

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 22, 1962

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM 196

TO: The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Secretary of the Treasury
The Attorney General
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT Establishment of an Executive Committee
of the National Security Council

I hereby establish, for the purpose of effective conduct of the operations of the Executive Branch in the current crisis, an Executive Committee of the National Security Council. This committee will meet, until further notice, daily at 10:00 a.m. in the Cabinet Room. I shall act as Chairman of this committee, and its additional regular members will be as follows: the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Ambassador-at-Large, the Special Counsel, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

The first meeting of this committee will be held at the regular hour on Tuesday, October 23rd, at which point further arrangements with respect to its management and operation will be decided.

cc:
The Under Secretary of State
The Deputy Secretary of Defense
The Ambassador-at-Large
The Special Counsel
The Special Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
bc:
Mr. O'Donnell
Mr. Salinger

Lyndon B. Johnson
cc: Mrs. Lincoln
Mr. Bundy (3)
Mr. Johnson
NSC Files

The Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) was a group of experts who advised President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. National Security Action Memorandum 196 established the ExComm to ensure effective decision making during the crisis. The memorandum called for Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, and Army General Maxwell Taylor, including others, to gather in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Robert Kennedy had no experience in foreign policy crisis, but was a member because the President trusted him.

<https://www.keepandshare.com/doc9/22576/excomm-pdf-265k?da=y>



This is a list of the 12 ExComm members and the positions they initially advocated with regard to the Crisis:

[Lyndon B. Johnson](#), Vice President. Kennedy relied on him to keep tabs during the crisis about the mood in Congress.

[Dean Rusk](#), Secretary of State. A former Rhodes scholar and lawyer by training, he initially favored an air strike against the missile installations in Cuba.

[Robert McNamara](#), Secretary of Defense. A former president of Ford Motor Company, he became an early, strong advocate of the blockade.

[C. Douglas Dillon](#), Secretary of the Treasury. The lone Republican in Kennedy's cabinet and a Wall Street veteran, initially supported an air attack.

[Robert Kennedy](#), Attorney General. Advocated for the blockade and participated in many secret meetings with the Soviet ambassador.

[John McCone](#), Director of Central Intelligence Agency. He was a former undersecretary of the Air Force and had pushed to fly U-2 reconnaissance missions over Cuba.

[George W. Ball](#), Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs. A former associate general counsel for the Lend-Lease program promoted a naval blockade.

[Roswell Gilpatric](#), Deputy Secretary of Defense. He was a former Wall Street lawyer and undersecretary of the Air Force and a strong advocate of the blockade.

[General Maxwell D. Taylor](#), Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff. A hero in the World War II invasions of Sicily and Italy initially backed immediate military action.

[Llewellyn Thompson](#), Ambassador-at-Large. He served as the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, and supported the naval blockade. Importantly, he persuaded Kennedy to accept Khrushchev's proposal on October 26 while publicly ignoring the section about removing missiles from Turkey.

[Theodore Sorensen](#), Special Counsel. He was the president's speechwriter advocated the naval blockade as the first response.

[McGeorge Bundy](#), Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. A former Harvard dean, he supported an air strike and took the minutes of the ExComm meetings.

The members of ExComm also obtained advice from the following experts:

[Dean Acheson](#), Former Secretary of State

[U. Alexis Johnson](#), Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs

[Edwin Martin](#), Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs

[Paul Nitze](#), Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security

[Kenneth O'Donnell](#), Special Assistant to the President

[Walt W. Rostow](#), Chairman, Policy Planning Council, Department of State

[Pierre Salinger](#), White House Press Secretary

[Bromley K. Smith](#), National Security Council Executive Secretary

[Adlai Stevenson](#), Ambassador to the United Nations

[Donald Wilson](#), Deputy Director of the U.S. Information Agency