

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Simulation 1: To Place…or not to place? That is the question.**

Assign your class into two sides: pro- and anti-nuclear installation in Cuba.

Imagine that you are a Soviet advisor to Premier Nikita Khrushchev. While at his villa on the Black Sea coast, Khrushchev asks for your honest opinion of this idea: the Soviet Union should place nuclear missiles in Cuba. He wants you *not* to look at it from the perspective of Marxist ideology – he knows you are a loyal Communist! Consider the USSR’s strategic perspective: does this move make sense? Before going off to write your response, Khrushchev asks you (1) not to fear being punished for what you write (he reminds you that he is not Stalin!) and (2) to consider these facts before writing your message:

1. The Soviet Union has few nuclear missiles; many cannot reach the United States. The Soviet Union does have a massive number of nuclear bombers that can hit the United States, yet the United States can shoot down many of these planes.
2. The United States has a huge number of nuclear missiles and nuclear bombers, many of which *can* hit the Soviet Union.
3. The Soviet Union has conventional military superiority in Europe; it has a sizable presence in Cuba, but nothing near the military might the US can bring to bear in the Caribbean.
4. The Soviet Union has been trying to push the Western powers out of West Berlin. The most recent crisis in summer 1961 has not been resolved, and a major foreign victory in placing nukes in Cuba would be very helpful to Soviet prestige.
5. The United States has tried to invade Cuba by supporting the “Bay of Pigs” invasion in 1961. Our KGB agents in Cuba report that the Americans have repeatedly tried to kill Castro.
6. American intelligence agencies are closely monitoring Cuba. There is a reasonable risk that any missile sites could be discovered before their construction is completed.

Have your students use this information to debate as a class whether to place nuclear weapons in Cuba. At the end of the class, students should vote (*not* based on whether they were in the pro or con groups of the debate) on whether Khrushchev should place weapons in Cuba. Make sure that your students put themselves into the shoes of an advisor *before* the Crisis: they do not yet know whether Khrushchev’s plan will work!

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**Simulation 2: Paths to Armageddon**

Divide your class into six groups. Assign each group one of the six steps from steps two through seven below from Graham Allison’s *Essence of Decision*. Using what they know about the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, each group will give a presentation on how different decisions at this step could have escalated to nuclear war.

1. The Soviet Union secretly places missiles in Cuba (September 1962).
2. American U-2 flight photographs Soviet missiles (October 14, 1962).
3. President Kennedy initiates a public confrontation by announcing the Soviet action to the world, demanding Soviet removal of their missiles, ordering a U.S. blockade of Soviet weapon shipments to Cuba, putting U.S. strategic forces on alert, and warning the Soviet Union that any missile launched from Cuba would be regarded as a Soviet missile and met with a full retaliatory response (October 22).
4. Khrushchev orders Soviet strategic forces to alert and threatens to sink U.S. ships if they interfere with Soviet ships en route to Cuba (October 23).
5. Soviet ships stop short of the U.S. quarantine line (October 24).
6. Khrushchev’s private letter says the necessity for the Soviet deployment would disappear if the U.S. will pledge not to invade Cuba (October 26), followed by a second, public, Khrushchev letter demanding U.S. withdrawal of Turkish missiles for Soviet withdrawal of Cuban missiles (October 27).
7. U.S. responds affirmatively to Khrushchev’s first letter but says that first missiles now in Cuba must be rendered inoperable and urges quick agreement. Robert Kennedy adds privately that the missiles in Turkey will eventually be withdrawn but that the missiles in Cuba must be removed immediately and a commitment to that effect must be received the next day, otherwise military action will follow (October 27).



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**Simulation 3: End Game**

Each student is assigned a role (for larger class sizes, assign each role to two students) taken from the “Dramatis Personae” list of ExComm (available [here](http://www.cubanmissilecrisis.org/background/dramatis-personae/)). You, the teacher, will play President Kennedy.

It is October 27th and President Kennedy is in a dilemma. He is debating what to do about the missiles in Cuba, and he needs advice. Below are the key facts the President and his advisors from the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or ExComm, should know.

1. There are nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba; our best estimate is that these missiles are capable of hitting almost any city in America.
2. We have imposed a “quarantine” around Cuba to prevent the future installation of any missiles or placement of military forces in that country. In practice, this means that we have dispatched the US Navy to blockade the island.
3. On Friday, Premier Khrushchev sent a private letter to the President with a proposal: if the United States pledged to never invade Cuba, the Soviets would withdraw their missiles from Cuba.
4. But earlier today, Premier Khrushchev publically announced he would only remove missiles from Cuba if the United States pledged never to invade Cuba and that the United States withdraws its missiles from Turkey.
5. Meanwhile, our spy overflights indicate that construction is nearing completion on the missile sites. This means that if the US Air Force hopes to strike the Soviet missiles before they are operational, it will need to do it very soon.
6. Later in the day, the President was informed that an American U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down by a Soviet surface-to-air missile over Banes, Cuba, killing its pilot Major Rudolph Anderson.

Given these circumstances, each student (or student group) should indicate how their member of ExComm would act. The class should give their reasons why they support their decision (whether to strike Cuba, give into the Soviet demands, etc.), given what they know about the Missile Crisis.