

LmunA 2023

# Research report

Forum: Historical Security Council  
Issue: Preventing escalation and promoting conflict resolution during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962  
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Position: President of The Historical Security Council



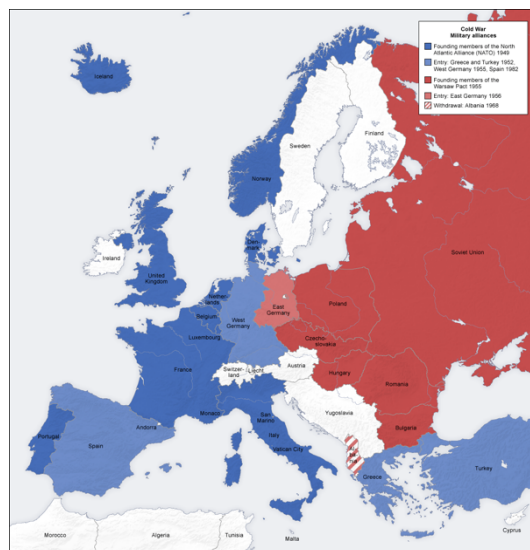
# LMUNA

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## Introduction

After the second World War, the axis powers were defeated and a significant power vacuum arose in Europe and the rest of the world, this power vacuum was swiftly filled by the Soviet Union in the east of Europe and the Western (Allied Powers) in the west. Both those powers came together in Germany, the central European country. The border between these powers caused a lot of friction. This was largely caused by both powers' ideologies being opposite from each other. And the once very unlikely allies during the second World War started a decades long stare-down and arms race that would later be called the Cold War.

This arms race had glowing red tinge to it. As the Second World War ended with the use of nuclear weapons, with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These nuclear bombs were developed by the United States in order to win the war in Japan in a swift manner. By the summer of 1949 the Russian Soviet Union caught up to the American nuclear developments and detonated their first nuclear bomb. Thus, both sides of the cold war were nuclear capable



Europe during the cold war  
[Source](#)

In these decades there were several Proxy-wars like the ones on the Korean Peninsula<sup>1</sup> and in Vietnam<sup>2</sup>. The period also knew several close calls like the during the Berlin Crisis of 1961<sup>3</sup> or the several close calls where early warning radar systems malfunctioned and the final decision to launch the nukes came down to a single person.

This research report will focus on one of the closest calls of the conflict. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962, where the two powers nearly collided in a nuclear conflict.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin\\_Crisis\\_of\\_1961](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Crisis_of_1961)

LmunA 2023

## Definitions of key terms

### *The Cold War*

The cold war was a decades spanning period of tension between the communist east and the capitalist west. This period in history was marked with nuclear testing, Revolutions, protests and the space race. Citizens of both sides of the conflict underwent a lot of stress and anxiety due to the looming threat of nuclear war and the fear of opposing ideologies. This was also based on a lot of propaganda from either sides.

### *Proxy War*

Proxy wars are conflicts where powerful nations support and manipulate other groups or states to fight on their behalf, often due to ideological or strategic interests. These wars allow major powers to avoid direct confrontation while still pursuing their goals. Notable examples include the Korean War and the Vietnam War during the Cold War era.

### *Nuclear Weapons*

A nuclear weapon in this context is an atomic bomb, that uses the fission of highly reactive elements to unleash an extreme amount of energy in a short moment. This energy is in the form of a lot of heat, a strong blast wave. This combined with a lot of radiation make the atomic bomb one of, if not the most destructive weapon humanity has ever created. These might later be referred to as 'nukes or 'A-bombs'

### *Coup D'état*

An often-military change of government in a country. Coup d'états are swift and, even though they result from authoritarian governments, the resulting governments are even authoritarian, possibly even dictatorial.

### *McCarthyism*

McCarthyism was a period of intense anti-communist hysteria in the United States during the Cold War era, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy. It involved witch hunts, congressional investigations, and blacklisting of individuals accused of being communists or sympathizers, often with little evidence. This era had a chilling effect on civil liberties and free speech until McCarthy's influence declined and he was censured by the Senate in 1954.

### *DEFCON*

DEFCON, short for "Defense Readiness Condition," is a system used by the United States military to communicate the readiness and alert status of the armed forces, particularly regarding the potential for nuclear war or other significant threats. The DEFCON levels range from 5 (lowest state of readiness) to 1 (highest state of readiness). Each level corresponds to specific preparedness measures and military actions that may be taken in response to escalating threats,

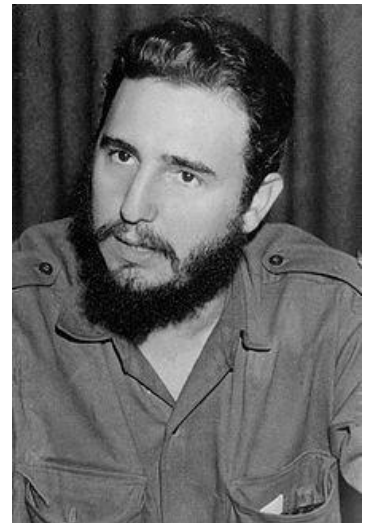
## LmunA 2023

with DEFCON 5 being normal peacetime readiness and DEFCON 1 indicating a state of maximum readiness, implying an imminent or ongoing major conflict or nuclear war.

### General overview

#### *Cuban Revolution*

After world war 2 a lot changed in the world ideology wise, several countries flipped from a fascist authoritarian state to either democracy or communism. Furthermore, some countries chose a more socialist approach during their democratic elections. The republic of Cuba had a more rocky road towards its current state. The country is Communist in 1962. However, that state of affairs has only been existing for several year. As in 1952, the democratically elected government had been ousted after the coup d'état placed a military dictatorship in power. This military dictatorship was by no means popular among the people and on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1953, only a bit longer than a year after the coup the country went through what would be called the Cuban Revolution. This was a period of rebellious activity led by Fidel Castro, a popular revolutionary, would lead to the rise of Marxist-Leninism in the country and the eventual ousting of the military dictator. The revolution was won and the Republic of Cuba for the first time ever would be under communist rule.



#### *US – Cuban Relations, Embargo's & the Bay of Pigs Invasion*

After the Cuban revolution US – Cuban relations soured as the American government feared that communist sympathies would spread across the country and the Americas if they would be supportive of the new Cuban government. On the other side of the Florida Keys the new, Castro led government was becoming more resentful towards the Americans as the Americans favoured the Military Dictatorship over the revolutionaries. After the Cuban state seized American assets in Cuba the American President Eisenhower and his administration chose to sever diplomatic relations, freeze all Cuban assets on American soil and increase the embargo imposed on Cuba. This initially only encompassed the sale of arms but was at that point scaled up to embargo everything except food and medicine. By the start of 1962 the embargo encompassed nearly everything.

By 1960 the US government was fed up with losing its control over their assets in Cuba and found that an embargo was not quick enough with removing power from the Communist government in Cuba. This combined with increased fear of communism, known as McCarthyism, which made the US government more and more invested in a quick removal of

## LmunA 2023

Castro's government. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was ordered to look into options to overthrow Castro's government and was allotted 13 million USD (1960). The options that came out were amongst others, to assassinate Fidel Castro or Invade the Island. The CIA explored both options and attempted many times to assassinate Fidel Castro or his compatriots like Che Guevara.

The Idea of invading the island was explored further and preparations were made. The CIA had already several experiences with installing new governments in South America and created a small task force of agents to devise a plan to invade the island.

A force of Cubans in exile was assembled and amounted to 1400 men, they were trained by the CIA in Guatemala and come the inauguration of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) by February the force was ready to invade. The invasion went badly as JFK decided to disguise American participation to the fullest. And the force already weakened from the start. The airstrikes that were supposed to weaken the Revolutionary air force missed most of its targets and the invasion force was quickly met with a 20.000-man strong Cuban force and the invasion was lost within a day.

The failed invasion heavily soured US-Cuban relations and the United States were to pay the Cuban Republic back for the prisons they took.

### *The Beginning of the crisis*

Already in the first year of JFK's presidency he would be faced with the biggest challenge of his political career, probably his life.

### **Soviet-Cuban relations**

By late 1961 Soviet-Cuban relations were not completely stable. Castro called upon the Soviet Union to supply the Cuban with anti-aircraft missiles. This was not granted by the Soviet Union and that fell badly with Castro. This fogged up the relation between the countries and Castro already started to look towards the Chinese People's Republic for economic assistance. This, coupled with the firing of a pro-Moscow party leader in Cuba made the Soviet Union concerned about the Cuban drift towards China. It said to be the driving factor for the Soviet Union to concede and send these anti-aircraft missiles to Cuba.

### **U.S.-Cuban relations**

The bay of Pigs invasion was made a significant crack in the U.S.-Cuban relations. The United States wanted Castro gone and Castro was furiously starting to hate the Americans. The United States launched a full-scale embargo against the Cubans and the Cubans seized American assets. The Americans attempted to assassinate Castro and sponsored a terror campaign on the island as well as sabotage missions and other covert destabilization activities.

### **U.S.-Soviet relations & S/M/ICBM's**

A new president of the USA was for the Soviets not a big deal, Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary (Leader) of the Soviet Union was not impressed by JFK. He felt that Kennedy was

## LmunA 2023

weak and during the Berlin Crisis of 1961, a very heated point between both sides of the Iron Curtain.

In total Cold War style, there were constant tensions between the two superpowers, although 'recently' in 1959, Khrushchev visited the United States for nearly two weeks.

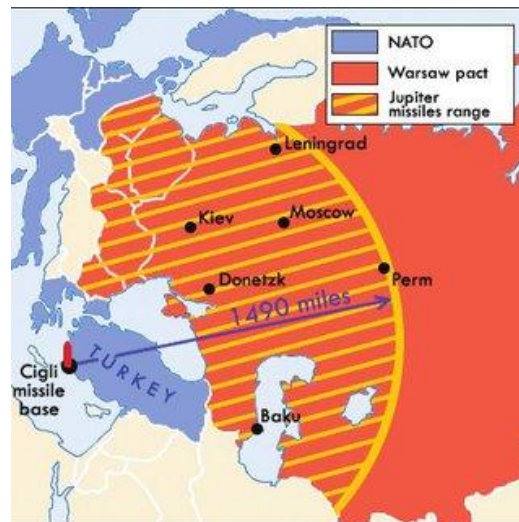
By 1962 rocket and guided rocket (Missile) development had come a long way since the Second World war. The space race was about to kick off in full swing and the arms race was already going extremely fast paced. The superpowers were finding quicker ways to deliver ordinance to each other in all kinds of creative ways. Firing Nuclear armed missiles from a submarine, dropping bombs from faster and faster planes. The space race gave way to another form. Launching missiles from a base and having it travel high up in space, to later have it come down at high speeds. The enemy would not be able to stop the warhead from coming down. These are called ballistic missiles. These came in all shaped and sizes, like the famous ICBM's (InterContinental), and others like IRBM's (Intermediate-Range), MRBM's (Medium-Range) and SRBM's (Short-Range).

### MRBM's in Turkey & Italy

In 1961 the Americans and NATO placed such MRBM's too close to comfort for the Soviet Union. Jupiter type Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles were installed in Italy, but most importantly in Turkey.

With a range of over 1500 miles, these missiles, capable of delivering nuclear warheads to the Soviet capital of Moscow. This made top brass in the Soviet Union wary and somewhat afraid of the new American presence.

Something needed to be done about this seeming threat because the Soviet Union was at a disadvantage, as ICBMs were not yet developed to such a point that Russian missiles from Russian soil could hit American cities.



### Soviet Arms to Cuba

With a new Marxist-Leninist country being a stone's throw away, Russia did see a strategic ally in Cuba, one that could provide the same strategic possibilities as Turkey could to the USA. This So to strengthen Cuban-Soviet relations and to level the playing field, Khrushchev sent an envoy to Castro.

Castro at first, was hesitant, he wanted to seem strong and not give in to that much soviet influence, however the envoy sent by Khrushchev was persuasive and argued that the missiles would assure safety for both the USSR and Cuba. Cuba would become a big player on the world stage. This still did not fully convince Castro in the end Khrushchev pressured him to accept it.





## LmunA 2023

and sent his brother, Robert Kennedy to the Soviet Embassy where the Soviet Ambassador could only respond by denying the fact and stating he was explicitly instructed that there were no missiles in Cuba.

EXCOMM discussed many different courses of action, between which were diplomacy, full-scale invasion of the island, airstrikes of the known sites, do nothing or covertly offer Castro a way out or be invaded. However, the committee and the president would remain talking for several days as it was further discovered there were 3 operational bases. The committee decided a full-scale invasion would not be the correct option as well as doing nothing would also be unwise as it would show the world that the US would allow 'the enemy' to place them under danger.

### **DEFCON level increases and the quarantine**

EXCOMM decided the best option would be a blockade, to stop any and all ships from entering and supplying Cuba. This way no (extra) missiles could be installed at the missile bases.

It is important this blockade to be a quarantine, otherwise it would be an act of war.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1962, a lot of diplomatic and administrative events happened. At 3pm Kennedy official created EXCOMM, by 5pm he met with congressional leader who would oppose the blockade. In Moscow, the American Ambassador would inform Khrushchev of the blockade and around the globe American delegations would inform several non-eastern bloc countries' governments of the blockade. Conrad Adenauer (West Germany), Charles de Gaulle (France) and Harold Macmillan (United Kingdom) were to be informed of the intel and the subsequent blockade. Together with the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States they were all approving of the American plan.

At 7pm Kennedy went live to the nation and delivered an address to explain the situation to the American public. During the speech a directive went out to all military bases of the United States placing all US forces on DEFCON 3, within 15 minutes of the order, missiles could be fired, and aircraft would take off.

Shortly after, tensions rose as countries like the Soviets Union officially reacted to the blockade. Fidel Castro calls for a nationwide mobilization, calling on 300,000 men to defend the island. In Florida, USA, bombers clutter the runway, troops sleep in football stadiums and are ready to invade the island of Cuba.

Tensions rising caused American Strategic Air Command (SAC) to move on to DEFCON 2 on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the 1500 bombers of the SAC will be on continuous air alert and are circling near Russian airspace.

**Presidents note:** "this is very unorthodox thing to do, but to raise the stakes of debate and to actually have us search for a resolution, the 'lore' would stop here. It is October 26<sup>th</sup> and tensions are nearly at an all-time high. Any further information in the General Overview is not to be used



## LmunA 2023

during debate but rather to inform you of the events of the crisis. We believe this is sufficient for the debate”

October 26<sup>th</sup>, Khrushchev sends a message urging for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. He proposes that the Soviet troops return to Russia if the Americans promise not to invade Cuba. Kennedy and his administration are initially in favour of this. However, the next morning, October 27<sup>th</sup> (Black Saturday), Radio Moscow broadcasts another proposition: The removal of Cuban missiles, in exchange of a guarantee of non-aggression towards Cuba AND that the Jupiter missiles were to be removed from Turkey.



Castro writes a letter to Khrushchev urging for a first (nuclear) strike.

### **Black Saturday, the day World War Three was supposed to begin**

October 27<sup>th</sup> was the day where if only one thing were to be a bit different, history would have played out entirely different. At noon, a U-2 Spy plane conducting aerial reconnaissance was shot down by the Cuban military. The plane was lost, and the pilot was killed. The US found that the USSR had drawn first blood. All the while EXCOMM was heavily discussing a response to Khrushchev's both proposals. Kennedy and Khrushchev were making up their own minds. They wanted humanity to survive.

After a long during yet short relay of communications both parties decided to stand down, agree to the 'missile swap' and not escalate any further.

### **B-59 and Vasily Arkhipov**

During these discussions and at the height of tensions between both powers, Soviet nuclear armed submarine, B-59, had been playing cat and mouse with an American destroyer. Though the destroyer had finally caught up to the submarine and started to throw training depth charges to warn the submarine (as the blockade was still up). The submarine was too deep to observe any radio contact and for all the crew would have known, the war had already started. This got up to such a boiling point where the captain ordered to load the torpedo with a nuclear warhead to the front of it.

To launch such a weapon the two commanding officers on board should be in agreement, they were. However, the flotilla commander of the submarine fleet was present as well. Vasily Arkhipov was against their decision and the torpedo did not launch.

## LmunA 2023

### **Major parties involved**

#### *Republic of Cuba*

Cuba is a country in the Caribbean, the government is communist and is the theater of this crisis. Fidel Castro is a trigger-happy revolutionary in this crisis. He is the ultimate loser of this crisis, as he lost both any sympathy from the US and support from the USSR.

#### *U.S.A*

Powerhouse of the west. The USA is one of the most powerful countries in the world and its ideology is capitalist democracy. They feel threatened by the Soviet weapons in Cuba and have a certain distaste for communism.

#### *USSR*

Powerhouse of the east, the largest country in the world and the strongest eastern might. The USSR is the adversary of the USA and western nations. They are the stronghold and source of communism. They are inherently opposed to capitalism, and they think communism is the solution for all the issues.

#### *Turkey*

Turkey, being a member of NATO is in this period one of the most important allies of NATO when it comes to strategic advantage. The US has placed Jupiter MRMB's there which pose a significant threat towards the Soviet Union.

#### *NATO*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the military alliance between all the democratic western countries. It comprises of most western European countries as well as the USA and Canada. ("please note that it is 1962 and NATO is not as large as it is in the present")

#### *OAS*

The Organization of American States is a foreign relations organization comprised of nearly all American States (Countries in the Americas, not to be confused with the 50 States of the USA). This organization focuses on human rights, social and economic development as well as security. Its role in this crisis is that it might pose as a security alliance and/or diplomatically

## LmunA 2023

intervene. Argentina, Venezuela, and Trinidad & Tobago as well as the Dominican Republic offered ships or ports to help the blockade. Furthermore, it was used as legal ground for the 'quarantine'

### Timeline of Key Events

1953 - 1959	Cuban Revolution
January 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1961,	JFK becomes president
April 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1961,	Bay of Pig
Early 1961	Missiles in Turkey
May 1962	Agreement between Castro and Khrushchev
July 1962	Arms to Cuba
Early August 1962	First sighting of Soviet Presence in Cuba
September 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1962, reconnaissance	Start of the photo gap, significantly less aerial
September 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	First missiles in Cuba
October 14 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	Confirmation of missiles in Cuba
October 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 1962,	DEFCON 3, Kennedy addresses the nation, the blockade starts
Morning, October 26 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	DEFCON 2 (Strategic Air Command only)
<b>"The future"</b>	
Evening, October 26 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	Peace proposal(s) by Khrushchev

### LmunA 2023

12:00 pm October 27 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	U-2 incident
October 27 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	B-59 incident
November 15 <sup>th</sup> , 1962	Strategic Air Command DEFCON 3
November 20 <sup>th</sup> , 1962,	Worldwide US Forces DEFCON 4 (business as usual for the cold war)

### **Possible solutions**

This issue was eventually solved by politics and diplomacy, with a bit military action in the mix. However, EXCOMM discussed several options after initial confirmation of missiles in Cuba, among these options were

1. Do nothing: American vulnerability to Soviet missiles was not new.
2. Diplomacy: Use diplomatic pressure to get the Soviet Union to remove the missiles.
3. Secret approach: Offer Castro the choice of splitting with the Soviets or being invaded.
4. Invasion: Full-force invasion of Cuba and overthrow of Castro.
5. Air strike: Use the US Air Force to attack all known missile sites.
6. Blockade: Use the US Navy to block any missiles from arriving in Cuba.

Eventually it came down to the blockade, but one has to wonder what would have happened if these options were chosen.

### **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

There were no true attempts to solve this issue, as it was a crisis and an ongoing and daily (sometimes hourly) changing event.

However, it is important to point out the aforementioned several options that the EXCOMM decided to debate on. These could be seen as attempts to solve the issue.

Furthermore, there were, of course, several attempts to solve this conflict by way of diplomacy. An example of this would be backroom politics by the Kennedy's where the brother of JFK, Robert F. Kennedy would meet in secret with the Soviet ambassador in the United States. Where

## LmunA 2023

at times would plead for peace through persuasion and convincing. RFK's efforts most likely had played a significant part in this crisis and its solution.

### **Further reading**

Please join our WhatsApp groupsapp that we have made:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/IRG8m5bqNtBFgQTEFjtaUi>

Please only join if you are a delegate in the LmunA 2023 HSC

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/the-cuban-missile-crisis-how-to-respond>

<https://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/> (this one is interactive and holds a ton of information and content)

### **Bibliography**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqJBibhR07w>

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[https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis`](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban\\_Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Revolution)