

Historical Crisis Committee

30 Seconds to Midnight: Cuban Missile Crisis

Date: Alternate Timeline

1. History of the Committee

The Historical Crisis Committee follows a format intended for delegates to change historical events at important points in history in new and creative ways, and deal with possible outcomes and crises that could have risen in those scenarios, as well as a fresh and interesting crisis to change the pace of the debate and bring delegates together to realize and draft new alliances and solutions. The committee was originally introduced in Model UN conferences by the early 2000s to help engage students in a more dynamic and creative process compared to traditional MUN committees. The HCC presents often unpredictable forms of debate that rely in comradery and collaboration between individuals; quick decision is the primordial aspect denoted from the HCC, making crisis evolve unpredictably.

The Bamun XXV HCC will simulate a version of the Cuban Missile Crisis with heavy alterations to differ from the actual events, allowing the delegates to explore a “what if” situation and alternate historical paths while attempting to maintain realism.

1. Introduction

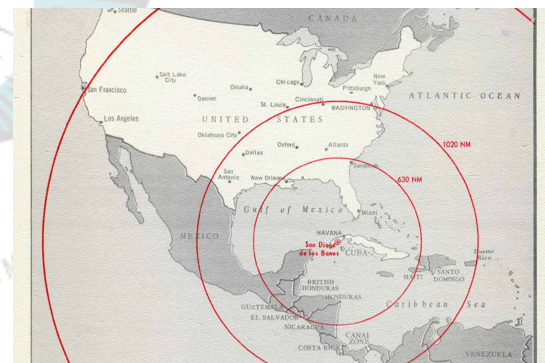
In 1962, the world came terrifyingly close to nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a tense 13-day standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union over the presence of Soviet ballistic missiles in Cuba. This, a threat to both US interests involving an occupation of Cuba which they wanted since the early 19th century, as well as threatened US territory with ballistic missiles for the first time. Delegates will play real historical figures from the U.S., USSR, Cuba, NATO, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. Historical Context

By the early 1960s, the United States and the Soviet Union had emerged as the two dominant global powers, representing differing political and economic systems. Both countries possessed nuclear weapons, and wanted to gain the upper hand in international affairs to obtain more influence over other nations around the world, starting a series of hostile proxy conflicts and economic battles called the Cold War. In 1961, the United States deployed around 15 Intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Turkey, aimed at the USSR as a nuclear deterrent, thus, the USSR started to look for an equal.

In 1959, the Cuban Revolution resulted in the removal of President Fulgencio Batista and the rise of a government led by Fidel Castro, which pursued policies aligned with Marxist-Leninist principles. Relations between Cuba and the United States deteriorated rapidly, particularly after the implementation of economic restrictions and unsuccessful attempts to change the Cuban government, including the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Following these developments, Cuba strengthened its relationship with the Soviet Union.

Soviet leadership, under Premier Nikita Khrushchev, sought to support Cuba both politically and militarily. One aspect of this support was the decision to install intermediate-range ballistic missiles on Cuban territory. In October 1962, aerial reconnaissance by the United States confirmed the presence of missile sites under construction in Cuba, initiating a period of heightened tension between Washington and Moscow.



3. Current Issue

In this alternate version of events, the crisis escalates following two incidents: the downing of a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over Cuba and damage to a U.S. naval vessel caused by a torpedo launched from a Soviet submarine. These developments take place during the U.S. naval quarantine of the island and result in casualties among military personnel.



Communication between the United States and the Soviet Union becomes increasingly strained, with both sides receiving conflicting information from military and intelligence sources. Leaders in Washington, Moscow, and Havana face internal pressures to respond decisively, while assessing the risks associated with further escalation. In Cuba, there is concern about the possibility of an imminent invasion, and discussions take place regarding the operational readiness of missile systems.

Public awareness of these events grows rapidly through international media coverage, contributing to heightened tensions among civilian populations in multiple countries. The situation remains unstable, with decisions confronting limited timeframes, incomplete information, and the potential for rapid and significant consequences depending on the actions taken.

4. Past International actions

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 led to a set of international measures to tackle the imminent danger of nuclear conflict and deter the development of similar crises in the future. Although the crisis itself was essentially a bilateral confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, it played out under the watchful eyes of the world and the United Nations had a major role to play as a diplomatic entity. UN Secretary-General, U Thant, provided his good offices to mediate between the sides, assisting in communications that helped to de-escalate. Though no official UN resolution was issued that directly solved the crisis, the UN was used as a platform where both superpowers could state their cases before the international community.

Following the crisis, a number of significant international agreement and diplomacy developments were resolved. In 1963, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom signed the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, outer space and under water in an attempt to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ease the tension. In the same year, the Washington Moscow hotline was put in place to ensure direct and speedy communication between the two super power leaders and minimize

the chances of misunderstanding during future confrontations. The measures were an international acknowledgment of the hazards of brinkmanship in the nuclear era.

Beyond formal treaties, the crisis also affected the policies of different governments and international organizations. NATO reconsidered its strategic position and the Organization of American States (OAS) endorsed the U.S. quarantine of Cuba as a regional security initiative within the context of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance. There were governments who tried to enhance their own defense and intelligence abilities and there were governments who encouraged disarmament and prevention of conflicts through diplomacy.

The achievements of these efforts were based on the fact that direct nuclear war was avoided and the means to enhance communication and nuclear risk reduction were established. Nonetheless, there were shortcomings. Although the crisis led to some partial arms control, it did not stop the world nuclear arms race, or solve the geopolitical conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that precipitated it. Cuba did not become a member of the Organization of American States until decades later and the U.S. embargo on the island continued, an indication that more fundamental political and ideological differences had not been overcome.

5. Subtopics

a) Nuclear Escalation and Deterrence

- How close should delegates push toward conflict?
- What doctrines (e.g., MAD Mutually Assured Destruction) apply?

b) Intelligence and Misinformation

- How will you verify the accuracy of reports or enemy actions?
- How does misinformation affect public opinion and diplomacy?

c) Domestic Pressure and Leadership

- How do internal politics shape foreign decisions?
- How much power should military advisors hold?

d) Third-Party Involvement

- What role will Cuba, NATO members, and non-aligned states play?
- Will smaller states become battlegrounds?

6. Positions

I. United States & Allied Bloc

Goal: To avoid the operational deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba without sacrificing the U.S. strategic credibility and without jeopardizing the security of the Western Hemisphere.

- John F. Kennedy- the president of the United States, chief of the executive decision-making process.
- Robert F. Kennedy U.S. Attorney General, adviser and back-channel negotiator.
- Dean Rusk, U.S. Secretary of State, in charge of diplomatic efforts.
- Maxwell D. Taylor Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, military strategist.
- Lyndon B. Johnson is the Vice President of the United States, political intermediary.
- Harold Macmillan - Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, NATO member and proponent of U.S. policy.
- Paul-Henri Spaak - NATO Secretary General, who organized responses to the alliance.

Context: The U.S. and allies fear that permitting Soviet missiles in Cuba will weaken deterrence, strengthen Soviet expansion, and shorten the response time of the western military. Its top priority should be to eliminate the missiles, preferably by diplomatic means, but with the option of military action should that be needed. Their stance is also focused on cohesiveness of alliances and the need to be seen not to be weak.

II. Soviet Union & Cuban-Aligned Block

Goal: to gain Cuba as a socialist ally, defend it against U.S. intervention, and achieve strategic nuclear parity with the United States.

- Nikita Khrushchev - First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the main Soviet decision maker.
- Anastas Mikoyan - First Deputy Premier, negotiator and political advisor.
- Rodion Malinovsky - Soviet Minister of Defense, in charge of military preparedness.
- Valerian Zorin - Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations, in charge of public diplomacy.
- Fidel Castro - Cuban Prime Minister, who wanted assurances of non-invasion by the U.S.
- Raul Castro - Cuban Minister of the Armed Forces, in charge of coordinating Cuban defense.
- Che Guevara - Cuban Minister of Industries, politician who promoted revolutionary solidarity.

Context: The Soviet and Cuban stance is informed by the sense that the American antagonism to Cuba is an existential threat to the socialist regime in Cuba. The deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba is considered a deterrent to invasion as well as the means to rectify the strategic imbalance generated by American missiles in Turkey and Italy. Although not confident that a direct nuclear war will not take place, this bloc strives to withstand American pressure and retain its political and military advantages.

7. *Guiding questions*

- What was the contribution of the placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba to change the balance power of the Cold War?
- What were the backchannels and diplomacy that happened, and what form did it play in decisions?
- How did the naval blockade/quarantine affect the development of events in the crisis?
- What impact did the crisis have on such alliances as NATO and the Warsaw Pact?
- How did the perception in the media and by the people contribute to aggravation or reduction in tensions?
- What other possible measures could have been done by one party or the other to alter the

result?

- How did the crisis have short and long-run effects on international relations and nuclear policy?
- What was the impact of the crisis on the later arms control and the diplomatic procedures?
- What did the Cuban Missile Crisis teach to the nuclear standoffs of the current times?



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