



*Department of State, courtesy Harry S. Truman Library.*

President Truman and General Douglas MacArthur on Wake Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean during the early days of the Korean War.

President Truman at a press conference two days after Chinese communists had counterattacked UN forces in Korea.



*Harris & Ewing/Stock Montage, via Harry S. Truman Library.*



President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles addressed the nation on television shortly before the outbreak of the 1956 Suez War.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Presidential Library and  
Museum.*



In a national TV address, Eisenhower used an aerial photograph of San Diego to demonstrate the U-2's aerial photo capabilities.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Presidential Library and  
Museum.*



Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev and President Eisenhower at Camp David in 1959.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower  
Presidential Library and  
Museum.*

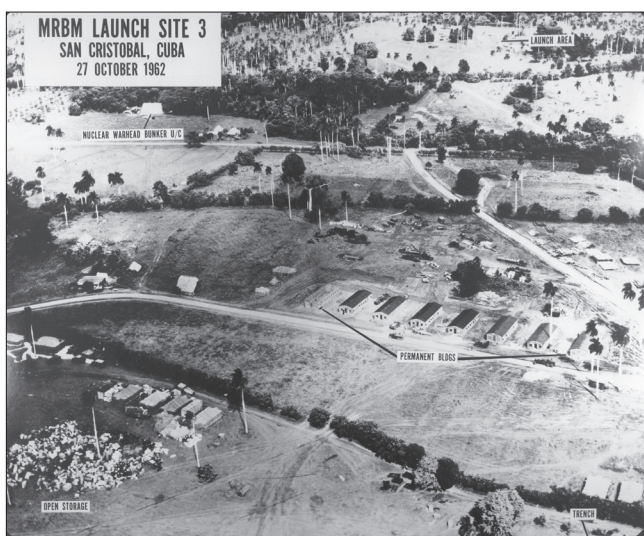


John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.



This aerial image from a low-level Navy reconnaissance flight shows the construction of a Soviet warhead storage bunker in San Cristobal, Cuba.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.



(Left) A launch site for a Soviet SS-4 medium-range ballistic missile in Cuba.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.



(Below) President Kennedy met frequently with his Cuban Missile Crisis advisory group.

Lyndon B. Johnson Library, photograph by Yoichi Okamoto.



President Johnson and his advisers in the White House Situation Room during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

President Johnson meeting with his staff after North Korea seized the intelligence-gathering ship, *USS Pueblo*.



Lyndon B. Johnson Library, photograph by Yoichi Okamoto.

Naval Historical and Heritage Command, Naval Subjects Collection.



*USS Pueblo* gathered signals intelligence (SIGINT) by loitering offshore of communist countries in the Far East.





*Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.*

President Nixon, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Chief of Staff Alexander Haig at Camp David during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.



*Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.*

President Nixon met with Congressional leaders in the Cabinet Room on October 10, 1973, four days after the start of the war.



Gerald R. Ford Library, photograph by David Hume Kennerly.

President Ford and his crisis team in the Cabinet Room during the *Mayaguez* incident.

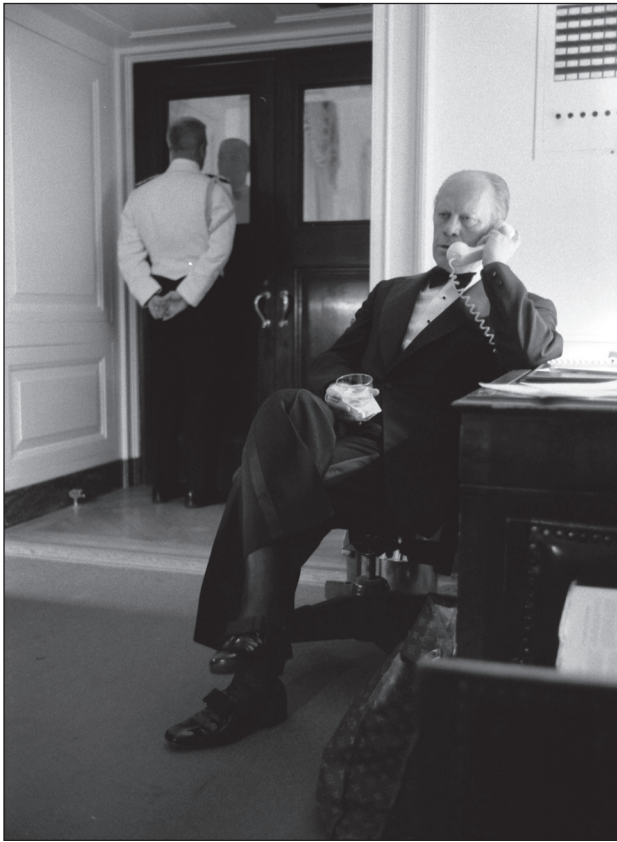


Associated Press.

Cambodian Khmer Rouge military personnel aboard a former US Navy Swift boat alongside the cargo ship *SS Mayaguez*, which they had seized.



*Gerald R. Ford Library, photograph by David Hume Kennerly.*



President Ford on the phone during a break from a White House dinner, speaking with Secretary of Defense Schlesinger about ongoing military operations during the crisis.



*Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.*

President Carter and his crisis advisers in the Cabinet Room during the Iranian hostage crisis.



Members of Carter's National Security Council joined the president at Camp David to discuss the threatened trial of American hostages in Tehran.

*Jimmy Carter Presidential Library*

President Carter addressed the nation after the aborted hostage rescue mission. His face reflected the immense pressures of the prolonged crisis.



*Associated Press*





Notified of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, President Reagan immediately returned from a golf weekend in Georgia and met with his crisis team in the conference room in the Situation Room complex.

*Ronald Regan Library.*



President Reagan considered a military response to a Libyan-backed terrorist attack in West Berlin.

*Ronald Regan Library.*



Reagan briefing Congressional leaders on the impending military strikes on Libya.

*Ronald Regan Library.*



George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

President George H. W. Bush preferred meeting with a small group of advisers during the 1990–91 Persian Gulf crisis.



George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

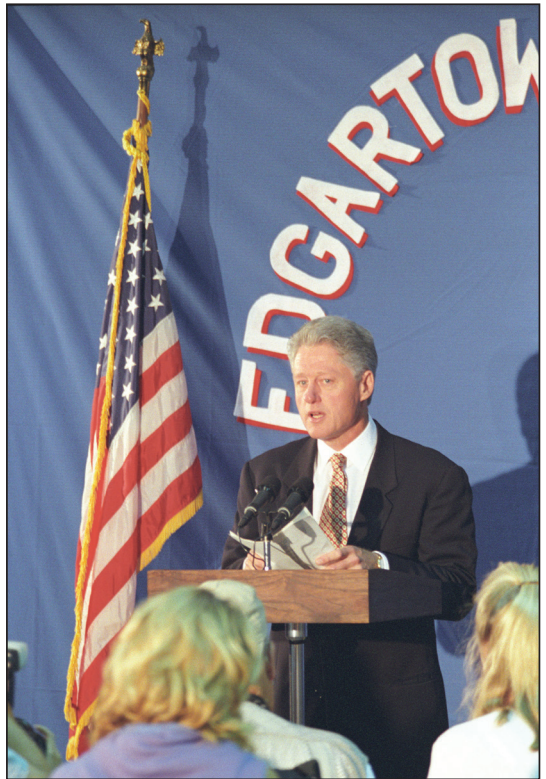
President Bush decided unilaterally to end the Persian Gulf War at this meeting after only 100 hours of ground combat.





William J. Clinton Presidential Library.

Meeting in the Oval Office, President Clinton considered responses to al-Qaeda's bombing of US embassies in East Africa.



William J. Clinton Presidential Library.

Shortly after Tomahawk cruise missiles struck targets in Afghanistan and Sudan, President Clinton addressed the news media on Martha's Vineyard, where he was vacationing.



George Bush Presidential Library.

President George W. Bush at a Florida elementary school after a second plane hit the World Trade Center.



George Bush Presidential Library.

Before returning to Washington on 9/11, President Bush held a videoconference with key advisers in the Strategic Command's underground bunker in Nebraska.





*George Bush, Presidential Library.*

Bush in the White House bomb shelter, the President's Emergency Operations Center, after addressing the nation on television in the evening of 9/11.



*Official White House Photo by Pete Souza.*

President Obama and his team in the Situation Room's conference room. Note the décor changes from Johnson to Reagan to Obama.



Early in the Arab Spring of 2011, President Obama called Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak from the Oval Office.

*Official White House Photo  
by Pete Souza.*



President Obama briefed congressional leaders in the Cabinet Room after a Syrian chemical weapons attack.

*Official White House  
Photo by Pete Souza.*





White House Photograph.

The author with his wife, Elin, sons, Erik (left) and Carter, and President Reagan.



White House Photograph.

The author as a White House social aide to President Nixon.



White House Photograph.

The author and George H.W. Bush.



White House Photograph.

The White House Situation Room is not just a room; it is the president's 24/7 intelligence center. And it is not underground, as the windows behind the duty officers attest in this mid-1980s image.