

# Everyone in the Developed World Owes This Man Their Life

While living in a developed modern nation comes with a slew of perks and benefits that allow for a certain degree of comfort when it comes to living, one of the unfortunate downsides to having superior technology reveals itself when one looks at those who use it maliciously or for destruction.

Nuclear weapons are undoubtedly one of the most terrifying creations the world has seen thus far, and with the United States demonstrating the power of two nuclear weapons on the nation of Japan toward the end of World War II ([resulting in the deaths of over 220,000 people the first day](#)), the world has been reluctant to see them used again.

As one could imagine, having the authority to inflict such devastation on a group of people comes with an unprecedented level of responsibility. One that requires a calm, reflective and composed demeanor. And luckily for the United States and much of the developed world, one Russian naval officer had the necessary demeanor and level-headedness to keep cool during a critical moment of tension between nations.

At the peak of the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#) in October of 1962, three Soviet submarines were stationed in the oceans surrounding Cuba, each one carrying a nuclear-tipped torpedo. The American naval forces had spotted one of the subs and began dropping depth charges on either side of it to signal that they knew of their presence and were asking them to surface (not knowing they had nuclear weapons on board).

Commander of this sub, Valentin Savitsky, nervous and exhausted, mistook these depth charges as direct attacks that were trying to sink their vessel. None of the submarines could

surface at the time, so they had no idea what was going on.

Savitsky, fearing that a war had started, decided that he would launch his nuclear torpedo and destroy the American fleet along with himself and everyone else to avoid the shame of defeat.

Luckily for everyone alive back then, and the future generations of Americans and Russians alike, Vasili Arkhipov, the commander in charge of the three subs, and Savitsky's equal, told Savitsky 'no.'

Each of the three subs had a commander on board and it was decided that when a nuclear weapon was wanting to be used, the commander of that ship needed the votes of the other two officers before being able to use the weapon.

Arkhipov, recognizing that the Americans were not attacking the submarines, told Savitsky that none of them were in danger and that they needed to surface.

They surfaced and were greeted by a U.S. destroyer. Their sub was not boarded by Americans and there were no inspections. The United States wouldn't know that there were nuclear weapons on board these submarines for at least 50 years.

Had Savitsky been allowed to use the nuclear-tipped torpedo, it would have likely triggered a chain reaction of nuclear activity by both the United States and the Soviet Union, producing catastrophic results across the entire world.

So, you, me, and everyone else that is alive today has one man to thank, and it's Vasili Arkhipov, the Russian naval commander that was able to keep his cool during a time of complete distress and uncertainty, knowing that the world would be forever changed if he hadn't.

