

Cuban Missile Crisis Simulation

Teams: The Americans, the Soviets, and the Cubans

Crisis: It is October of 1962 and the Soviet Union has decided to place intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba, only 90 miles from American shores. This act could quite possibly lead to the start of a nuclear war between the Superpowers, possibly even leading to the end of the world.

Goal: To try and end this crisis peacefully without starting World War III. Don't worry, if you fail, it could only mean the end of your job, your country's honor, or civilization as we know it. No pressure.

How the Game is played: Each team is given a stack of option cards to demonstrate how they will deal with the crisis. The cards come in three kinds: escalation, de-escalation, and compromise. The Americans start each round, followed by the Soviets, and then the Cubans. After each team plays its card the following teams meet to discuss their options and then produce the next card. A prestige point is earned each time an opponent deescalates or proposes a compromise. The winner is the team with the most prestige points.



Eight hundred women strikers for peace on 47th Street

Image source: By Phil Stanziola, 1962. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Country Description #1

The Soviets

You are Nikita Khrushchev and the Politburo. You have been behind in the arms race. The United States has recently placed missiles very close to home in Turkey, so you've decided to place missiles in Cuba to threaten the United States. Sure, that was a provocative move, but they started it. The Americans' recently failed in their attempt to invade the Bay of Pigs. You feel that you must protect your communist ally Fidel Castro by making sure that Cuba is never again invaded. You have assured the Americans that these missiles are there for purely defensive reasons, and can't understand why they are so surprised or upset. You never really wanted a showdown with the United States, but you can't back down now without losing face. Nothing must come in the way of your goal of worldwide communism. You must rescue the innocent people of Cuba from domination by the capitalistic, imperialistic Americans!



The options

Escalation	De-escalation	Compromise
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a televised speech denouncing American intervention in Cuba's internal affairs. 2. Accuse the United States of spying and upsetting the balance of power. 3. Call up Kennedy and chew him out. 4. Publicly denounce Kennedy as an aggressor. 5. Attempt to run the blockade of ships from Cuba. 6. Intercept all ships attempting to blockade Cuba. Roll a percentile die to see how many are intercepted. 7. File a formal protest in the United Nations and demand that the United States stay out of Cuba. 8. Respond to air strikes with fighter pilots or ABM's. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A reversal of any of the escalations when possible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do nothing and hope the problem goes away. 2. Make a televised speech announcing your peaceful intentions towards America and call for an immediate resolution to the crisis. 3. Send a special envoy to Kennedy to secretly discuss terms. 4. Call for a summit meeting with Kennedy. 5. Withdraw ships to areas outside the naval blockade zone around Cuba. 6. Decrease the number of missile technicians in Cuba. 7. Decrease the number of ABM's in Cuba. 8. Remove our missiles in Cuba unilaterally.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Increase the number of ships in the Caribbean. 10. Increase the number of missiles in Cuba. 11. Increase the number of missile technicians in Cuba. 12. Increase the number of ABM's in Cuba. 13. Close the US Embassy and expel its ambassadors. 14. Ask the Politburo to declare war on the United States. 15. Conduct an air strike on the United States. 16. Engage the American fleet in battle. 17. Patrol the American coastline with subs and ships. 18. Blockade the Panama Canal. 19. Invade the Panama Canal Zone. 20. Blockade Berlin. 21. Invade South Korea. 22. Try to assassinate Kennedy. 23. Conduct an air strike on American missiles in Turkey. 24. Send Soviet troops to defend Cuba. 25. Increase aid to Communist insurrectionists in other Latin American countries. 26. Put your missiles on full alert. 27. Conduct a pre-emptive missile strike on the United States. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Remove our missiles in Cuba only if they remove their missiles from Turkey. 10. Make a deal with Castro separately to remove the missiles but replace them with some other defensive weapons system. 11. Pledge not to place nuclear forces in Cuba ever again. 12. Propose a nuclear arms reduction treaty.
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Country Description #2

The Americans

You are John F. Kennedy and his Cabinet. You are ahead in the arms race, but fear that the Soviets are catching up. The previous president placed missiles in Turkey, and you meant to remove them but never got around to it. You are shocked that the Soviets placed missiles in Cuba. You have tried not to appear soft on Communism, but have not done well in recent meetings with Khrushchev. Is he trying to start World War III? Or is he just trying to embarrass the president with some kind of showdown? This is a threat to every man, woman, and child in the United States! The Soviets have assured you that these missiles are there for purely defensive reasons, but you don't trust them. You don't really want a showdown with the Soviet Union, but you can't back down now without losing face. You are the leaders of the Free World. Nothing must come in the way of your goal of containing Communism. You must protect the innocent people of the United States from annihilation by the Communists!



The options

Escalation	De-escalation	Compromise
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reveal that you know about the exact number and location of the missiles to embarrass the Soviets. 2. Declare a national emergency and prepare for attack. 3. Blockade all ships from Cuba. 4. Blockade only military ships from Cuba. 5. Blockade only fuel tankers from Cuba. 6. Bomb Cuba with conventional bombs hitting only airfields and defenses. 7. Bomb Cuba with conventional bombs hitting only the missiles. Roll a percentile die to see how many are destroyed. 8. File a formal protest in the United Nations and demand weapons inspections of Cuba. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A reversal of any of the escalations when possible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do nothing and hope the problem goes away. 2. Make a televised speech announcing your peaceful intentions towards the USSR and call for an immediate resolution to the crisis. 3. Send a special envoy to Khrushchev to secretly discuss terms. 4. Call for a summit meeting with Khrushchev. 5. Remove our missiles in Turkey unilaterally. 6. Remove our missiles in Turkey only if they remove their missiles from Cuba. 7. Make a deal with Castro separately to remove the missiles. 8. Pledge not to invade Cuba ever again.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Make a televised speech denouncing the placement of the missiles. 10. Go before the OAS and ask for measures to be taken to punish Castro. 11. Go before the OAS and ask for measures for mutual defense. 12. Drop leaflets over the missile sites in Cuba warning the Soviets of an imminent US attack if the missiles are not pulled out. 13. Call up Khrushchev and chew him out. 14. Publicly denounce Khrushchev as an aggressor. 15. Put your missiles on full alert. 16. Ask Congress to declare war on Cuba. 17. Try to assassinate Castro. 18. Activate air defenses and continuously patrol your borders for incoming missiles. 19. Close the Soviet Embassy and expel its ambassadors. 20. Impose trade sanctions on the USSR. 21. Invade Cuba and try to overthrow Castro. 22. Engage the Soviet fleet in battle. 23. Launch a conventional invasion of the USSR. 24. Launch a nuclear strike against the USSR. 25. Threaten to retaliate against a missile strike against any Latin American country 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Extend diplomatic recognition to Cuba. 10. Lift the trade embargo with Cuba. 11. Return Guantanamo Bay to Cuba. 12. Propose a nuclear arms reduction treaty
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Country Description #3

The Cubans

You are Fidel Castro and the leaders of the People's Party. You have very few weapons to protect your country from the huge aggressor to the North. The United States has refused to recognize your government and has cut off your trade, so you've decided to make friends with the Soviets. Sure, that was a provocative move, but they started it. The Americans' recently failed in their attempt to invade the Bay of Pigs. You feel that you must make sure that Cuba is never again invaded. You are very proud to have Soviet missiles on your soil because it will cement the relations between your two great nations. Now that you have the same weapons as the big boys, let's see if the Yankees mess with you. You have assured the Americans that these missiles are there for purely defensive reasons, and can't understand why they are so surprised or upset. You never really wanted a showdown with the United States, but you can't back down now without losing face. You must preserve the innocent people of Cuba from domination by the capitalistic, imperialistic Americans!



The options

You may not initiate any major policy options of your own. You may talk to either the Americans or the Soviets separately or together. Naturally you will lean towards what the Soviets want and they have the ultimate say in what the final decision will be for each turn. Remember that you blame the United States for all of the world's problems, but overall you will do what is best for Cuba, even if that means making a compromise or abandoning the Soviet alliance. You win in any situation that results in Cuba not being invaded or taken over. The stronger a pledge you can obtain to secure Cuba's freedom from American invasion, the more successful you have been.