

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

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

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

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.

Consider only this information and what you, as Khrushchev’s advisor, would have known before the Soviets put missiles in Cuba. Should the USSR pursue this goal? Argue whether the Soviet Union should put nuclear missiles in Cuba. Be sure to also address any potential counter-arguments.

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**Worksheet 2: Paths to Armageddon**

Below are seven steps of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as identified by Allison and Zelikow in *Essence of Decision*. Choose one of the steps from two to seven. Explain in an essay how nuclear war might have occurred if the US, USSR, and/or Cuba had acted differently at that step.

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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**Worksheet 3:  End Game**

It is late evening on October 27th. President Kennedy is debating what to do about the missiles in Cuba, and he needs advice. Below are the key facts the President 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 never to invade Cuba, the Soviets would withdraw their missiles.
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 to withdraw 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. An American U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down today by a Soviet surface-to-air missile over Banes, Cuba, killing its pilot, Major Rudolph Anderson.

Considering only these facts (and only information known to President Kennedy and ExComm *by* October 27th), write an essay assessing the pros and cons of three options:

1. Attack the Cuban missile sites with airstrikes.
2. Attack the missile sites and invade Cuba.
3. Give into Soviet demands to withdraw missiles from Turkey and pledge never to attack Cuba.
4. Give into Soviet demands to never invade Cuba, but secretly agree to withdraw missiles from Turkey.



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**Worksheet 4: Kennedy’s Lesson**

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave the commencement address at American University (found [here](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Speeches/Commencement-Address-at-American-University-June-10-1963.aspx/)). This address is considered his clearest distillation of the lessons drawn by Kennedy from the Missile Crisis (for examples of other lessons drawn by US presidents, see [here](http://www.cubanmissilecrisis.org/lessons/lessons-from-presidents/)). One of the key lessons is Kennedy’s statement that “our primary long-range interest…is general and complete [nuclear] disarmament.” Since that time, the nuclear disarmament movement has ebbed and flowed. Today, statesmen including George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, and Bill Perry, and groups like [Global Zero](http://www.globalzero.org/) advocate for the elimination of all nuclear weapons in order to avoid nuclear war. Others argue that this goal is ultimately a fantasy, and that nuclear weapons are a stabilizing force for world politics. What do you think of this goal? Why?