

# Cuban Missile Crisis

For 13 days in October 1962 the world hovered on the brink of nuclear war, with the United States and the Soviet Union locked in a standoff at the height of the Cold War



■ **Apr 1961:** Soviet Union increases support of *Fidel Castro's* regime in Cuba after *Bay of Pigs* invasion

■ **Sep 1962:** Soviet leader *Nikita Khrushchev* gives go-ahead to install nuclear missiles on Cuba to defend island from U.S. invasion

■ **Oct 14:** American U-2 spy plane obtains photographs of missile sites on Cuba



■ **Oct 16:** U.S. President *John F. Kennedy* convenes *ExComm* – group of senior advisors – to tackle crisis

■ **Oct 18:** ExComm told installation of SS-4 missiles is nearly complete

■ **Oct 22:** Kennedy makes TV address, declaring naval blockade of Cuba and warning U.S. will retaliate if any Soviet missile is launched from Cuba

■ All U.S. military forces worldwide ordered to go to DEFCON 3 – heightened state of nuclear alert



■ **Oct 24:** Soviet ships carrying military equipment to Cuba reverse course as they near quarantine zone



■ **Oct 24:** Khrushchev says blockade is “an act of aggression”. U.S. forces go to DEFCON 2 – highest alert status short of war

■ **Oct 25:** CIA reports SS-4 missiles are ready to fire – Kennedy considers invasion

■ **Oct 26:** Soviets offer to dismantle sites if U.S. pledges not to invade Cuba

■ **Oct 27:** Khrushchev now demands removal of U.S. missile sites from Turkey



■ U2 plane shot down over Cuba, killing U.S. pilot – war looks imminent

■ **Oct 27:** Kennedy offers to end blockade and not invade Cuba if Soviets withdraw missiles

■ **Oct 28:** Khrushchev announces removal of missiles in exchange for U.S. pledge never to invade Cuba. Deal to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey not made public

■ **Nov 20:** Naval blockade lifted after Soviet missiles withdrawn

■ **Apr 1963:** U.S. missiles in Turkey dismantled – kept secret until 1989

■ **Aug 30:** “Hotline” – direct communication between Moscow and Washington – goes into operation

