

# The Cuban Missile Crisis

October 1962

# Lesson objectives/questions

- What was the background to the events in Cuba?
- How successful were early attempts at ‘containment’?
- Why was the USSR interested in helping Cuba?
- What happened during the Cuban Missile/October Crisis?
- What was the outcome of the crisis?

# What was the background to the events in Cuba?

- Cuba, small island, approximately 90 miles from coast of Florida
- US ally, US businesses & US military base (Guantanamo)
- 1959, Fidel Castro overthrows Battista (US-backed dictator), establishing Communist government.



*Why was Cuba so important to the Americans?*



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# How successful were early attempts at 'containment'?

- Castro takes over US businesses
- January 1961, US breaks off diplomatic relations
- April, 1961, Bay of Pigs – 1,400 anti-Cuban exiles attempted to overthrow Castro
- Autumn 1962, Cuba has received 1000s of USSR missiles, jets, boats & personnel



*The US committed \$100 million to overthrowing Castro, the CIA tried to sabotage the economy, they even planned to send him an exploding cigar! Why did they go to such lengths after April 1961?*



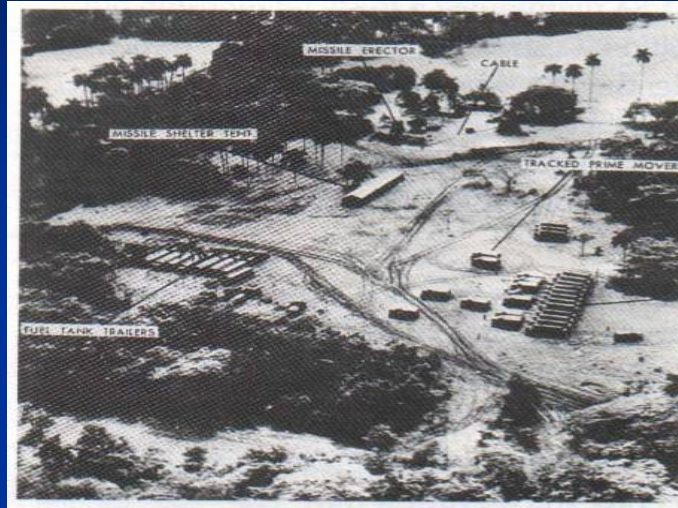
# Why was the USSR interested in helping Cuba?

- Cuba was a new Communist state
- Cuba provided a launch base for USSR inter-continental missiles (ICMs)
- Khrushchev wanted to test strength of new US president, JFK
- Khrushchev wanted to force JFK into bargaining over US missile in Europe

*Why does this cartoonist think that Khrushchev was interested in Cuba?*



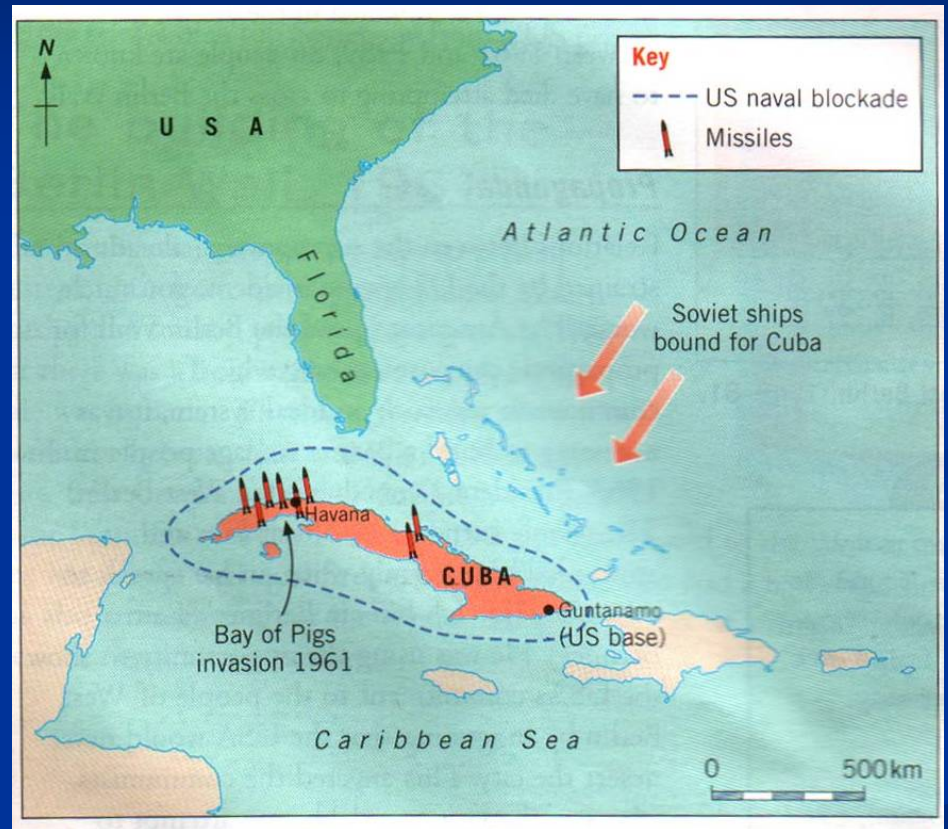
# What happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis?



- 14 October 1962, US U2 spy plane takes photos of suspected USSR missile sites on Cuba
- Sites nearing completion, experts believe they could be ready in 7 days
- 15 October US spy planes identify 20 Soviet ships bound for Cuba carrying missiles

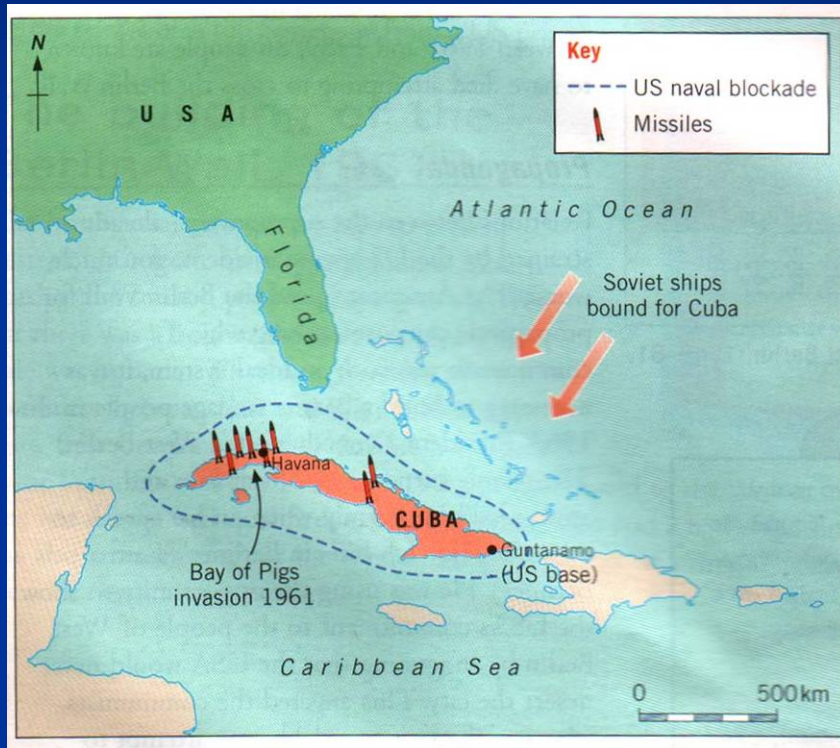
# What happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

- 20 October, Kennedy decides to “quarantine” Cuba
- 22 October, Kennedy publicly calls on Khrushchev to remove weapons





# What happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis?



- 23 October Khrushchev refuses to acknowledge “quarantine” or presence of Soviet missiles on Cuba
- 24 October, 1<sup>st</sup> Soviet ships (accompanied by submarine) approach exclusion zone



# What happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

- 24 October, 10:32 am, Soviet ships stop and turn round
- 25 October, aerial photos show continued construction of missile sites
- 26 October, Kennedy receives another letter offering to negotiate over missiles in Cuba with removal of blockade and US invasion threat
- 27 October, Kennedy receives second letter calling for withdrawal of US missiles in Turkey too

# What happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

- 27 October, US U2 plane shot down over Cuba & pilot killed. Kennedy decides to ignore second letter, but accepts terms of 1<sup>st</sup> letter
- 28 October, Khrushchev agrees to dismantle Soviet missiles in Cuba



*What is this cartoonist trying to say about the difficulties facing Kennedy during the Crisis?*

# What was the outcome of the crisis?

- Cuba remained Communist & heavily armed (without nuclear missiles)
- Both leaders didn't lose face and came away with concessions
- Helped renew the thaw – world saw the futility of MAD
- Permanent hotline between White House & Kremlin set up
- Supported theory of containment & co-existence because alternatives unimaginable



## Your task

*President John F Kennedy was faced with a number of extremely difficult decisions that could decide the fate of the world! Look in your envelope. Place the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in order. Good luck, you have five minutes.....*

# ✈ Extension task

*Divide into groups A or B. Group A must produce a short press release explaining the background, key events & outcome from the Soviet press perspective. Group B must do the same for the perspective of the American press.*

# Key Terms and People

- Communist
- Kremlin
- John F. Kennedy
- Nikita Khrushchev
- “quarantine”
- U2 spy plane
- Castro
- Guantanamo
- ‘containment’





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