

— HELIMUN XXVI ANNUAL SESSION —

Forum: Historical Security Council

Issue: The Cuban Missile Crisis

Student Officer: Reko Vainio

Position: President of the Historical Security Council

Introduction

Our day is defined by growing tensions in a bi-polar world. It may seem inevitable that all nations choose their side in the competition between super powers – the United States, champion of the capitalist democracies of the global West on one hand, and the communist world movement led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the other. However, the United Nations must thoroughly remain committed to mankind's ultimate interests, principally our continued existence. Today it is threatened, in a way wholly distinct from any hour man has yet faced. We must rise to the occasion, and make it so we shall avert a third World War in our time.

The US and the USSR are looking each other "eyeball to eyeball" on the Caribbean Sea, now. Reconnaissance has confirmed that ballistic missile launch sites have been constructed on the communist island nation of Cuba. Fidel Castro's government has received assistance in this endeavor from the Soviets in a co-ordinated effort. Medium-range ballistic nuclear missiles were also discovered, with the Soviets attempting to bring even more by sea. These weapons have the ability to swiftly reach major American cities, and the US President Kennedy has vowed to leave no measure unused in the pursuit to neutralize the missiles. The Soviet Union remains opaque, and unwilling to back down. Both nations possess nuclear arsenals which if deployed could devastate the world in an unimaginable fashion. A large number of our member nations are aligned with one of the two parties, especially in Europe through NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and it is clear that an American-Soviet war would mean the mutual devastation of the parties involved.

Definition of Key Terms

Cold War

The world is currently embroiled in a power struggle between two super powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, through their military alliances (NATO and the Warsaw pact, respectively) and satellite states.¹ This conflict stems from a fundamental ideological disparity between "1st-world" Western-European nations led by the US, which engage in and promote free market capitalism, and "2nd-world" Marxist-Leninist nations led by the USSR. While tensions have somewhat cooled since the death of Soviet despot Stalin, the Sino-Soviet split has left the USSR more vulnerable, and in need to consolidate allies and present strength.²

Proxy War

Military conflict in which one or more third parties directly or indirectly support one or more state or nonstate combatants in an effort to influence the conflict's outcome and thereby to advance their own strategic interests or to undermine those of their opponents. Third parties in a proxy war do not participate in the actual fighting to any significant extent, if at all. Proxy wars enable major powers to avoid direct confrontation with each other as they compete for influence and resources. Direct means of support by third parties consist of military aid and training, economic assistance, and sometimes limited military operations with surrogate forces. Indirect means of support have included blockades, sanctions, trade embargoes, and other strategies designed to thwart a rival's ambitions.³

Nuclear Weapon

A device designed to release energy in an explosive manner as a result of nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of the two processes. Nuclear weapons produce enormous explosive energy. Their significance may best be appreciated by the coining of the words *kiloton* (1,000 tons) and *megaton* (1,000,000 tons) to describe their blast energy in equivalent weights of the conventional chemical explosive TNT. For example, the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945, containing only about 64 kg (140 pounds) of highly enriched uranium, released energy equaling about 15 kilotons of chemical explosive. That blast immediately produced a strong shock wave, enormous amounts of heat, and lethal ionizing radiation. Convection currents created by the explosion drew dust and other debris into the air, creating the mushroom-shaped cloud that has since become the virtual signature of a nuclear explosion. In addition, radioactive debris was carried by winds high into the atmosphere, later to settle to Earth as radioactive fallout. The enormous toll in destruction, death, injury,

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War>, accessed 6.12.2025

² Westad, Odd Arne 2017: *The Cold War - A War History*, ISBN 978-0-141-97991-5

³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/proxy-war>, accessed 6.12.2025

and sickness produced by the explosions at Hiroshima and, three days later, at Nagasaki was on a scale never before produced by any single weapon.⁴⁵ Nuclear weapons have developed since. While depositing a bomb deep into enemy territory requires a profound control over said enemy's air space, the modern invention of placing a thermonuclear warhead on an intercontinental missile eliminates this requirement. IRBMs and MRBMs were placed on Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The former is the abbreviation for an intermediate-range ballistic missile, which have ranges of about 2400 to 6000 kilometers. MRBMs are medium-range ballistic missiles, and have ranges of 1000 to 3000 km.⁶ For reference, the distance between Havana and Washington DC is a little over 1800 km.⁷

Nuclear Holocaust

A nuclear holocaust, also known as a nuclear apocalypse, nuclear annihilation, nuclear armageddon, or atomic holocaust, is a theoretical scenario where the mass detonation of nuclear weapons causes widespread destruction and radioactive fallout, with global consequences. Such a scenario envisages large parts of the Earth becoming uninhabitable due to the effects of nuclear warfare, potentially causing the collapse of civilization, the extinction of humanity, or the termination of most biological life on Earth.⁸

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)

A doctrine of military strategy and national security policy which posits that a full-scale use of nuclear weapons by an attacker on a nuclear-armed defender with second-strike capabilities would result in the complete annihilation of both the attacker and the defender.^[1] It is based on the theory of rational deterrence, which holds that the threat of using strong weapons against the enemy prevents the enemy's use of those same weapons. The strategy is a form of Nash equilibrium in which, once armed, neither side has any incentive to initiate a conflict or to disarm.⁹

Deterrence Theory

Military strategy under which one power uses the threat of reprisal effectively to preclude an attack from an adversary power. With the advent of nuclear weapons, the term deterrence largely has been applied to the basic strategy of the nuclear powers and of the major alliance systems. The premise of the strategy is that each nuclear power maintains a high level of instant and overwhelming destructive capability against any aggression—i.e., the ability, visible and credible to a would-be attacker, to inflict unacceptable damage upon the attacker with forces that survive a surprise attack. An essential element

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/nuclear-weapon>, accessed 6.12.2025

⁵ Simonen, Katriina 2023: *Joukkotuhaoiset ja asevalvonta*. Maanpuolustuskokeakoulu, Helsinki, referred to 18.12.2025

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/missile#ref264832>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁷ <https://www.airmilescalculator.com/distance/hav-to-dca/>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁸ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1449821/pdf/0940036.pdf>, accessed 6.12.2025

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_assured_destruction, accessed 6.12.2025

in successful deterrence is a degree of uncertainty on the part of a would-be aggressor as to whether the target power, although attacked and badly damaged, will nonetheless retaliate—even at the risk of suffering further, crippling damage in a second attack. Thus, nuclear-deterrence strategy relies on two basic conditions: the ability to retaliate after a surprise attack must be perceived as credible; and the will to retaliate must be perceived as a possibility, though not necessarily as a certainty.¹⁰

Naval Blockade

A belligerent operation to prevent vessels and/or aircraft of all nations, enemy as well as neutral, from entering or exiting specified ports, airfields, or coastal areas belonging to, occupied by, or under the control of an enemy nation, to deny the enemy the use of enemy and neutral vessels or aircraft to transport personnel and goods to or from enemy territory. Today the establishment of a blockade is very often an integral part of a military operation that is not directed against the enemy's economy but against its armed forces. For example, a blockade may be declared and enforced in preparation of a landing operation. It may also help in surrounding enemy armed forces or in cutting off their lines of supply.¹¹ The US is currently engaged in a blockade on Cuba, on top of the economic embargo, which has stood since 1960.

Truman doctrine

US policy of opposing totalitarianism and containing the expansion of Soviet communism throughout the Cold War.¹² The military nature of the Truman doctrine is exemplified in the 1950 national security directive "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" (colloquially "NSC 68"). The paper outlined arms (including nuclear) buildup, military support of allies, and an aggressive disposition toward the USSR.¹³¹⁴ The Truman doctrine is in action around the world in 1962, specifically in Vietnam. President Kennedy has approved a significant increase in military aid to the South Vietnamese government, which is embroiled in a battle against the communist North Vietnam. This support includes an increase of US military advisers in Vietnam, from 3,000 to 17,000.¹⁵¹⁶

Embargo

Legal prohibition by a government or group of governments restricting the departure of vessels or movement of goods from some or all locations to one or more countries.¹⁷ The US has had Cuba under

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/deterrence-political-and-military-strategy>, accessed 6.12.2025

¹¹ <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1429&context=ils>, accessed 6.12.2025

¹² <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>, accessed 26.12.2025

¹³ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68>, accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁴ <https://info.publicintelligence.net/US-NSC-68.pdf>, accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zvmrr2p/revision/2>, accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁶ <https://dh.scu.edu/exhibits/exhibits/show/vietnam-war-from-truman-to-nix/john-f-kennedy>, accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/money/embargo-international-law>, accessed 6.12.2025

embargo since 1960, as a response to Castro's mass nationalizations of Cuba's agriculture and natural resources, most of which were property of American companies.¹⁸ The embargo prohibits American businesses from doing business in Cuba.¹⁹

Nuclear Sharing

Nuclear sharing is a concept in deterrence theory in which a nuclear-armed country deploys nuclear weapons on the territory of a country that does not possess nuclear weapons and extended its nuclear deterrent to that country. Nuclear sharing typically also involves joint planning and training processes for potentially using them, going beyond nuclear stationing or nuclear basing, which refer to a nuclear-armed country's deployment of nuclear weapons on foreign soil without an operational role for the host country's military and government.²⁰

Strategic Weapons

Any weapons system designed to strike an enemy at the source of his military, economic, or political power. In practice, this means destroying a nation's cities, factories, military bases, transportation and communications infrastructure, and seat of government. Strategic weapons systems use atomic or thermonuclear devices, because only these weapons have sufficient explosive power to destroy, with relative ease and quickness, the entire war-making capability of a large nation. The term strategic weapons system refers not merely to the explosive devices themselves but rather to the complex delivery systems that enable these warheads to reach their targets. Indeed, the distinguishing feature of a strategic weapons system is its ability to deliver thermonuclear warheads accurately from one continent to another.²¹

Collective Security

An international political arrangement involving an alliance of nations that agree not to attack one another. In the event that any member nation breaks this pledge by attacking another member or causing some other clear threat to overall peace within the alliance, the other nations are obligated to respond. These responding nations may take a number of strategies in dealing with the aggressor nation, ranging from diplomacy to sanctions to armed warfare, with the overall goal of restoring peace and security to the alliance.²²

Article 5 (NATO)

Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that an armed attack against one NATO member shall be considered an attack against them all.²³ The United States is a principle member of the Treaty Organization.

¹⁸ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1156316>, accessed 16.12.2025

¹⁹ Hastings, Max 2022: *Abyss - World on the Brink*, ISBN 978-0-00-836503-5, referred to 26.12.2025

²⁰ https://nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/mohamed_shaker_npt_vol_2.pdf, accessed 6.12.2025

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/strategic-weapons-system>, accessed 7.12.2025

²² <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/diplomacy-and-international-relations/collective-security-political-strategy>, accessed 7.12.2025

²³ <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/introduction-to-nato/collective-defence-and-article-5>, accessed 7.12.2025

Operation Mongoose

US campaign of sabotage and terrorism against Cuba, aimed at deposing the communists. Authorized by President Kennedy on 30 Nov 1961, and rendered obsolete on 30 Oct 1962. Many plans were made to assassinate Fidel Castro, specifically. A major reason for the USSR's decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba.²⁴²⁵²⁶

Background

Cuba gained independence in 1902 when US military rule, established after the Spanish-American war, ended. The US maintained a large amount of influence in Cuban affairs through the Platt Agreement from 1901 to 1934, which allowed the US to legally interfere in Cuba's affairs. Cuba during the early 20th century has been described a protectorate of the United States, subject to repeated military interventions. For instance, during 1906-1909, Cuba was ruled by an American governor.

American domination of Cuban industry and economics would continue under democratically elected leaders, but discontentment toward the lopsided relationship grew during the tenure of General Fulgencio Batista, who had suspended the Cuban democracy in 1950, and ruled as dictator. Corruption was omnipresent in the executive branch of the government, and opposition politicians were violently persecuted during this time. The US supported the regime logically, financially, and militarily.²⁷ Indeed, at the beginning of 1959, the US accounted for two-thirds of Cuba's imports, while American companies owned 40% of the country's sugar fields, 90% of the mines, 80% of the utilities, and practically all cattle ranches, as well as the oil industry. While the quality of life in the country degraded, a significant portion of US aid amounted to arming and bolstering the rule of Fulgencio Batista, and not helping average Cubans reach a higher standard of life.²⁸ Wealth disparities grew, instead. Revolutionary groups began to form in the poor districts of cities. One such group, lead by young lawyer Fidel Castro, attacked the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba on 26 July 1953. The effort failed and the surviving rebels were imprisoned until 1955. Castro, his brother, and several of their comrades fled to Mexico the same year, where they regrouped and recruited more help, including the eventually famous Ernesto Guevara. The following year they landed a small insurgent force, and waged an ultimately successful guerrilla war from the mountains of Sierra Maestra against Batista, whose troops (though far greater in numbers) were ill-trained and unmotivated. When in 1958 the US stopped selling weapons to Batista's incredibly unpopular government, the rebels made a final offensive and captured Havana in 1959. The civil instability caused by the revolution caused around 700 000 Cubans to flee to the US.²⁹

While the US hoped that Castro would democratize the country, he consolidated power in a one-party system, and nationalized farmland from US companies. Cuba also invaded Panama and the Dominican Republic with guerrilla soldiers in April and June of 1959 respectively. Both of these

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Mongoose, accessed 11.12.2025

²⁵ <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/cuba/2019-10-03/kennedy-cuba-operation-mongoose>, accessed 26.12.2025

²⁶ Escalante, Fabián (1996). *CIA Targets Fidel: Secret 1967 CIA Inspector General's Report on Plots to Assassinate Fidel Castro*. Melbourne, Vic., Australia: Ocean Press. ISBN 1875284907.

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cuba#1940_Constitution_and_the_Batista_era, accessed 7.12.2025

²⁸ <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/speech-senator-john-f-kennedy-cincinnati-ohio-democratic-dinner>, accessed 7.12.2025

²⁹ Aalto, J., et co. 2020 *Opus 2: Kansainväliset suhteet*, Edita publishing OY, ISBN 978-95 5.1.2026 1-37-7776-0, referred to

operations failed unceremoniously.³⁰ American relations quickly deteriorated. Dwight Eisenhower approved CIA plans to bring Castro down at all costs. However, their plan to incite a counter-revolution by training Cuban exiles failed disasterously, after the operatives failed to gain anticipated support amongst the populous when they landed in the infamous Bay of Pigs Invasion of April 1961. The US backed down, and didn't help the almost-immediately captured operatives. The Kennedy administration had been humiliated, but a new plan to destabilize Cuba and assassinate Castro, Operation Mongoose, was approved.³¹ However, the Cuban leadership had been shaken by the apparent aims of the US to upend their regime. Cuba had already been driven to the USSR as its main trade partner after the US had instituted an embargo in 1960. After the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban revolution was declared Marxist-Leninist, and the country sought closer political and military ties with the Soviet Union to protect itself from further US invasions.³²

At the same time, the world's premier socialist nation, the USSR, was looking to fortify its influence over the worldwide communist bloc. After the death of dictator Joseph Stalin, his successor Khrushchev had shocked the system by announcing de-Stalinization: the dismantling of personality cult around the position of General-Secretary, and a slightly softer foreign policy where capitalist nations weren't an existential threat, and the existence of neutral countries was accepted. This had begun to cause the Sino-Soviet Split. China would no longer be a Soviet ally, and instead a competing power. The Soviet Union would henceforth need to actively keep its allies under control. Cuba was an example of an isolated socialist country in danger of being toppled by the US. Khrushchev wished to support the faraway island nation.

From a July 1962 meeting between Cuba's Castro and Khrushchev came the idea that the USSR could place ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads on Cuba. The initiative was Castro's. The use of this was two-fold. Firstly, The US wouldn't dare attack a nation under the USSR's nuclear umbrella, as everyone understood the devastation which would befall the world should nuclear powers go head to head. Secondly, it would tip the scales in the nuclear arms race: The US had Jupiter-class ballistic missiles in range of Moscow in Turkey and Italy. The Soviet Union would be better secured if Washington D.C. was also susceptible. For both parties, the perks of such an agreement seemed undisputable. The USSR would thus deliver 24 IRBM launch pads and 16 MRBM launch pads. All pads would be outfitted with two ballistic missiles of the appropriate variety, bearing nuclear warheads. Also, some 40 000 Soviet troops, along with fighter jets, bomber jets, and defensive missile systems, were stationed on the island nation. All of this transpired in absolute secrecy, via apparent cargo shipments, and under a formal contract between the two parties, which was supposed to be in place for five years at a time. Additionally, all Soviet weaponry was subject to only the control of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, not the Cuban defence forces.³³ The construction of the missile sites was underway in late summer, and by September 4th the US had already become suspicious of Soviet military activity on the island of Cuba, with President Kennedy issuing a public warning against placement of offensive weapons on Cuba.³⁴ On October 14th, the actual crisis commenced, as US intelligence ascertained the existence of launch sites for ballistic missiles, which would be capable of striking the continental US, on Cuban soil.³⁵

President Kennedy was certain, these transgressions – as the US saw them – couldn't go unchecked. In a televised speech on 22 October, he said: "The 1930s taught us a clear lesson. Aggressive conduct, if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war." Furthermore, his "unswerving objective" would be to "prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other

³⁰ Scheina (2003). *Latin America's Wars Volume II: The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900-2001*. pp. 1003–1035. referred to 6.1.2026

³¹ <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/the-bay-of-pigs>, accessed 18.12.2025

³² Hastings, Max 2022: *Abyss - World on the Brink*, ISBN 978-0-00-836503-5, referred to 25.12.2025

³³ Anderson, Jon Lee 1998: *Che*, ISBN 978-951-12859-8-4, referred to 26.12.2025

³⁴ <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/CMC-60/red-lines-and-regrets>, accessed 26.12.2025

³⁵ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis>, accessed 26.12.2025

country, and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the Western Hemisphere". Additionally, any pretense of proxy war was cast aside as the President declared, "It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union." Clearly, there was an acute threat of world war between the super powers, as the US would now direct a counter-attack to the USSR in the case of the Cubans using the ballistic missiles stationed on their soil. It's to be noted that while US/Western intelligence were uncertain, there were in fact already nuclear weapons capable of striking Washington on Cuba during the crisis.³⁶³⁷ Kennedy appealed to Khrushchev not to attempt to bring ballistic missiles to Cuba, via a letter to the Kremlin. He set up ExComm, a committee of top-advisers. The US was on high-alert, but no one in command understood the Cubans' commitment to defend their revolution or, indeed, the Soviets' motives in general.³⁸ ExComm thought that the USSR wanted to attack the US, or at least thwart the legitimate US control of the Western Hemisphere (Latin America, etc.). The US set up a naval blockade called a "quarantine" around Cuba. This was done to avoid insinuating that a state of war existed between US and Cuba. Traditionally, and effectively in UN legislature, a blockade is an act of war.³⁹ Due to this wording, the US received the sanction for its actions from the Organization of American States. The UN has neither sanctioned nor condemned the US' actions thus far. The Soviet Union has condemned the quarantine as an "act of aggression", and stated that further shipments of arms will not turn back. On 24 and 25 October, some did, however. Other ships were stopped, but contained no offensive weapons and were allowed to pass.

Explanation of the Question

The Cuban Missile Crisis emerges from a difficult history between Cuba and the USA, as well as the contemporary Cold War between the capitalist "West" and communist "East". The issue stems from fundamental conflicts of interests between the parties involved. To the US, nuclear missiles (or offensive Soviet weapons of any kind) are unacceptable in the Western hemisphere where they can strike at the continental US. The Kennedy administration is explicitly ready to go to war and invade Cuba in order to remain the only nuclear presence in the Americas. Secondary goals for the US are maintaining a strategic upper hand in the arms race with the Soviets, and toppling the Castro regime. The US seeks to weaken communism through proxy wars in East Asia and, for instance, support West Berlin as a liberal haven amidst the Soviet satellite GDR. Superiority in nuclear arsenal is key to the US being able to do so, and counter-revolution efforts in Castroist Cuba serve as an extension of the Monroe and Truman doctrines. The USSR's primary goal meanwhile is reaching strategic nuclear parity with the US; since they don't have a comparable nuclear arsenal, they seek to at least be able to threaten the US the same way the US is able to threaten them with its ballistic missiles in Turkey. Secondary goals for the USSR are maintaining bluster and credibility after the humiliation of the Berlin Crisis of 1961, the Sino-Soviet Split, and de-Stalinization. Also, the USSR is committed to helping its ally Cuba as an extension of these other more principal goals. Cuba seeks to maintain sovereignty in the face of a perceived existential US threat, and to deepen ties to its main economic partner the Soviet Union.

As of 26 October the conflict appears to be at a total stalemate. Both the Americans and the Soviets have their arms forces on operational readiness for impending war. With world peace and – indeed, human civilisation as we know – in unprecedented peril, it's imperative that the UN is able to arrive to a

³⁶ https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/jfkpof-041-018#?image_identifier=JFKPOF-041-018-p0002, accessed 18.12.2025

³⁷ Mikoyan, Sergo 2012: *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, and the Missiles of November*, ISBN 978-0804762014, referred to 26.12.2025

³⁸ <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2012-10/reconsidering-perilous-cuban-missile-crisis-50-years-later>, accessed 26.12.2025

³⁹ Westad, Odd Arne 2017: *The Cold War - A War History*, ISBN 978-0-141-97991-5, referred to 25.12.2025

solution which averts outright battle between the Soviet bloc and the United States. Also clear is that in order to do this, nuclear disarmament in Cuba is likely to be a prerequisite, though a multilateral agreement surely necessitates concessions from the US, as well. To mediate such an arrangement, is to be the ultimate goal of this meeting.⁴⁰⁴¹⁴²⁴³



American President John F. Kennedy with Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara at an EXCOMM-meeting.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis>, accessed 26.12.2025

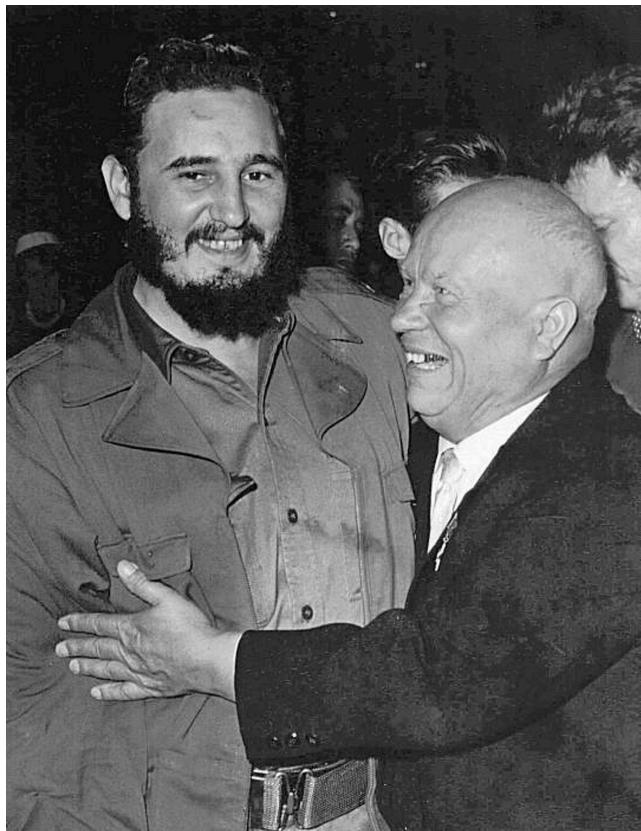
⁴¹ <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html>, accessed 18.12.2025

⁴² <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2031?p=emailA23pXyTiu9dlc&d=/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2031&print>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁴³

<http://slantchev.ucsd.edu/courses/ps240/06%20Domestic%20Organizations%20and%20International%20Behavior/Allison%20-%20The%20Cuban%20Missile%20Crisis.pdf>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁴⁴ Cecil Stoughton - Cecil Stoughton. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#/media/File:McNamara_and_Kennedy.jpg, accessed 11.12.2025



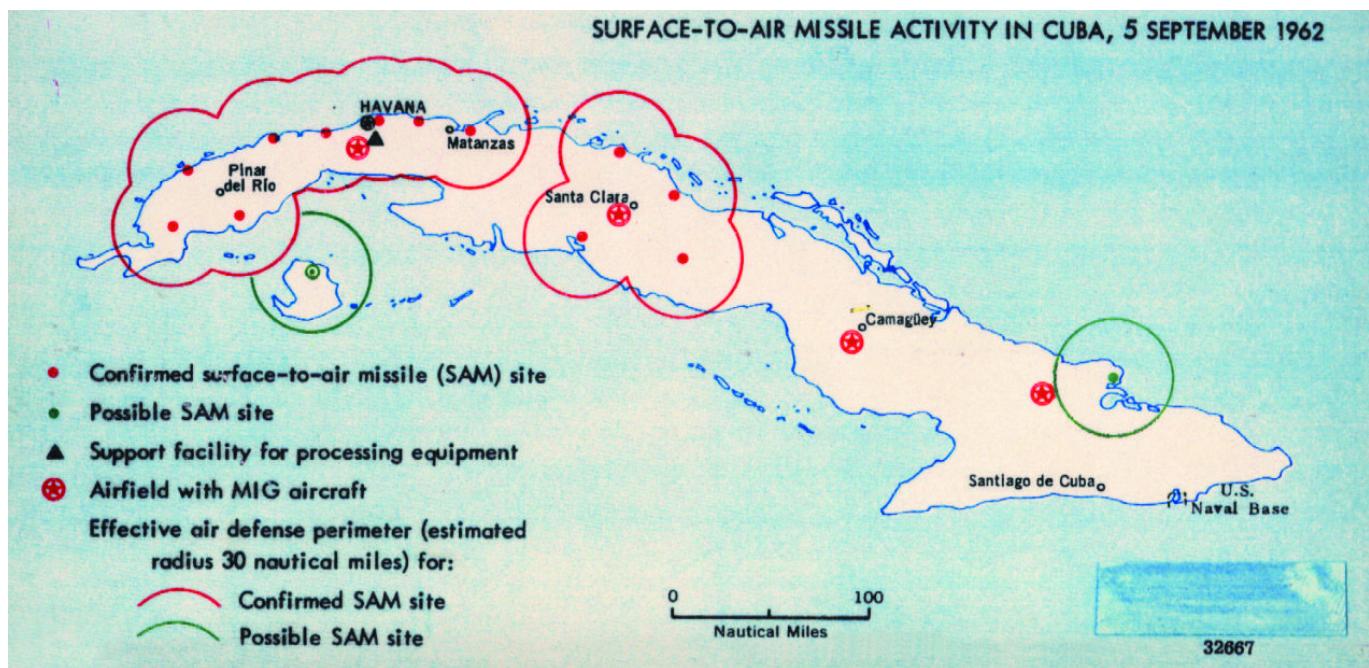
Castro and Khrushchev.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Marty Lederhandler/AP (1960)



Ranges of ballistic missile types in Cuba.⁴⁶

⁴⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#/media/File:The_relative_ranges_of_the_IL-28,_SS-4,_and_SS-5,_s_tationed_on_Cuba.png, accessed 11.12.2025



⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#/media/File:1962_Cuba_Missiles_\(30848755396\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#/media/File:1962_Cuba_Missiles_(30848755396).jpg), accessed 11.12.2025

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

Republic of Cuba

Cuba's position is primarily shaped by its recent revolutionary history, and a view of the United States as an acute external threat to the country's sovereignty. Since the Revolution of 1959, the government of Fidel Castro has sustained hostility from the US, including economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, sabotage campaigns, and most notably the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. These actions convinced Cuban leadership that another US invasion was not only possible but likely. Cuba hence viewed the placement of Soviet nuclear warheads to its territory as a defensive necessity. From Havana's perspective, this act of nuclear sharing serves as a deterrent to safeguard from anti-communist regime-change efforts.⁴⁸

In terms of solving the crisis, Cuba's stance is defined by an emphasis on security guarantees. Prime minister Castro maintains that any acceptable solution must include a formal and binding commitment by the US to cease all hostile actions against Cuba, including the economic embargo on the island-nation, and US efforts to get other nations to also impose trade restrictions (particularly in the Organization of American States). Additionally, Cuba pursues a stronger sovereignty where the US will stop counter-revolutionary pursuits on Cuba's coast, and also return Guantanamo Bay military base (Cuban soil on indefinite "lease", from 1903) back into Cuban control.⁴⁹ Cuba opposes unilateral and even bilateral decisions that would bypass its own role in negotiations. Without guarantees for its continued sovereignty, Cuba is unlikely to accept nuclear disarmament in its territory. According to post facto memoirs and corroborated by contemporary sources, in their fervor, Cuban leadership is ready and willing to be caught in a nuclear war.⁵⁰ They feared a possible first strike by the Americans, and were in all aspects the least willing to make concessions. The Cubans' particular history with the US is to be noted when analysing their stances; the Americans are in no good graces of theirs. Then again, it's the USSR, not Cuba, which presides over the nuclear arsenal stationed on the island nation.⁵²

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The USSR's position is shaped by strategic, political, and ideological considerations tied to the broader balance of power in the Cold War. By 1962, the USSR has a disadvantage relative to the US when it comes to its nuclear capabilities and deterrent. The main reason for this is that the USSR has few means of delivering nuclear weapons' systems to a location where warheads could threaten the

⁴⁸ Hastings, Max 2022: *Abyss - World on the Brink*, ISBN 978-0-00-836503-5, referred to 25.12.2025

⁴⁹ <https://historyinpieces.com/research/castro-five-points>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁵⁰ <https://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/oct26/doc2.html>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁵¹ Westad, Odd Arne 2017: *The Cold War - A War History*, ISBN 978-0-141-97991-5, referred to 18.12.2025

⁵² Anderson, Jon Lee 1998: *Che*, ISBN 978-951-12859-8-4, referred to 18.12.2025

continental US. At the same time, the US had in 1959 and 1961 placed nuclear missiles in NATO allies England, Italy, and Turkey. Soviet capital Moscow has since been in range of nuclear attack, while the USSR's nuclear umbrella does not extend beyond the Eastern Hemisphere. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that to the Soviets sharing nuclear weapons with Cuba represents above all an attempt to reach strategic parity, and status as a formidable match to the US on the world stage. Following deterrence theory, the USSR did not – prior to the events of 1962 – have a credible deterrent against the possibility of nuclear war with the US. While the US is, certainly at the moment, committed to protecting its European allies, and preventing a nuclear war, there is no telling what the future will bring. Should communism spread around the world through revolutions in the "third world", US dominance in global trade and military might could falter in comparison with the collective of the Soviet sphere of influence. In such a situation the US may be compelled to protect itself with either strategic or tactical nuclear strikes. It could also do this, as the Soviets would not be able to strike at the US, but the opposite is true. Thus, from the point of view of the Soviets, the missile deployment is a defensive counter-measure, rather than an act of explicit aggression. Without nuclear missiles in Cuba, there is no "mutually assured destruction" in the event of nuclear war, only the destruction of the Soviet Union. With missiles in Cuba, the balance of nuclear power could in turn shift, providing for a world where nuclear war is actually less likely, and Soviet interests in the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere could proceed with a greater degree of impunity. Quite possible is that the Soviets were hoping to drive the West out of Berlin with nuclear leverage on the US.⁵³⁵⁴

Paramount to the Soviets are but their strategic interests, also preserving their credibility and alliance commitments. It's important to remember that one motive for its commitment to protecting Cuba is to prevent its ally from drifting into the influence of the People's Republic of China, likewise a communist nation – albeit a bitter competitor. The USSR does not want to appear weak by conceding to unilateral decisions, and it wants its security concerns to be addressed. Furthermore, the USSR is likewise aware of the threat the US poses to Cuba, and that Havana can't be protected through conventional means. Ever since Castro declared the Cuban revolution Marxist, there has been a strong motive for the Kremlin to assist its ideological cohort.⁵⁵ Kruschev had already been humiliated in the Berlin crisis of 1961, and the Chinese have begun to mock him for indecision, as Sino-Soviet relations worsen. That being said, it does not wish escalate the situation if it can be avoided. After all, despite its bluster (e.g. building singular huge bombs, like the factually undeployable Tsar Bomba, with the explosive power of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions times 1500), the USSR does not have the nuclear capabilities it

⁵³

<http://slantchev.ucsd.edu/courses/ps240/06%20Domestic%20Organizations%20and%20International%20Behavior/Allison%20-%20The%20Cuban%20Missile%20Crisis.pdf>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁵⁴ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/cold-war-on-file/khrushchev-on-cuban-crisis-1962/>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁵⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00428A000200010014-0.pdf>, accessed 26.12.2025

claims. It has attempted to up for deficiencies by claiming to have a greater arsenal than it really has.⁵⁶ A vast majority of the USSR's arsenal remains in domestic bases, from where they can't be launched against the US, aside from Alaska.⁵⁷ The USSR thus has an incentive to diplomacy with the US, as long as no weakness is projected. Few lines of communication exist between the heads of state of these countries, though.

United States of America (USA)

The US views the conflict as a threat to national security and to strategic stability in the Western Hemisphere. Washington sees the deployment of Soviet missiles to Cuba, as well as the existence of launch facilities as unacceptable, and an escalation in the Cold War. In the US view the situation before the crisis had been one of strategic balance, which had now been disturbed. The US, as per a tradition dating to the Monroe Doctrine, the establishment of foreign military power in the Americas was something not to be allowed. President John F Kennedy and his administration regarded decisive action as necessary to neutralize the threat, and to maintain US dominance in nuclear geopolitics. Additionally, US foreign policy continues to be informed by the Truman doctrine; a commitment to preventing the spread of communism, and resisting the Soviet bloc wherever possible.⁵⁸ Kennedy's administration is not averse to escalation and nuclear war if it can't achieve its security interests another way. It won't stand for continued housing of offensive Soviet weapons on Cuba, however as long as that need is met, there is room for negotiation.

The Kennedy administration has thus far responded to the crisis with concrete action, including a naval blockade on further weapons shipments of Cuba. This blockade is referred to by the US itself as a "quarantine" to avoid the implications of international law, under which a blockade is usually an act of war. Article 42 of the UN charter allows for blockades, but the US has not thus far gotten UN sanction for their actions. While the United States publicly rejected negotiations that appeared to reward Soviet brinkmanship, it remains open in principle to reciprocal arrangements that would de-escalate tensions, provided they did not erode American strategic or alliance commitments. Central to Washington's position is the demand for verifiable missile withdrawal, alongside a desire to prevent future deployments of offensive weapons in Cuba. The US leadership seeks to preserve deterrence while minimizing the risk of nuclear war.

⁵⁶ Westad, Odd Arne 2017: *The Cold War - A War History*, ISBN 978-0-141-97991-5, referred to 18.12.2025

⁵⁷ https://archive.org/details/essenceofdecisio00alli_0/page/94/mode/2up, accessed 26.12.2025

⁵⁸ <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine>, accessed 26.12.2025

Timeline of Events⁵⁹

Date	Description of event
10 March 1952	Former President of Cuba and presidential candidate in elections to be held in June, General Fulgencio Batista with the support of the Constitutional Army, stages a near-bloodless coup d'état on the sitting President Carlos Prío Socarrás, seizing power.
10 March 1952 - 1 January 1959	Era of the Batista Regime.
26 July 1953 - 1 January 1959	Cuban Revolution takes place. Lead by Fidel Castro, Raul Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Mostly consisted of guerrilla fighting in the Sierra Maestra. Ended with the overthrow of Batista, who flees the country. ⁶⁰
1960	Castro consolidates power, dashing US hopes for a democracy in Cuba. Agrarian reforms lead to farmland under ownership of Americans being expropriated into public property of the republic. Hundreds of Batista's loyalists are executed. US-Cuba relations deteriorate, with the US implementing sanctions, and Cuba turning to the USSR for economic reciprocity. Dwight Eisenhower authorises plans for an invasion into Cuba.
April 1961	The US attempt to overthrow Castro in the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. Their counter-revolutionaries get no support from the Cuban populous, and are captured in the end of an embarrassing three-day operation. ⁶¹ Castro declares the Cuban Revolution to have been socialist in nature, paving the way for closer relations with the Soviets. ⁶²
July 1962	Soviet and Cuban leaders Khrushchev and Castro meet. Khrushchev agrees to place nuclear missiles on Cuba to deter a US invasion, at Castro's request. The first Soviet personnel are deployed under great secrecy.
September 1962	The first missiles and Soviet military personnel arrive in Cuba in cargo ships, undetected.

⁵⁹ Hastings, Max 2022: *Abyss - World on the Brink*, ISBN 978-0-00-836503-5, referred to 25.12.2025

⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Revolution#, accessed 11.12.2025

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Pigs_Invasion, accessed 11.12.2025

⁶² Anderson, Jon Lee 1998: *Che*, ISBN 978-951-12859-8-4, referred to 18.12.2025

14 October 1962	US spy plane takes photographs of the ballistic missile launch sites under construction on Cuba. By this time the largest missiles present have a range of 1200 miles, enough to reach cities in the southern and eastern US from Houston to Baltimore.
22 October 1962	President Kennedy gives a television speech making the situation public to the masses, and announcing a naval blockade of Cuba.
23 October	The Soviet Union condemns the US blockade as an act of aggression. The OAS sanctions the blockade
24 October	The US naval "quarantine" turns two Soviet freighters back.
25 October 1962	The US presents evidence of the existence of Soviet missiles on Cuban soil to the United Nations. The US conducts searches of Soviet ships trying to get past the blockade.



John F. Kennedy with Nikita Khrushchev in 1961.⁶³

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

- **The UN Charter⁶⁴ (signed 26 July 1945)**

According to Article 2 (Section 3), "*All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.*" Additionally, the article (Section 4) states that "*All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.*"

According to Article 51, "*Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures*

⁶³ Photograph from the U. S. Department of State in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikita_Khrushchev#/media/File:John_Kennedy,_Nikita_Khrushchev_1961.jpg, accessed 11.12.2025

⁶⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>, accessed 18.12.2025

taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security." Furthermore, according to Section 7, "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction..."

All should also verily be aware of the powers which the Charter bestows upon the Security Council to resolve threats to peace. If uncertain, review and refer to the UN Charter, and specifically to Articles 39-42.

- **Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty)⁶⁵ (signed 2 September 1947)**

Under this treaty, the member states of the Organization of American States commit to unified defense against threats, similar to NATO's Article 5. On October 23 the Council of the OAS convened, and condemned Cuba as having upset the security of the Western Hemisphere. It decided that under Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty, members take "all measures, individually and collectively, including the use of armed force", to prevent the flow of military material to Cuba and prevent the missiles becoming an active threat to the peace.⁶⁶ The OAS had previously in January 1962 suspended Cuba from its ranks, because of the country's Marxism.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>, accessed 18.12.2025

⁶⁶ <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2031?p=emailA23pXyTiu9dlc&d=10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2031&print>, accessed 26.12.2025

⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba%E2%80%93OAS_relations, accessed 26.12.2025



The US presents evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba to the United Nations, 25 October.⁶⁸

Possible Solutions

A highly volatile situation such as the Cuban Missile Crisis requires swift and decisive action, if it is to be resolved in the first place. There are several problems colliding into each other here. It's obvious that zero-sum thinking, combined with a lack of regulations and agreements on amassing nuclear weapons, has led nation states to achieve arsenals which are unfettered by any sense of humanity. A principal epiphany of this meeting ought to be that in the modern world the collective survival of mankind must prevail over the strategic interests of nations. There are places where intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with thermonuclear warheads simply can't be located, if global security is to remain in balance. For the US, surely Cuba is one such location, but it's equally critical to notice that this crisis' origins lie in Cuba's and the USSR's security concerns being ignored. If the US is at an advantage in the Cold War, it might at a glance seem dubious that they'd make concessions. While it may be realpolitik that (in the words of the Greek historian Thucydides) "the strong do what they can, and the weak what they must", however in the face of nuclear annihilation, it seems, we are all the weak and shall do what

⁶⁸https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#/media/File:Adlai_Stevenson_shows_missiles_to_UN_Security_Council_with_David_Parker_standing.jpg accessed 18.12.2025

we must. Nuclear disarmament would have to be reciprocal for either side to agree to it. Under the deterrence theory, the party which lacks a credible deterrent will be attacked, and since this is an existential threat in the nuclear context, great care must be taken so that neither the US nor the USSR get put in a distinctly unfavourable position in the peace drafts which this meeting shall seek to produce. The representatives of the nations in question will surely see to that. If either power feels that they have a better chance fighting the nuclear battle, they will probably choose to do so. Mutual concessions would most likely mean not just the removal of nuclear weapons from Cuba, but from Eastern Europe as well. Important is, how is this de-escalation implemented, kept agreeable for the parties involved, and what kind of regulations are placed as we move forward. The security council needs all members' approval, but an equitable decision could lead to the swift action necessary. One possibility could be the establishment of nuclear-free zones under UN supervision in critical geopolitical areas. Among the principal considerations is whether either side will be subject to a public "loss of face" or humiliation, if the settlement seems unfavourable to a given side. It's to be remembered that this credibility is also a currency to be traded in negotiations. Perhaps some sort of communication line is also in order for the often-quarreling super powers. Also possible is that the parties involved agree to the fairness of American missiles in Italy and Turkey while Soviet counterparts exist in Cuba. This option would specifically save both sides from the embarrassment of backing down, though the UN ought to nevertheless pursue multilateral agreements on stopping nuclear arms buildup, while facilitating peace. Cuba's concerns over sovereignty are sure to clash with longstanding US foreign policy. In fact, the island nation may stand in the way of possible agreements if it feels its destiny is once more being decided by great powers over itself.

Bibliography

Books

- Allison, Graham. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.
- Anderson, Jon Lee. *Che*. London: Grove Press, 1998. ISBN 978-951-12859-8-4.
- Escalante, Fabián. *CIA Targets Fidel: Secret 1967 CIA Inspector General's Report on Plots to Assassinate Fidel Castro*. Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1996. ISBN 1875284907.
- Hastings, Max. *Abyss: The World on the Brink*. London: William Collins, 2022. ISBN 978-0-00-836503-5.
- Mikoyan, Sergo. *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, and the Missiles of November*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0804762014.

- Simonen, Katariina. *Joukkotuhoaseet ja asevalvonta*. Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2023.
- Westad, Odd Arne. *The Cold War: A World History*. London: Penguin Books, 2017. ISBN 978-0-141-97991-5.
- Aalto, J., et co. *Opus 2: Kansainväliset suhteet*. Keuruu: Edita publishing OY, 2020. ISBN 978-951-37-7776-0

Encyclopedias & Reference Works

- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Cold War." Accessed December 6, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Proxy War." Accessed December 6, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Nuclear Weapon." Accessed December 6, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Missile." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Strategic Weapons System." Accessed December 7, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Deterrence." Accessed December 6, 2025.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Embargo (International Law)." Accessed December 6, 2025.

Academic Journals & Research Publications

- Arms Control Association. "Reconsidering the Perilous Cuban Missile Crisis 50 Years Later." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- Mohamed Shaker. *The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origin and Implementation*, Vol. 2. 1980s.
- National Institutes of Health (NIH). "Nuclear Holocaust." Accessed December 6, 2025.

Government & Official Documents

- Central Intelligence Agency. *Cuban Missile Crisis Documents*. CIA Reading Room. Accessed December 26, 2025.
- Kennedy, John F. Presidential Library and Museum. *Cuban Missile Crisis Archives*. Accessed December 2025.
- National Security Council. *NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security*. 1950.
- United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations*. Signed June 26, 1945.

- United Nations News. "Cuba Embargo." Accessed December 16, 2025.
- United States Department of State, Office of the Historian. "Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- United States Department of State, Office of the Historian. "Truman Doctrine." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- United States National Archives. "The Cuban Missile Crisis." Accessed December 18, 2025.

Treaties & International Organizations

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Collective Defence and Article 5." Accessed December 7, 2025.
- Organization of American States. *Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty)*. Signed September 2, 1947.
- Organization of American States. "Cuba–OAS Relations." Accessed December 26, 2025.

Educational & History Websites

- BBC Bitesize. "Vietnam War – Cold War Context." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- EBSCO Research Starters. "Collective Security (Political Strategy)." Accessed December 7, 2025.
- History.state.gov. "Milestones: Cuban Missile Crisis." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- National Archives (UK). "Khrushchev on the Cuban Missile Crisis." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- National Security Archive (George Washington University). "Operation Mongoose." Accessed December 26, 2025.
- Presidency of the United States (UC Santa Barbara). "John F. Kennedy Speeches." Accessed December 7, 2025.

Wikipedia

- Wikipedia. "Bay of Pigs Invasion." Accessed December 11, 2025.
- Wikipedia. "Cold War." Accessed December 2025.

- Wikipedia. “Cuban Missile Crisis.” Accessed December 2025.
- Wikipedia. “Cuban Revolution.” Accessed December 11, 2025.
- Wikipedia. “Deterrence Theory.” Accessed December 2025.
- Wikipedia. “History of Cuba.” Accessed December 7, 2025.
- Wikipedia. “Mutual Assured Destruction.” Accessed December 2025.
- Wikipedia. “Nuclear Weapons.” Accessed December 2025.
- Wikipedia. “Operation Mongoose.” Accessed December 11, 2025.

Miscellaneous

- Air Miles Calculator. “Distance from Havana to Washington, D.C.” Accessed December 26, 2025.