

**#206: MISSILES IN CUBA, 1962**

*Parties:* US v. USSR, Cuba

*Agents:* UN

Continued tensions between the US and Cuba had resulted in tying the Cuban government of Fidel Castro quite tightly to the USSR with economic, political, and security arrangements (see case #106: Cuban Revolution, 1955-59; case #165, 166: Cuban-American Relations, 1960-61; case #178: Bay of Pigs, 1961; and case #192: Relations with Cuba, 1961- ). Through the summer of 1962 Soviet military support of Cuba had been confined to supplies of conventional weapons, advisers, and warnings to the US that Cuba was under the Soviet nuclear umbrella. In mid-October 1962, however, the US discovered that the USSR was in the process of stationing missiles on the island that could deliver nuclear payloads on the US.

On the evening of 22 October US President Kennedy announced US knowledge of the threat to its vital national interests and demanded their removal. To achieve that end, he announced that the US would institute a naval quarantine on the shipment of further offensive weapons to Cuba to begin 24 October; that support would be sought from NATO and the OAS; and that the US would reply to any attack from Cuba with retaliation on the USSR. OAS support of the naval blockade and NATO support of the US position was forthcoming the following day. The USSR continued for a time to deny that missiles had been placed in Cuba and then argued that they were purely defensive; the USSR also refused to acknowledge the US naval quarantine but did not challenge it when operations commenced on 24 October. Uneventful blockade contacts occurred, and tension mounted through 26 October when an unofficial approach was made by a Soviet embassy official to an ABC news correspondent suggesting possible terms of accommodation. A note to Kennedy from USSR Premier Krushchev, received later that night, seemed to confirm the unofficial offer; but a second Soviet note, received the next day, suggested that a settlement would be reached only under more stringent conditions. Furthermore, a U-2 reconnaissance flight was downed over Cuba on 27 October contributing even more to the strained atmosphere. Kennedy decided nonetheless to accept essentially the terms proffered by the USSR on the 26th, and those terms basically established the settlement that was reached the following day. In essence, the USSR agreed to dismantle the missiles and return them to the USSR in exchange for US assurances that it would not attempt to invade Cuba in the future.

The UN was deadlocked in this confrontation, and appeals by Secretary-General U Thant were unavailing. Although the USSR had finally agreed to dismantle the weapons under UN supervision, when Thant arrived in Cuba on 30 October, Castro refused to permit an inspection.

There have been no subsequent nuclear confrontations like this one between the superpowers. Relations between Castro and the US continued to be highly strained, and the US was concerned to inhibit Cuba from "exporting revolution" to the rest of the hemisphere (see case #229: Venezuelan Terrorism, 1963-67; case #250, 251, 252: Dominican Intervention, 1965-66; and case #263: Bolivian Guerrilla Insurgency, 1967-68). Nonetheless, no further operations like the Bay of Pigs were attempted.

**Refs:**

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Henry M. Pachter, *Collision Course* (New York: Praeger, 1963)

**#207, 208, 209: YEMENI CIVIL WAR, 1962-70**

*Parties:* Republicans, Egypt v. Royalists, Saudi Arabia

*Agents:* UN, Arab League, Sudan

Imam Ahmed, ruler of Yemen since 1948, died in early September 1962, and his son Mohammed al-Badr assumed the Imamate. On 26 September a Republican coup ousted him but failed to kill him and his family. Escaping to the north, the Imam determined to regain his position by force of arms; several of the interior Yemeni tribes rallied to his cause, and on 28 September an eight-year civil war was begun. Egypt quickly supported the Republican side, soon becoming extensively involved by supplying troops and munitions. Egyptian aid did not prove decisive in the war, however, nor did it secure for Egypt any decisive influence over Republican Yemeni policy; as the war dragged on with no outcome in sight, and as Egyptian involvement in Republican politics and intrigues made it lose favor, Egypt's President Nasser came to refer to the Yemeni war as his Vietnam. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, supported the Royalist cause with supplies and sanctuary but without troops; except for a few border incidents, Saudi policy proved