



The Kennedy Presidency 1961

JFK at 100 presented by Kennedys and King | May 2017



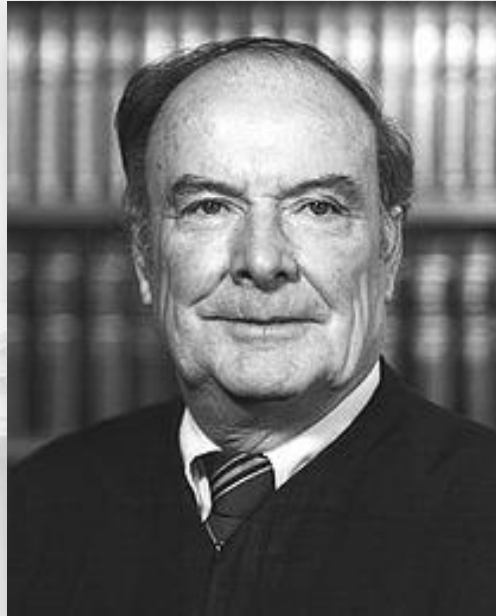
On January 17, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of Congo, who Kennedy favored, is murdered in Katanga. The CIA keeps this fact from Kennedy, since they had been involved in plots to kill him. On January 20, Kennedy is inaugurated. That evening he begins an informal affirmative action program because he felt there were not enough African Americans in that day's ceremony.



January 21: Robert Kennedy is confirmed as attorney general. JFK tells him to begin filing lawsuits in the south to attack voting discrimination. On February 2, and not knowing Lumumba is dead, Kennedy reverses Eisenhower's policy in Congo. He does not want Katanga split off, he supports the UN as an official force there and wants all political prisoners released. Twelve days later, Kennedy learns of Lumumba's death through Ambassador Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations. This moment is captured in a photo by Jacques Lowe which crystallizes Kennedy's anguish.



March 6: Kennedy signs an executive order to eliminate discrimination in government employee hiring and contracting. This law will eventually establish the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. On March 15, and due to resignations, Kennedy appoints two seats to the Civil Rights Commission and also a new staff director. This tilts the commission from being moderate to progressive.



March 20: The Kennedy administration intercedes in the New Orleans School District desegregation case on behalf of integrationist Judge J. Skelly Wright. JFK later appoints Judge Wright to the D.C. Court of Appeals.



April 12: After rumors of a U.S. operation against Cuba surface in the press, Kennedy pledges no American troops under any conditions will intervene in Cuba. On April 16, and with Kennedy's knowledge, the Bay of Pigs assault force leaves Guatemala. JFK does not exercise his option to cancel within 24 hours of departure. On April 19, the amphibious force is defeated on the beach at Playa Giron. The Pentagon asks for American intervention with jet fighters. Kennedy refuses.



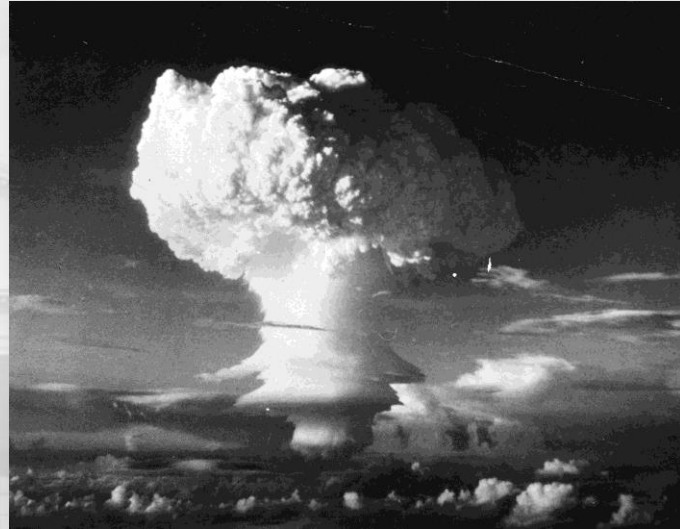
April 21: Kennedy accepts responsibility for the Bay of Pigs disaster in public. But he suspects the CIA lied to him about its chances of success. He privately commissions a White House study of what went wrong. So does the CIA.



On May 7, astronaut Alan Shepard becomes the first American to achieve human spaceflight. On May 25, Kennedy gives a speech before a joint session of Congress calling for an ambitious space exploration program that includes not just missions to put astronauts on the moon, but also a Rover nuclear rocket, weather satellites, and other space projects.



May 14: Freedom Riders arrive in Anniston, then Montgomery, Alabama. They are pulled off buses and beaten up with baseball bats. Double-crossed by the governor, and with the FBI doing nothing, Kennedy sends in 500 U.S. Marshals to rescue them. On May 29, and in his first reaction to the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy wires all embassies abroad that the ambassador in that nation makes all decisions about U.S. policy, not the CIA.



June 4: The Vienna summit with Khrushchev begins. The Russian leader is very aggressive about all of Berlin becoming part of East Germany. On July 20, the CIA and Pentagon propose to Kennedy a first strike nuclear attack on Russia for the fall of 1963. Kennedy asks a few questions, walks out, and comments to Dean Rusk, "And we call ourselves the human race."



August 14: East Germany closes down its border with West Berlin and the construction of the Berlin Wall begins. On August 17, Kennedy's plan to extend loans and aid to Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, is signed in Punta del Este, Uruguay.



September 14: Peace Corps Act passes the House and will be signed by the president in one week. Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, becomes its first director. Four days later, Dag Hammarskjold is killed when his plane is sabotaged. JFK calls him the greatest statesman of the 20th century, and vows to continue their policies for an independent, neutral Congo and freeing of West Irian from the Netherlands.

US Orders Segregation Halt In Interstate Bus Travel

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Interstate Commerce Commission Friday ordered a halt to racial segregation in interstate bus travel.

The rules, which go in effect Nov. 1, will require all interstate buses and all major terminals to post signs to the effect that seating and service are to be provided without regard to race, creed or color.

Attay. Gen. Robert K. Kennedy requested such action after the so-called "freedom riders" touted the South last spring testing racial barriers. There were several cases of violence, and numbers of the riders were arrested on disorderly conduct charges.

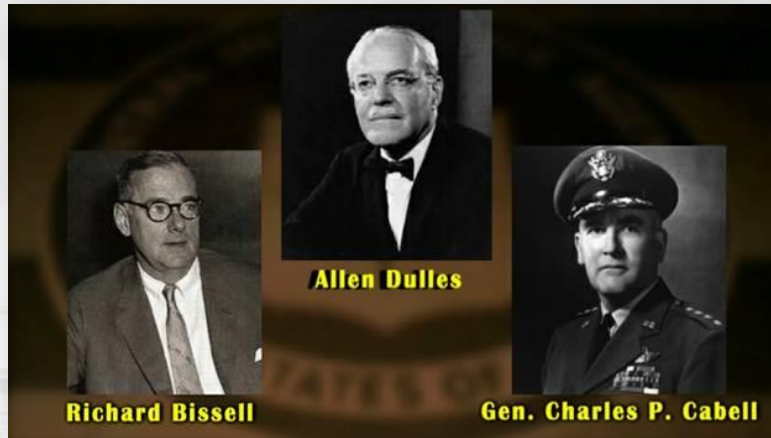
The commission said in a statement that it will require bus operators to report any interference with the new regulations.

Motor carriers found guilty of violating the rules could be fined a maximum of \$500 for each offense. The ICC would investigate complaints and present evidence to the U. S. attorney for the district where the incident occurred.

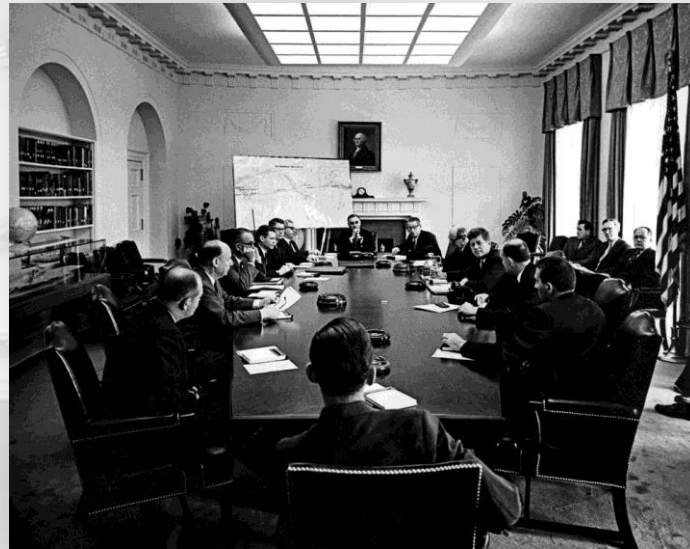
The new rules in effect make it illegal to maintain separate facilities for intra-state passengers in any terminal serving interstate buses. Many Southern cities maintain segregated facilities for interstate passengers, since the ICC does not regulate bus travel within states.



September 22: At the urging of RFK, the Interstate Commerce Commission passes laws to integrate all travel facilities. Through the enforcement of this law, by the end of 1962, the Freedom Riders have triumphed. On September 25, Kennedy addresses the United Nations, urging them not to forsake Hammarskjold's mission in Congo. Edmund Gullion now goes to Congo as Kennedy's ambassador.



October 16: Lyman Kirkpatrick finishes the CIA report on the Bay of Pigs. With this, and Gen. Maxwell Taylor's White House report, Kennedy asks for the resignations of Director Allen Dulles, his deputy Charles Cabell, and Director of Plans Dick Bissell. On October 28, U.S. and Soviet tanks face each other at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin over rights of diplomatic passage through the wall. Kennedy and Khrushchev negotiate a solution through proxies. Kennedy concludes, "Better a wall than a war."



November 2: Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow return from Vietnam. They recommend Kennedy commit combat troops to the conflict. On November 21, and on a secret mission to Saigon, India Ambassador John K. Galbraith wires JFK—there should be no more U.S. involvement and he should plan to withdraw. On November 22, during a two-week debate, Kennedy blocks all attempts to commit troops to Vietnam. He signs NSAM 111, which sends 15,000 advisors instead.



“I can make a strong case against intervening in an area 10,000 miles away against 16,000 guerillas, with a native army of 200,000, where millions have been spent for years with no success.”

John F. Kennedy
November 15, 1961