the ground directly at nadir could have a spatial resolution as high as thirty inches from an altitude of sixty-five thousand feet.

While the U-2 was technologically 'sophisticated,' Lindgram adds, 'the tools of analysis were decidedly not.' Not only was the viewing machinery crude in comparison to the IMINT collection, but the U.S. relied on its human intelligence (HUMINT) to decipher the photos. HUMINT during the missile crisis included Cuban exiles, which the CIA largely believed to be unreliable, as well as a Soviet officer named Colonel Oleg Penkovsky, who provided the crucial details needed to identify the medium-range missile sites in Cuba. U.S. intelligence gathering continued over the next several weeks. Signals intelligence, (SIGINT) intercepted Soviet and Cuban communications; U-2 over flights, which had been slightly hindered due to poor weather conditions over Cuba, were increased. On 14 October a U-2 photographed a medium-range missile site, as well as a variety of military vehicles including missile trailers, near the Sierra del Rosario Mountains. The photos were presented to Kennedy on 16 October, prompting him to establish the 'Executive Committee of the National Security Council' (Excomm) to advise him on how to get the missiles out of Cuba. Over the next several days more sites were discovered, evidence of missiles that could hit American cities. Excomm began to ponder the options: air strikes, a missile trade with the Soviets and a possible American invasion of Cuba.

Defining 'incontrovertible'
The KGB did not believe the Americans would react so strongly to the missile bases in Cuba, given U.S. military support for nations near the Soviet Union. The Soviets claimed that the weapons were needed to protect Cuba from American aggression. Asked by the White House whether nuclear missiles were part of the military buildup, a CIA National Intelligence Estimate written in September stated that it did not believe an offensive military buildup in Cuba was 'likely.' The White House was asking the CIA to gauge Soviet intentions in Cuba, a difficult task before the U-2 photos were generated. Gauging an enemy’s intentions is always difficult for intelligence analysts. For as Malcolm Gladwell states, 'what is clear in hindsight, is rarely so before the fact.' Yet pressure was mounting on the American government. The IMINT collection had not only discovered the presence of missiles that could hit U.S. targets but also that several bases could soon be operational, but the IMINT could not determine whether nuclear warheads were on Cuban soil.

Possible air strikes, invasion, blockade or a possible missile trade were all debated by Excomm. These formally secret deliberations are well documented by historians, but little work has been done on how the U.S. decided to present the Soviet buildup to the world. In a meeting of the National Security Council on 20 October, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara outlined some of the benefits of a blockade of Cuba:

1. It would cause us the least trouble with our allies.
2. It avoids any surprise air attack on Cuba, which is contrary to our tradition.
3. It is the only military course of action compatible with our position as a leader of the free world.
4. It avoids a sudden military move which might provoke a response from the USSR which could result in escalating actions leading to general war.
In addition to averting all-out war, how to maintain American national honor and placate U.S. allies were top concerns for the administration. A blockade of Cuba was an attractive option but it still did not solve the problem of removing the missiles that were already in Cuba. But what the Excomm meetings also make clear is that the Kennedy administration believed it could determine Soviet intentions in Cuba from the photographs, that is, the Soviets were engaging in an aggressive action against the United States, and the missiles were offensive.21 The blockade option was considered to be the least invasive option while still allowing the U.S. to prevent the Soviets from continuing the buildup. With consensus in favor of a blockade, the question remained of how best to sell the U.S. response to the press, the allies, and the rest of the world. During the meeting McGeorge Bundy stressed that the press was becoming difficult but that suggesting to them that 'we had obtained photographic evidence of the existence of strategic missiles in Cuba' might satisfy their concerns.22 The President could state in a televised address that he had initially been 'opposed' to invading Cuba but now we have the kind of evidence which we can make available to our allies in order to convince them of the necessity of acting.23 While the administration had not yet gone so far as actually releasing the photos to the media, it did in these early meetings decide that its photo intelligence could bolster the U.S. position on blockading Cuba and justify a possible invasion.

With the meeting concluded, the administration began the process of constructing a narrative that could best achieve international support for the U.S. plan. The first step was to write an effective presidential speech. On 21 October the National Security Council began that task, changing the word 'blockade' to 'quarantine' in the President’s speech (a blockade is an act of war).24 McCone and Kennedy believed it important to stress that the Americans were not evoking the 'Monroe Doctrine,' that the missiles in Cuba were 'offensive,' and that the U.S., while implementing a 'quarantine' of Cuba, would not rule out further military action.25 How to deal with the U.N. and NATO was an important concern in this meeting. The goal of the administration was not to debate its policies in the U.N. but rather to get the U.N. to agree to its aims, which included sending U.N. inspection teams to missile sites after the U.S. 'put out the fire in Cuba,' as Secretary Rusk put it.26 The President believed that 'a better tactic was for us initially to frighten the United Nations representatives with the prospect of all kinds of actions and then, when a resolution calling for the withdrawal of missiles from Cuba, Turkey and Italy was proposed, we could consider supporting such a resolution.'27 Ambassador Stevenson built on the President’s suggestion, adding that the U.S. should take the lead in 'calling a U.N. Security Council meeting to demand an immediate missile standstill in Cuba.'28 Ted Sorenson believed that the President must accuse 'the Soviets of being the aggressors' and 'persuade others to agree with us.'29 Indeed, the stance of the U.S. in the U.N. should be 'offensive' in order to attack the Soviets for being secretive in its missile deployment to Cuba.30 In order to persuade its allies of the necessity of the U.S. blockade, members of the administration would be sent out to each NATO capital accompanied by 'technical experts from [the] CIA who could answer questions concerning the photographic intelligence which reveals the missile sites.'31 While low-level over flight photos would later prove definitively that missiles were in Cuba even to the untrained eye, no such photos were yet available, and the CIA was thus needed to help explain the photos to its observers. The CIA was now being called upon by the Kennedy administration, not to provide their expertise in assessing the Soviets’ plans in Cuba, but to help the administration build its crisis narrative.

'Annihilation without Representation'

On Sunday 21 October 1962, Kennedy took the first steps towards briefing his NATO allies. He met the British ambassador to Washington David Ormsby-Gore that evening. While Ormsby-Gore had already advised British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that something may be afoot in Cuba (he was tipped off by British intelligence) this meeting resembled more of a meeting between friends than government officials. A solid friendship between the two men had developed earlier; Kennedy’s sister Kathleen was godmother to Ormsby-Gore’s eldest child.32 The official briefing of the British Prime Minister would follow Kennedy’s chat with Ormsby-Gore. Kennedy sent a personal letter to Macmillan that the prime minister would receive on Monday through the U.S. ambassador in London.33 The British were arguably the best-informed of the NATO allies during the crisis. Nonetheless, Kennedy admitted
that same evening to Ormsby-Gore that his informing the British of the Americans’ plans was not the same as consulting them. Kennedy added that he believed it ‘absolutely essential in the interests of security and speed to make my first decision on my own responsibility.’ Throughout the crisis Kennedy had numerous discussions with Macmillan over their private phone line. But the British Prime Minister continually felt frustrated by the White House’s ‘go-it-alone’ strategy. During the crisis Macmillan had made several suggestions to Kennedy in the hopes of diffusing tensions, but it had become increasingly clear to Macmillan that, as Nigel Ashton writes, ‘nothing Macmillan said or did changed the course of the President’s handling of the crisis.’

The British did help to sway public opinion in favor of the United States. After spending only a few moments looking at the U-2 photos Macmillan remarked that they were ‘good enough for him.’ He believed that the British and Europeans were used to the idea of missiles being aimed at them and that eventually the Americans would too. ‘Life goes on somehow’ he remarked. But if the Prime Minister needed little convincing to back the U.S., the British public did. Macmillan recommended releasing the photos to the public. Kennedy agreed that the photos should go to the media but he did not specify when. Macmillan took Kennedy’s agreement as an acknowledgement that the photos should be made available immediately and pressed Sherman Kent of the CIA, who was in London, to do so. Kent later recalled why he thought it was important to release the photos:

…Philip De Zuluetta, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary, expressed serious concern about the reception any strong Government statement would have in the absence of incontrovertible proof of the missile buildup… the British press was almost universally skeptical of the President's claim.
The release of the photos to the media could provide 'incontrovertible proof' of the Soviets’ aggressive designs as well as make up for what the public believed were previous intelligence 'failures' in Cuba. The public, with an explanation of what the photos ‘meant,’ could judge the intelligence for themselves.

While the British were kept informed of Kennedy’s plans and tried to help sway public opinion in the U.K., the U-2 photos also made their way to President Charles de Gaulle of France and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of Germany. Dean Acheson went to France and Ambassador Dowling and R.J. Smith of the CIA went to Germany. Sherman Kent later recalled Smith’s meeting with Adenauer:

The Chancellor's first response was characteristic: it showed [two lines deleted] certainly something more than a trace of his legendary suspicion of everything. 'Are you sure your name is Smith? Perhaps you have two names,' he said, just by way of getting things straight at the start…Adenauer was an attentive listener…he asked questions such as one regarding the state of readiness of the surface-to-surface missiles (As it came through the interpreter, it was to the effect 'were they warm or cold?).

Smith also recalled that Adenauer was impressed with the photos and said 'You may assure your President that I will be useful.' Although the photos seemed to have the intended effect on Adenauer, he did ask whether the missiles were operational. Smith told him that the U.S. could only provide estimates about when the bases would become operational. Adenauer had little choice but to accept Kennedy’s plans, despite his concerns with the Kennedy administration. The security of Berlin was a top concern for Adenauer; the American fixation on Cuba could not be allowed to jeopardize Berlin. But perhaps more so than other allies, Adenauer clearly understood that he was beholden to the U.S. He depended on the U.S. military presence in Europe, and believed that the security of Berlin should be the main focus for NATO.

Acheson, Smith and Kent flew to France to meet Charles de Gaulle. Kent recalls his first time meeting de Gaulle:

… he seemed to be about twice the size of normal men. His eyes too were somewhat unnerving, shielded as they were behind the thick lenses made necessary by the removal of cataracts. I can recall a feeling of despair that came with the realization that the evidence which we were about to present was wholly visual evidence.

Upon meeting de Gaulle, Kent appeared to have reservations about the evidence he was about to present. It was as if the 'incontrovertible' photographic evidence was not going to satisfy someone like de Gaulle. Nonetheless, Kent began to describe in painstaking detail what each of the photos revealed. He recalled that initially de Gaulle was not interested in the photos. Kennedy would not send someone like Acheson to see him if the matter was not urgent. But de Gaulle sat quietly through Kent’s detailed presentation, apparently convinced by the photos. Kent believed that the NATO allies could not ignore the power of the visual evidence. But he appeared never to consider that, just because the allies had not questioned the photos, they approved of the U.S. actions in the Caribbean.

France in particular was aware of a Soviet military buildup in Cuba due to French intelligence operating in the Caribbean. The French, even before the missile crisis, questioned American involvement in Europe, they were skeptical about the British joining the European Economic Commonwealth (EEC), fearing that Britain would act as Trojan horse of sorts for the U.S. President de Gaulle knew the importance of maintaining the appearance of NATO unity. This may have informed his support of Kennedy’s blockade of Cuba more than the U-2 photos. De Gaulle’s sentiments were later explained by the American ambassador, 'The French for centuries had lived with threats and menaces, first from the Germans and from the Russians, but he understood the U.S. had not had a comparable experience.'
de Gaulle, a tinge of 'immaturity' had led the United States to 'overreact.' Moreover, he knew full well, as did Macmillan and Adenauer, that he was being shown the U-2 photos after the U.S. had already decided upon its course of action. It prompted him to remark that the Cuban missile crisis was a form of 'annihilation without representation.'

Canada also expressed frustration with Kennedy’s, lack of consultation but its initial reaction to the U-2 photos was quite different than other nations. The photos were carried to Ottawa by former U.S. ambassador to Canada Livingston Merchant and CIA officer William Tidwell. Merchant and Tidwell met with Prime Minister Diefenbaker, Secretary of External Affairs Howard Green and Secretary of Defense Douglas Harkness. Merchant briefed the Prime Minister on the main points of the President’s televised speech, which was to take place two hours later. The Prime Minister reacted with 'vehemence,' according to Sherman Kent. He feared that the Soviets would withdraw their ambassador from the United States after being accused by Kennedy of being 'dishonest' and 'dishonorable.' Diefenbaker was also concerned about a lack of evidence regarding the missiles in Cuba. Tidwell proceeded to explain the photographs with the Canadians, concluding that they had accepted the evidence as sound. Diefenbaker’s published memoirs recount how he did not question the U-2 photographs but rather the right of the United States to act on them without consulting its allies first, and particularly Canada, its NORAD partner. The Americans requested that the Canadians put their armed forces on DEFCON 3 after the President’s televised address. According to Diefenbaker, he asked Kennedy when were we consulted? Kennedy replied 'You weren’t.' While Diefenbaker always maintained that his government never questioned the IMINT, his response in the House of Commons the night of 22 October is telling.

Diefenbaker urged calm after the President’s televised speech. He stated, 'our duty is not to fan the flames of fear but to do our part to bring about relief from the tensions, the great tensions of the hour.' He urged that the U.N. 'be charged at the earliest possible moment with this serious problem,' adding that in order for the world to have a 'full and complete understanding of what is taking place in Cuba' a U.N. inspection team should conduct an on-site inspection to verify the American claims of offensive missiles there. His speech was supported by the rest of the House. Tommy Douglas leader of the New Democratic Party agreed with Diefenbaker stating 'Before we get too excited, we should remember that for fifteen years the Western powers have been ringing the ears of the Soviet Union with missile and air bases…we have only the statements of the Americans' in regards to the Soviet actions in Cuba. Canada's initial public response placed it as the only NATO power to recommend a U.N. role in the crisis rather than simply urging the U.N. to agree to the American blockade.

This slight deviation by the Canadians could have occurred for a number of different reasons. On a personal level, there was no love lost between Diefenbaker and Kennedy. While their early meetings were cordial, this did not last long. But more crucially, Diefenbaker and Kennedy sharply disagreed about the Canadian relationship with Castro’s Cuba. Diefenbaker's memoirs continually emphasize how sharply his government and Kennedy's differed on Cuba and how the Cuban Missile Crisis was a stark illustration of this disagreement. Although the issue of Cuba was not often discussed in their personal meetings, Kennedy's administration officials, unlike Eisenhower’s, had made frequent public calls for Canada to fall in line with the United States' hard-line stance toward Cuba. But these pressure tactics backfired, and only served to increase nationalist sentiment in Canada, especially vis-à-vis its Cuba policy.

While the troubled relationship between Diefenbaker and Kennedy may have been a factor in the Canadian decision to not immediately back the American actions in Cuba, particularly troubling for the Canadian government was the Bay of Pigs fiasco. The Canadians, so far as can be determined, were never consulted about this CIA-backed invasion of one of its hemispheric trading partners. While U.S. intelligence was aware of the Canadian perspective from Cuba it was ignored. This despite Canadian embassy officials who noted that the occasional bombings that occurred before the Bay of Pigs invasion placed the Cuban military on high alert. Castro’s forces were thus ready and prepared for an attack. Then Canadian ambassador Allen Cunningham’s assessment of the strength of the Cuban government was that it could only be overthrown 'with the greatest of difficulty and in all probability not at all.' To dispel the
allegations by the Cubans that the Americans were involved in the Bay of Pigs, Adlai Stevenson at the U.N. presented photographic ‘evidence’ of a downed B-26 bomber with Cuban markings (that the CIA had painted on) used in the attack to prove that the Americans were not involved. But the photos revealed too much such as a metal nose on the plane (as opposed to the plastic one found on real Cuban planes) and that the machine guns on the plane were taped up and thus could not have been fired. When the doctored photos were exposed, Stevenson realized the CIA had lied to him and the credibility of the U.S. had become suspect in the international area. For the Canadian government, the Bay of Pigs crystallized Canada’s position on Cuba with respect to U.S. involvement on the island nation. As the Canadian Charge d’ Affaires in Cuba Malcolm Bow put it, ‘Canada should pursue a policy of friendly but not fraternal relations with Cuba, and should adamantly oppose any outside intervention in Cuban affairs.’

Perhaps most importantly, the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred during a time when Canada was itself debating whether or not it was going to allow nuclear weapons on its own soil. By 1962 Diefenbaker had come to the conclusion that nuclear war was something to be avoided at all costs and that when nations used nuclear weapons as deterrents it only served to bring the world closer to all out nuclear war. By 1962 the Diefenbaker government was also beginning to believe that the United States was moving dangerously towards war with the Soviets and that the U.N. served as one of the most important mechanisms for averting a nuclear world war. As John Hilliker argues, the desire for a U.N. mission in Cuba was one that was drafted by the Canadians even before Diefenbaker’s speech thus presenting Diefenbaker’s support for a U.N. mission in Cuba as being more of a bureaucratic slip than a political one.

Recently declassified documents reveal that Diefenbaker’s government continued to pursue its strategy even after the Canadian government publicly changed course over its desire for U.N. inspectors. The Canadians government frequently consulted with its embassy officials in other NATO nations and non-aligned states in order to gauge how the crisis was being perceived internationally and to try and convince them to support the initial Canadian suggestion of having U.N. inspectors be sent to Cuba. No doubt much to Diefenbaker’s delight, some in the British media favored the Canadian plan of a U.N. inspection of U.S. claims of offensive missiles in Cuba. But despite the Canadian calls for a U.N. inspection, the Canadian government still moved its forces to high alert, provided warships to help support the U.S., and denied the Soviets access to Canadian airspace. The Canadians mobilized their defenses alongside the Americans and did not oppose the American blockade of Cuba. As much as Diefenbaker may have opposed Kennedy’s tactics, and however much he sought to avoid a nuclear showdown, he knew Canada could not maintain a radically different stance on Cuba during the missile crisis from other NATO members. The crisis demonstrated that although Canada and the U.S. did not see eye-to-eye on Cuba, and nuclear disarmament, within the context of the Cold War, Canada’s commitments to NATO proved to be more important. This is not to say that disagreements between NATO countries could not occur or did not occur or that Canada’s advocating of a U.N. brokered solution to the crisis placed it completely at odds within NATO, but that the appearance of unity against the Soviets during the crisis was crucially important. Canada and its other NATO allies had trusted (perhaps too easily) that the Kennedy administration would not risk a standoff with the Soviets without just cause. The general public on the other hand would not be so easily convinced without some hard evidence.

Storytellers

The OAS met the morning of 23 October and voted unanimously in favor of a resolution that endorsed the American ‘quarantine,’ and also supported any further actions that the United States might deem necessary. It is worth noting that the OAS did not yet see the photographic evidence the U.S. possessed. The U.N. Security Council also met Tuesday afternoon. It was the first time that Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and Ambassador Zorin of the Soviet Union would square off. Stevenson went on the offensive in line with the White House plan of 20 October, condemning the Soviet military buildup and accusing Cuba of being a communist ‘accomplice.’ Zorin was unprepared for the assault and denied that missiles were in Cuba. Two days later the Security Council reconvened and Stevenson pressed his offensive against Zorin. After being accused by Zorin that the United States lacked evidence of a Soviet buildup, Stevenson issued his now famous challenge to Zorin,
...Do you... deny that the U.S.S.R. has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no—don't wait for the translation—yes or no?..I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over... And I am also prepared to present the evidence in this room.64

Stevenson moved in on the shaken Soviet Ambassador. With the flare of a courtroom drama, Stevenson ‘unveiled’ the enlarged black and white U-2 photographs in front of the Security Council members and a global television audience. Stevenson then explained the ‘facts’ contained in the photos, enlightening his audience on the story the images revealed.65


The Kennedy administration’s expectations with the IMINT can be summarized by CIA officer Sherman Kent:

No one can ever know how many of the people whose acquaintance with the Cuban pictures was limited to television and press reproductions felt that they were being had...All over the world the great majority of people who knew and cared about such things must have looked at the appallingly deficient copies of the original pictures and concluded that their chiefs of government had acted on the basis of incontrovertible evidence... To paraphrase once again a famous remark--never have so many taken so much on the say-so of so few.66

The administration felt it had 'incontrovertible evidence' of Soviet aggression to display before the world. But while impressive, the photographs did not reveal any 'story,' as Kent believed. Indeed, photographs are but one component of a narrative. As Martha A. Sandweiss writes in 'Image and Artifact: The Photograph as Evidence in the Digital Age,'

Photographs are intrinsically historical...And making a photograph has much in common with the practice of crafting a history. One begins with a curiosity about the world, sifts through the evidence till an idea begins to emerge, and then carefully arranges the evidence for presentation
to a broader audience. Photographer and historian alike are storytellers who must choose what to include and what to leave out, how close to stand to their subjects, how to frame their tales. The ‘facts’ revealed in the photos were one component of a larger narrative. What facts mean, and how that meaning is interwoven into a narrative is the product of interpretation. Despite the administration’s best efforts, the U-2 photos did not reveal Soviet intentions in Cuba. The photos did not prove that the Soviet build-up was an aggressive move by the Soviets and not a defensive one designed to protect Cuba. In fact the photographs did not ‘do’ anything. The photographs were but one component that the Kennedy administration used to tell story the Americans wished to tell. They were not the story itself.

After the U.N. unveiling of the photos, the results of Stevenson’s performance were mixed. While the U.S. hoped the photos would sway the U.N. to support its narrative, the photos instead helped usher in negotiations between the Soviets and Americans. Determining the aggressor in the conflict did not appear to weigh heavily on the mind of U.N. Secretary General U Thant. In writing to both the U.S. and Soviet Union, U Thant claimed that a great many of the permanent members of the U.N. had pressed upon him to state that 'in the interest of international peace and security all concerned should refrain from any action which may aggravate the situation and …risk war.' He called for a suspension of Cuban arms shipments and a suspension of the American quarantine. The Secretary General stressed that he must retain 'discretion and impartiality' in his position and that 'good sense and understanding will be placed above the anger of the moment or the pride of nations.' Even after Stevenson’s presentation, U Thant pressed the Soviets to halt the advance of their ships and for the Americans to avoid engaging Soviet ships. This crucial first step in easing hostilities resulted in further negotiations between the Soviets and U.S. and the eventual removal of the missiles in Cuba as well as the secret removal of the American Jupiter missiles in Turkey. In addition, the Americans promised to not invade Cuba in the future. Diefenbaker would later praise U Thant’s attempts at easing hostilities and helping to initiate the Soviet and American discussions. While the U.N. had not resolved the crisis, it did play an important role in bringing the Soviets and Americans into negotiations.

In terms of public opinion, things were certainly better for the United States after the crisis, at least before the conflict in Vietnam began to escalate. But public opinion did not just favor the United States. Opinion polls appeared to support the actions of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Within the U.S., Kennedy’s approval rating was over 70 per cent. Americans had backed their government’s approach to the crisis but this was perhaps somewhat expected given its peaceful resolution. Polls conducted in NATO nations reflected similar conclusions. In Canada, Kennedy was immensely popular and Diefenbaker lost the next election to Lester Pearson's Liberal party. Although interestingly, while Canadians appeared to view Kennedy positively they also believed that the U.S. still acted dangerously particularly while the crisis was occurring. Even after the release of the photos, Canadians did not appear to doubt the existence of missiles in Cuba, but they did debate whether the missiles could be classified as 'offensive' or 'defensive' with one person writing to the Toronto Daily Star newspaper that they found it difficult when two people pointed pistols at each other to determine which one was offensive and which was defensive. While Canadians appeared to back the U.S. during the crisis, they did express the view that Kennedy perhaps acted too quickly in imposing a blockade of Cuba, were fearful of how the Soviets would respond to the blockade, and believed the evidence of the missiles should have been raised in the U.N. when they were first discovered. Europeans also viewed the United States more favorably and the American narrative of standing up to the aggressive and secretive actions of the Soviets also pervaded much of the literature on the missile crisis until the Cold War ended. But polls also revealed, as Don Munton and David Welch state, that 'the crisis raised questions in some minds about the simple 'black and white' Cold War pattern.' Indeed, most of the respondents viewed the Soviet Union in a more favorable light than before the crisis. In the U.K. and Germany people claimed that 'Soviet moderation' and not U.S. military might ended the crisis. As Munton and Welch state, 'the Cuban missile crisis marked for some Europeans the beginning of the end of stereo typical Cold War images.' The crisis did usher in the era of détente and along with it, an end to the ‘black and white’ dichotomies of the Cold War.
Conclusion

The Cuban missile crisis was a first in many respects. It marked the first time the world had been incredibly close to a nuclear war and the first time intelligence had been used in such a public and politicized way. The Americans used their U-2 photographs of Cuba first among their allies and later at the U.N., to try and sway international support for their narrative of Soviet aggression in the Caribbean. The Canadian government was the only NATO member to publicly question the American claims of offensive missiles in Cuba and call for a U.N. role in the crisis. Whether this was a bureaucratic slip or a political one, the Canadians continually advocating for a U.N. role to the crisis, even though they publicly supported the United States. But the crisis also revealed that within the polarized world that was the Cold War, Canada’s commitments to NATO superseded its own foreign policy objectives. Other NATO allies also knew they could hardly side with the Soviets during the crisis and were concerned with the lack of input they had in the U.S. decision of blockading Cuba.

Despite the White House’s claims about 'incontrovertible' evidence, it is surprising how little the photos revealed about Soviet intentions. Decades after the crisis Robert McNamara and Ted Sorenson, were present at a conference on the missile crisis. Both men admitted that they knew little about what was happening in Cuba despite the IMINT. During the conference Sorenson surprisingly remarked when asked about Soviet intentions during the crisis, ‘The only honest answer I have is, ‘I don’t know now, and I didn’t know then.’ None of us knew. We could only speculate about what Khrushchev was up to.’ While the photos achieved their purpose in ending the crisis, it is perhaps too easy in hindsight to view the use of the U.S. IMINT as a 'success' as many historians have done. This paper has sought to complicate the narrative of the U-2 photos as being the 'incontrovertible' evidence that ended the missile crisis. Relying on the interpretation of one nation's photographic intelligence in an international incident was not enough evidence to risk what was risked in 1962. The failures of this strategy are starkly apparent to us with the quagmire that was the 2003 U.S. led Iraq war. And as this contemporary example should demonstrate, the definition of 'success' wherever it may be purported, such as in the Cuban Missile Crisis, deserves the scrutiny of historians.

4 The Kennedy administration had also contacted the Italian, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Denmark and Norwegian governments. The Italian, Norwegian and Denmark governments favored U.S. negotiation with the Soviets over hard-line measures. See Barton J. Bernstein, 'Reconsidering the Missile Crisis: Dealing with the Problems of the American Jupiters in Turkey,' in The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited, ed. James Nathan (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992) especially 79-83. The President also personally contacted Mayor Willy Brandt of West Berlin, Premier Amintore Fanfani of Italy, and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India see Don Munton and David A. Welch, The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Concise History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 60. The Department of State also sent letters various to Latin American countries such as Brazil which had acted as a
mediator between the Kennedy administration and Castro in the hopes of Castro breaking ties with the Soviets before the missile crisis. See James G. Hershberg, 'The United States, Brazil, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962,' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, 2 and 3, (2004):3-20 and 5-67.


8 Lindgren 66.

9 Fursenko and Naftali 134-137 and Jones 6.

10 Lindgren 67.

11 Lindgren 68-69.

12 Ibid 69.

13 Ibid.


15 Welch, 'Intelligence Assessment in the Cuban Missile Crisis,' 425-426.

16 Blight and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis and Intelligence Performance,* 205-206. The 'Military buildup in Cuba' of 19 September 1962 written by the CIA states that the CIA did not believe that the Soviet establishment of an offensive military base in Cuba would be 'likely.' Office of National Estimates, Special National Intelligence Estimate 85-3-62, 'The Military Buildup in Cuba' in Mary S. McAuliffe, ed. *Cuban Missile Crisis* (CIA: CIA History Staff, 1992) 93.


19 While the benefits of a missile trade with the Soviets was discussed by Excomm, it was not their first choice. See for instance Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters 1957-1963* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997)


25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Munton and Welch 60.
35 Ashton 86.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Bernstein 80.
43 Ibid.
45 Bernstein 80-81.
46 Ibid.


67 Ibid.


70 U Thant, ‘A Statement by Mr. U Thant to U.N. Security Council, including text of letter to President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev,’ 24 October 1962, in Kennedy, Thirteen Days 148-152.

71 Ibid.

72 Ghent, 179-180. See the discussions on Canadians providing air support for the U.N. inspection found in LAC, RG24 Volume 21809 file 2438 pt. 2.

73 Munton and Welch 93.


75 ‘Canada’s Press views U.S. move,’ The Globe and Mail, 24 October 1962, 7; ‘Canada and Cuba,’ The Globe and Mail, 26 October 1962, 6; ‘Canada and Cuba,’ The Globe and Mail, 27 October 1962, 6;

76 Richard Ned Lebow, 'The Traditional and Revisionist Interpretations Reevaluated: Why was Cuba a Crisis?,' in The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited, 161.

77 Munton and Welch 93.

78 Ibid 94.

79 Blight and Welch 118.