peace. Both leaders attempted to achieve peace at the 1955 Geneva Peace Summit and in developing the Open Skies Policy. Both leaders aimed to work together for the good of humanity. Khrushchev went on international trips to meet leaders, including to the US to Camp David in 1959.

Peaceful coexistence was damaged by the 1960 U-2 incident in 1960. On 1 May 1960, a US U-2 spy plane was shot down by the USSR Air Defence Forces whilst performing routine photography in the USSR. Gary Powers, who was in the plane, parachuted out and survived and was captured. Initially, the US acknowledged a death and lied about the mission of the pilot but admitted it several days later when the USSR showed a recording of the pilot alive and telling them his mission. Powers was sentenced to three years of prison and seven years of hard labour but was exchanged 2 years later. However, this incident, two weeks before the Paris Peace Summit, embarrassed the US, whom became angry at the USSR. Paris ended in failure as both sides’ trust in one another dropped dramatically. The thaw, and peaceful coexistence, was over.

The extension of the arms race including ICBMs

Following US’s use of nuclear weapons against Japan in ending World War Two, the USSR became concerned that these weapons could be used to force US hegemony across the world. Several months later, the US experimented with nuclear weapons, including an underwater weapon, detonated in the Bikini Islands. The USSR became more alarmed and used the top scientists across Eastern Europe to create their own atomic weapon to challenge the US. On August 29, 1949, the USSR detonated a nuclear bomb shocking the world as the US had estimated it would take years more for the USSR to detonate a bomb. The US and USSR were now both equally powerful nuclear powers.

Both nations then worked on creating the H-Bomb (Hydrogen Bomb) and the US detonated the first one on 1 November 1952. The USSR surprised the world by releasing a similar bomb in August 1953. By 1955 the USSR had a more powerful Hydrogen Bomb than the US. At this point, with both sides having the ‘ultimate bombs’, the USSR aimed to catch up and surpass the US capability of bombs. The US wanted to remain the dominant figure in the world. This sparked the arms race.

In the 1950s, both sides decided that missiles were the ideal platform for nuclear weapons and began creating medium-range ballistic missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. As technology developed, they realized they could create missiles that could reach other continents, developing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)
during the Bay of Pigs invasion and issued a statement saying that a war in Cuba would lead to a war between the US and the USSR.

**The 13 Days**

Kennedy knew the US midterm elections were coming and he could not afford to do badly, so he intensified his aggression toward Cuba. In the following months, the US Intelligence received reports of missile building in Cuba. They became concerned and began sending U-2 planes to photograph Cuba to find evidence that the reports were true. On October 14th, a fighter pilot photographed evidence of construction of a missile launch base, to the shock of the US. The next day, the US identified that it could launch medium-range missiles and warned Dean Rusk. They told Kennedy on October 16th, who brought together a National Security Council meeting that evening.

There were several plans raised, but Kennedy was fearful of too much confrontation as it could lead to the Soviets attacking Berlin and wider international consequences. However, Kennedy was fearful that Russian missiles in Cuba would rebalance the war in favour of the USSR. He would have to face brinkmanship – quite possibly the closest brinkmanship that would occur during the Cold War.

On 18th October, Kennedy met with the Soviet Foreign Affairs Minister, who claimed the weapons were defensive only – which Kennedy knew was not true. Kennedy did not tell him that he knew they were building many weapons, in case the conversation leaked and the US public became alarmed. On 19th October, U-2 spy planes found four more operational sites. On 21st October, the National Security Council met again to decide on either an air strike on the bases or a naval blockade of Cuba, both of which were problematic. There were concerns either could spark war with the USSR.

On 22nd October, Kennedy made a speech to the US public, telling them about the missiles and the intention to hold a blockade around Cuba. US ships surrounded Cuba and threatened to shoot down any boat that entered its parameter. It was expected that Khrushchev would offer to exchange Cuba for Berlin. The next day, China reaffirmed that it would stand behind Cuba. The same day, a cable from the US Ambassador in Turkey suggested Turkish missiles could be withdrawn in exchange for Cuba’s ones. On 25th October, Castro announced that this would not happen because Cuba had the right to defend itself.

On 24th October, the USSR broadcast a telegram from Khrushchev to Kennedy warning Kennedy to stop engaging in piracy in Cuba, and threatened war. He also stated that the blockade was an act of aggression and would tell his ships to ignore it. Kennedy made it clear he would issue an air strike if needed. Khrushchev realized that the USSR could not match the aggression of the US and started to look for diplomatic solutions which favoured both sides. M.A.D. was clear by this point, so Khrushchev blinked and tried to move away from the firing line.

On 25th October, Kennedy responded to the telegram, suggesting the USSR would force the US into a war because it was breaking illegal. The same day, the US let a ship through the blockade, thinking it did not have any missile equipment on it. Later, it was announced that missiles were still being worked on in Cuba. The CIA verified