

Not too many people can say they saved the world, but these two sure can. The date was October 27th, 1962. It was at this time that the world came closer to nuclear war than any other time in our history...by far. It was the Cuban missile crisis. You know the story. Prior to the 27th of October, President Kennedy ordered a naval blockade to stop Russian ships from delivering any more nuclear war heads to Cuba. The blockade was a success. The Russian turned their ships around and shortly after an agreement was reached to take the missiles out of Cuba that were already there. However, the hopeful signs of peace would soon be shattered. On Oct 27th the Cubans shot down a U.S. spy plane even though the president warned that such an act would result in swift retaliation by the U.S.. President Kennedy called an emergency meeting of The Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss how the U.S. should respond. The meeting was tense, it was loud, it was aggressive. All the military Joint Chiefs of Staff exerted extreme pressure on the president to 'act *now*' and to '*retaliate before it was too late.*' The president however was not convinced. In his opinion diplomacy was needed. And, well, you know the rest. It was this diplomacy that saved the world because little did The Joint Chiefs of Staff know that on the island of Cuba was still one more missile with a nuclear warhead on it that had not been removed and was pointed directly at the state of Florida ready to be launched. Had there been a military strike by the U.S. as all the Joint Chiefs wanted, Cuba would have surely used it, sparking a retaliatory response by the U.S. to Russia thus starting a nuclear holocaust where by millions would have died. The composure of President Kennedy in the face of all those military advisors is legendary and was responsible for literally saving the world.

You know about the president's composure that day, but did you know about the other person responsible for saving the world that day? Vasili Arkhipov was a naval officer upon a Russian submarine that secretly escorted the Russian ships to Cuba on the day of the blockade. On the submarine was a nuclear torpedo. Due to a storm, the sub went off course and ended up floating not too far from Miami. Unable to communicate with Moscow the captain had no idea as to what was going on in regards to the spy plane being shot down and the response to come. The radio man on the sub tried desperately to communicate, but to no avail. He was however able to pick up a radio news station out of Miami which was reporting on the downing of the spy plane and how the White House was talking over plans for retaliation. Unable to communicate with Moscow, the captain of the sub, Captain Savitsky, panicked and ordered the nuclear missile be launched thinking the U.S. would retaliate with nuclear weapons. His second in command agreed and handed over to the captain the second of 3 keys needed to launch the missile. Vasili Arkhipov had the 3rd, part of a check and balance safeguard system the Russian put in place to prevent such an overreaction by any one man. The captain turned to Vasili for the key but he refused to hand it over. According to Vasili not enough was known and orders from the top were not given. The two went back and forth and after much verbal wrangling and even intimidation on the part of the captain, Vasili Arkhipov still did not give it up and without the 3rd key there could be no missile launched. Not long after, the radio man made contact with Moscow. They made it clear that the issue of the U2 plane was resolved and they were to head for home. Can you imagine the reaction of Captain Savitsky?

I mean how would you feel if you were almost responsible for starting a nuclear war?

So ended an incredible time in our nations history involving two men from two different countries believing in two different ideologies, each man an enemy of the other.

They were two men who couldn't of been more different but yet two men who will forever be linked by common bonds: First, the ability to exhibit extreme composure and common sense under intense pressure and second: the title they will share together as being the two men who literally saved the world.



President Kennedy



Vasili Arkhipov