

*Foreign Relations of the United States* is a documentary series published by the Department of State's Office of the Historian. The historians at the Department of State publish for each presidential administration the official record of our foreign policy during that administration, and clearly the Cuban Missile Crisis was determined to be a subject of utmost historical importance. It is because of this that the Office of the Historian undertook the compilation, declassification, and publication of *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*.

Historians from the office are armed with a law that requires that the Foreign Relations series be a thorough, accurate, and reliable record of U.S. foreign policy decisions. This law also aids those of us who conduct the declassification of the volume, as it is required that the contents be "accurate and reliable." As with any volume, the documents were gathered from many government repositories. The compilers and reviewers then determined which documents were of the most importance in telling the complete story and handed over the volume to the declassification division.

Declassification of the Cuban Missile Crisis volume began in May 1992 and was completed in November 1995. As with all volumes in the *Foreign Relations* series, declassification coordination began with painstaking review of the volume. The declassification coordinator reads the entire compilation and performs administrative tasks (making copies and listing the documents with identifying information). It is after this that more substantive work is done. Each document is carefully reviewed for equities to determine who would have interest in reviewing each document for declassification issues. In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis volume, it was determined that seven different entities had interest in the material covered in the volume. An entity that would require review can consist of a U.S. government agency, a foreign government, or an international organization. We then look through databases and secondary sources to determine what is already out in the public. This volume was declassified before the age of the Internet, so there was no online searching done, but more recently extensive searching online has been added to the preparation for declassification review. Our goal is to get as much information released as should be released, and we find whatever we can to assist reviewers in determining that information can and should be published. One should understand, though, that just because something is available to the public does not mean that it has officially been released, so while information on the Internet or in someone's memoirs can be used as an argument for declassification, it does not always mean that the information will be released officially. If it is not officially released we cannot publish it. After the referrals are prepared, the still-classified documents are sent out to the interested agencies for their review. Each agency has their own review process, but it usually entails sending the documents out to various offices for review, which can take some time. When review results are returned to our office, we then review them to see if the volume is "accurate and reliable" with the proposed redactions (information being denied for publication). If needed, we send an appeal to an agency or agencies for reconsideration. In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis volume, we sent appeals to two different agencies arguing for release of more information. Appeals add to the length of time it takes to declassify a volume, but often result in greater disclosure and did so in this particular volume.

Kerry Hite  
HIS 242 – FRUS Cuban Missile Crisis

The declassification of the Cuban Missile Crisis volume took 3 ½ years, which is long compared to many volumes. Less than 1% of the volume was denied, and no documents were denied in full. The Historian of the Department of State at the time, William Z. Slany, determined that the volume in its final state was an accurate account of U.S. government policy pertaining to the Cuban Missile Crisis.