

Rhodes College

Mid-South Model United Nations Conference 2025

Historical Committee

Stella Bentley, Chair

Mavis Vo, Chair

Letter From the Chair:

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 Mid-South Model United Nations Conference (MSMUN) and to the Historical Crisis Committee. I am Stella Bentley, and I will be your 2025 Historical Committee chair. I am a sophomore majoring in History with a minor in International Studies.

I am very excited to be chairs for the Historical Committee. This year's topic, The Cuban Missile Crisis, should be thrilling and intense. The geopolitical event, taking place over only thirteen days, was the height of the decades-long Cold War, and is considered the closest the world got to entering nuclear warfare. The crisis involved numerous countries and key political figures, such as John F. Kennedy, Fidel Castro, and Nikita Khrushchev, and was a crucial moment of the twentieth century. The Historical Committee allows delegates to place themselves in the past to learn from and analyze key international events. We can't wait to get started. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

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Introduction to Committee and Topic

For 13 days between October 16, 1962, and October 29, 1962, citizens of the United States and the USSR lived in a perpetual state of terror, knowing at any minute they could be attacked by nuclear missiles. Had war occurred, it would have meant the death of 100 million Americans, 100 million Russians, and millions of Europeans, so although there were two main actors, it truly was an international threat. After a failed invasion attempt into Cuba (Bay of Pigs Invasion) by the US in 1961, in July 1962, Khrushchev and Castro made a deal to place Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba to deter any future invasion attempt. Throughout the next two months, an arms build-up in Cuba began, with many attempts to keep this hidden from the United States. Even so, evidence of the arms build-up was gathered by the US on routine surveillance flights, and President Kennedy likewise issued a public warning against placing arms in Cuba. Despite this, on October 14, an American U-2 aircraft took several pictures containing sites for medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic nuclear missiles (MRBMs and IRBMs), thus leading to the beginning of the crisis.

Kennedy gathered his top advisers to consider the next course of action in the crisis. Some, including all the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued for an air strike to destroy the missiles and an invasion of Cuba. Others argued for a more conservative approach, such as strict warnings to Cuba and the Soviet Union. Ultimately, the President decides to enforce a naval "quarantine" against Cuba. The term "quarantine" was used to differentiate the action from a blockade, which would have been considered an act of war. The Kennedy Administration also worked to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in the crisis, stating that the doctrine acted as grounds for the US to confront the Soviet Union's actions in Cuba. Because of this, the US had approval and support from the Organization of American States during the crisis. At the same time, diplomatic

channels remained strained, with limited communication increasing the risk of miscalculation and escalation.

If either side were to fire their weapons, it would mean the death of hundreds of millions of people, the destruction of both countries, and likely, another international war. With millions of lives at stake, world leaders were forced to confront the urgent question of how to de-escalate the situation without sacrificing their own national security and ideological credibility. Your goal is to prevent this disaster from happening in the best way that you see fit. All resolutions must be formatted as letters to the chairs and crisis director, written to different people/agencies that could accomplish your goals. Best of luck, and we look forward to conducting this historical simulation with you!

Major Actors

John F. Kennedy

President of the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis. President Kennedy had only been in office for about a year and a half when the crisis took place. The crisis was the defining event in his presidency. Kennedy and his allies during the crisis served as the "executive committee of the National Security Council" or "ExComm" and the group made almost all American decisions during the crisis.

Nikita Khrushchev

Premier of the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He felt it necessary to place weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Cuba to protect his communist ally from a US invasion. He also saw the action as fair, since the US had placed nuclear missiles in Turkey the previous year. He was under immense domestic and international pressure at the time of the crisis.

Fidel Castro

Dictator of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Cuba and Castro were being used by the Soviet Union strictly for their geographic advantage, however Castro still agreed to the alliance to show “solidarity” with the Communist bloc and win more aid for his people.

Cemal Gürsel

President of Turkey during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Turkey was being used by the United States as a base for long range ballistic missiles, posing a threat to the Soviets and prompting them to put missiles in Cuba.

Antonio Segni

President of Italy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Similar to Turkey, Italy was being used by the United States as a base for long range ballistic missiles, posing a threat to the Soviets and prompting them to put missiles in Cuba.

Mao Zedong

Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and de facto leader of the Chinese people. The Soviet Union’s most important and influential political ally. Supported The Soviets and Cuba officially, but was quietly growing weary of the Soviet’s ability to lead the socialist world.

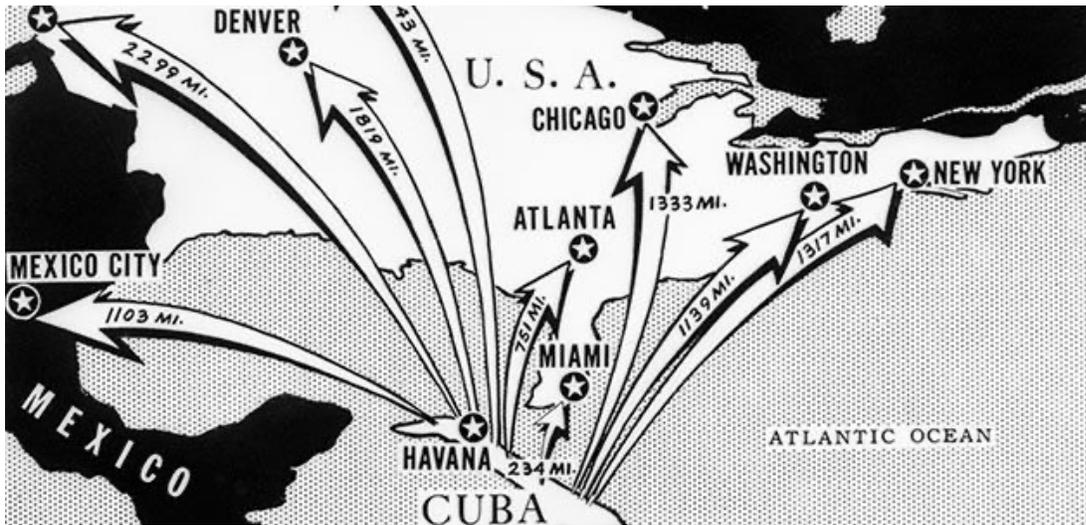
Gamal Abdel Nasser

Egyptian President and champion of the Non-Aligned Movement, which argued that super-power conflict was harmful to smaller states, and refused to take sides in the Cold-War. Generally believed to have been playing both sides of the Cold War for strategic gain, and believed that Cuba would ultimately be the biggest loser of the crisis.

Questions to Consider

- Should other countries be invited in on negotiations or solutions? If yes, which ones?
- In what ways could a resolution to this crisis be used to promote the de-escalation of general Cold War hostilities?
- How will the United Nations be involved in the aftermath of the crisis?
- How do Cold War politics impact the viability of potential solutions?
- How should the committee address both the concerns of Cuba and the USSR (Western imperialism, United States meddling in foreign affairs, etc.) and the anxieties of the United States (the presence of nuclear missiles less than a hundred miles from their shores, the possibility of nuclear warfare)?

Figure 1



Major US Cities that could have been attacked by Cuban Missiles (Frankel)

Figure 2



CIA Map of Cuban Missiles Range (Robey)

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