

## JFK Meeting Tape 31.2

**Date:** 1962-10-19

**Participant:** John F. Kennedy

**Participant:** Curtis E. LeMay

**Start Time:** 09:45

**Place Name:** Cabinet Room

SCROLLER TITLE: “As Bad as the Appeasement at Munich”

SCENE SETTER: The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the decision to quarantine Cuba, a position they expressed directly to President Kennedy at the White House. Air Force chief of staff Curtis E. LeMay was particularly vocal about his opposition. As he framed it, Kennedy’s policy was “almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich.”

**President Kennedy:** So I don’t think we’ve got any satisfactory alternatives. When we balance off that our problem is not merely Cuba, but it is also Berlin. And when we recognize the importance of Berlin to Europe, and recognize the importance of our allies to us, that’s what gives—that’s what has made this thing be a dilemma for three days. Otherwise, our answer would be quite easy.

*End of excerpt 1.*

**Curtis E. LeMay:** Now, as for the Berlin situation, I don’t share your view that if we knock off Cuba, they’re going to knock off Berlin. We’ve got the Berlin problem staring us in the face anyway. If we don’t do anything to Cuba, then they’re going to push on Berlin and push real hard, because they got us on the run. If we take military action against Cuba, then I think that the—

**President Kennedy:** What do you think their reprisal would be?

**LeMay:** I don’t think they’re going to make any reprisal if we tell them that the Berlin situation is just like it’s always been: If they make a move, we’re going to fight. Now, I don’t think this changes the Berlin situation at all, except you’ve got to make one more statement on it. So I see no other solution. This blockade and political action I see leading into war. I don’t see any other solution to it. It will lead right into war. This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich.

*End of excerpt 2.*

CITATION: “Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Cuban Missile Crisis on 19 October 1962,” Tape 31.2, John F. Kennedy Library, President’s Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [The Great Crises, vol. 2, ed. Timothy Naftali and Philip Zelikow]* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/8020050>