John F. Kennedy National Security Files, 1961–1963

General Editor: George C. Herring, University of Kentucky

The National Security Files (NSF) were the working files of President John F. Kennedy's special assistant for national security affairs, McGeorge Bundy. Documents in this file originated in the offices of Bundy and his assistants, Walt W. Rostow and Carl Kaysen; in the various executive departments and agencies, especially those having to do with foreign affairs and national defense; and in diplomatic and military posts around the world.

The NSF Country Files, arranged alphabetically by country, provide an in-depth look into foreign policy decision making. Memoranda, cables, intelligence reports, correspondence, and special studies are arranged chronologically within each country, allowing the researcher to follow on a day-to-day basis the administration's handling of crises and to trace the evolution of major policies.

Africa, First Supplement

Africa posed uniquely difficult challenges for the Kennedy administration. Seeking to win friends in the Third World, the administration attempted to break with the policies of its predecessors by endorsing local nationalism and accepting cold war neutralism. But the colonial powers in Africa—America's European allies—were the major antagonists to African nationalism. The United States could not take one side without offending the other; often, the administration took a middle position that offended both. In addition, American efforts to identify with African nationalism were hindered by the persistence of segregationist institutions and racial conflict within the United States.

Ultimately, the Kennedy administration was able to register only slight gains in Africa. Untainted by a colonial past on the continent, the Soviet Union was able to offer its unqualified support for independence and nationalism and opposition to South African apartheid. By contrast, the Kennedy administration's moderate positions on African issues nullified some of the goodwill earned by its aid programs and sympathy for African nationalism.

18 reels. ISBN 1-55655-905-4.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

Asia and the Pacific, First Supplement

Asia and the Pacific region caused the Kennedy administration great concern between 1961 and 1963. Throughout this period, the administration found itself constantly on the defensive in the region and barely able to hold the line. An aggressive and militant Communist China appeared to pose the most serious threat to the already tenuous stability of the area.

Especially in Southeast Asia, the Chinese seemed likely to capitalize on internal divisions and local conflicts. Indonesia's mercurial neutralist leader Achmed Sukarno inched ever closer to Communist China, threatened Western interests in his own country, and sought to take over West New Guinea and block the formation of Malaysia. In Indochina, North Vietnam supported an internal insurgency against South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem regime and threatened the neutrality of embattled Laos. And in late 1963, Cambodia moved closer to China by renouncing U.S. aid and breaking diplomatic relations with Washington.

33 reels. ISBN 1-55655-879-1.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

Latin America, First Supplement: Cuba

These National Security Files offer a close look at the evolution of Communist Cuba. A multiracial society, Cuba was transformed politically, economically, and socially into a totalitarian state. Fidel Castro, its charismatic leader, exercised control over all aspects of Cuban life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and the state security apparatus. Within months of taking power, Castro moved to consolidate his power by imprisoning or executing opponents. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled the island.

With this material researchers can examine the origins of the United States' troubled relations with Castro's Cuba and the intricacies of Castro's highly ambitious foreign policy. Castro's aim was to find new sources of trade, aid, and foreign investment, but his support of guerrilla movements typified the nation's involvement in regional Latin American politics.

In these pages of recently declassified diplomatic analysis, reporting, intelligence, and correspondence, scholars will learn firsthand of Castro's alliance with the Soviet Union and his efforts to spread communism through Cuba-backed guerilla insurgencies in Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia.

No region of the world occupied more of America's attention than Latin America in the early 1960s. American foreign policy was committed to promoting moderate change in a region swept by revolutionary ferment. The United States took vigorous steps to head off leftist revolutions and developed a near obsession with Castro's Cuba. Yet U.S. efforts produced at best modest results.

21 reels. ISBN 1-55655-904-6.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

USSR and Eastern Europe, First Supplement

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev asserted at the June 1961 Vienna summit that the USSR would sign a peace treaty with East Germany in December and that Western rights of access to Berlin would expire if the United States refused an interim agreement. The crisis over Berlin deepened when, on August 13, 1961, the East German government started to erect what became the "Berlin Wall." Unexpectedly, Khrushchev lifted his deadline for a separate German peace treaty in October, but the State Department believed that the USSR's determination to achieve its objectives remained "undiluted."

Concern about Soviet motives in Cuba also escalated during the summer of 1962. When U.S. reconnaissance aircraft confirmed the existence of Soviet offensive missile sites in Cuba, the most dangerous confrontation of the cold war ensued.

During the summer of 1963, however, U.S.–Soviet tensions eased. The Soviets stopped jamming Voice of America broadcasts, a direct communications channel between Moscow and Washington was agreed upon, and a limited nuclear test ban treaty was signed. The treaty was seen by both sides as a small but useful step in the right direction.

19 reels. ISBN 1-55655-876-7.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

Vietnam, First Supplement

When President Kennedy took office, the Vietnamese Communist (Vietcong) insurgency supported by North Vietnam threatened the U.S.–backed government of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam. Having suffered a major setback at the Bay of Pigs and stalemate in Laos and Berlin, the Kennedy administration decided that Vietnam was the best place to make a stand.

In late 1961 the administration launched Project BEEF-UP, a massive aid program to save the embattled South Vietnamese government. U.S. military assistance more than doubled and the growing contingent of U.S. advisers were authorized to play an increasingly active role. The program's benefits were short-lived, however; by late 1963 the Vietcong were regaining the initiative.

In mid-1963 a new and more volatile element was added to an already explosive situation. When Buddhists launched a massive countrywide protest against the Catholic Diem regime, the government responded with force, sending troops into the pagodas and jailing dissidents. The Buddhist crisis forced the Kennedy administration to reassess its commitment to Diem, if not to South Vietnam.

Increasingly fearful that the war could not be won with Diem and his family in power, the Kennedy administration became interested in supporting a coup. While the United States stood by and watched, Vietnamese army officers seized control of the government and, violating promises to the U.S. mission, murdered Diem and his brother. With the coup, the United States assumed an unprecedented level of responsibility for South Vietnam.

4 reels. ISBN 1-55655-880-5.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

Western Europe, First Supplement

To meet U.S. goals in Western Europe, President Kennedy and his advisers fashioned an ambitious "Grand Design." Its aims were to solidify U.S. relations with Western Europe while maintaining tight control over the Atlantic Alliance and to stabilize Europe in order to expand trade and solve its growing economic problems. The result was less successful than the administration had hoped—by early 1963, the "Grand Design" was in shambles amidst mutual recriminations between the United States and its European allies.

The Cuban missile crisis exposed starkly the growing fissures in the Western alliance. Rather than consulting in advance with its allies regarding a response to Soviet missiles in Cuba, the Kennedy administration informed them of the steps being taken. The allies loyally supported the United States during the crisis, but their fear of annihilation without representation and their resentment at being treated as little more than protectorates colored alliance politics for the remainder of Kennedy's presidency.

35 reels. ISBN 1-55655-881-3.
Microfilm available now. Guide forthcoming.

4520 East-West Highway
Bethesda, MD 20814-3389 USA
Phone: 800.638.8380 or 301.654.1550
Fax: 301.657.3203
E-mail: academicinfo@lexisnexis.com

www.lexisnexis.com/academic