



Arizona Model United Nations 64

Joint Crisis Committee 1: Cuban Missile Crisis - Soviet Politburo and Cuban Leadership

Background Guide

Chair Introduction

Hello! My name is Cooper Long, and I am excited to be chairing the Joint Crisis Committee 1: Cuban Missile Crisis – Soviet Politburo and Cuban Leadership. I am currently a sophomore at the University of Arizona, double-majoring in Political Science and Communication. I joined Model United Nations in the second semester of my freshman year of college because I wanted the opportunity to improve my public speaking and problem-solving skills, but I have continued because I enjoy working with the community of hard-working future leaders that is Arizona Model United Nations. Last year, I was the Crisis Coordinator for the Hunger Games committee, and I look forward to serving in a crisis committee once again, this time as chair. I am looking forward to meeting all of this committee’s amazing delegates, and I encourage all delegates to come prepared to committee sessions, actively participate, and collaborate with other delegates. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions!

Committee Introduction and Purview

The Joint Crisis Committee 1: Cuban Missile Crisis – Soviet Politburo and Cuban Leadership simulates the highest levels of decision-making within the Soviet Union and the Republic of Cuba during one of the most dangerous confrontations of the Cold War. Delegates will represent key Soviet and Cuban leaders, including members of the Soviet Politburo, senior military and intelligence officials, and the Cuban revolutionary leadership under Fidel Castro.

This committee is set in October 1962, following the covert deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles to Cuba. The missile placement was intended to protect the Cuban Revolution from further U.S. aggression, restore strategic balance in response to American missiles stationed in Turkey and Italy, and assert Soviet credibility as a global superpower. However, the discovery of these missiles by U.S. intelligence has rapidly escalated tensions, placing the world on the brink of nuclear war.

As a joint crisis committee, this body operates simultaneously with an opposing committee representing the United States President and Cabinet. Decisions made within this committee will directly influence—and be influenced by—actions taken by the United States. Delegates must

navigate secrecy, ideological commitments, alliance politics, and military risk while responding to fast-moving developments and incomplete information.

The purview of this committee includes military strategy, nuclear deployment and command decisions, diplomatic engagement, intelligence operations, alliance management between the Soviet Union and Cuba, and internal political stability. This committee does not follow General Assembly procedures. Instead, delegates will act through directives, crisis actions, negotiations, and rapid decision-making under extreme pressure.

Topic I: Prevention of Mutually Assured Destruction

Since the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union and the United States have existed in a state of strategic rivalry defined by the threat of nuclear annihilation. By 1962, both powers possess arsenals capable of destroying not only each other, but civilization itself. This condition, known as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), means that a direct nuclear exchange would result in catastrophic losses for all parties involved.

For the Soviet Union and Cuba, the Cuban Missile Crisis presents a paradox. The deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba strengthens deterrence and protects the island from U.S. invasion, yet it also dramatically increases the risk of escalation. Even limited military actions, miscommunications, or unauthorized decisions could trigger a chain reaction leading to nuclear war.

Delegates must therefore consider how to preserve the strategic benefits of missile deployment while preventing escalation beyond control. This includes managing military readiness, maintaining command and control over nuclear forces, communicating resolve without provoking panic, and responding to U.S. actions in a way that avoids irreversible escalation.

Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union faces challenges of geographic distance, alliance coordination, and imperfect control over Cuban decision-making. Cuban leadership, having experienced repeated U.S. attempts at regime change, may favor aggressive action even at high risk. Soviet leaders must balance ideological solidarity with Cuba against the existential danger posed by nuclear confrontation.

Additionally, the compressed timelines created by short-range missiles in Cuba reduce opportunities for diplomacy and increase the likelihood of accidental conflict. The prevention of

Mutually Assured Destruction, therefore, depends not only on restraint but on disciplined coordination between allies under extreme pressure.

Questions to Consider:

- How can the Soviet Union deter U.S. aggression without provoking a nuclear response?
- What level of control should Moscow exert over Cuban military decisions?
- How should the committee respond to U.S. naval, aerial, or covert actions?
- At what point does deterrence become provocation?
- Is limited escalation a viable strategy, or does it inevitably lead to nuclear war?

Topic II: Establishing Strategic Dominance

The Cuban Missile Crisis is not solely a defensive struggle; it is also a contest for strategic dominance. For the Soviet Union, missile deployment in Cuba represents an opportunity to correct the strategic imbalance created by U.S. nuclear missiles in Europe and to assert itself as an equal global superpower. For Cuba, Soviet military support is essential to the survival of the revolution and the preservation of national sovereignty.

Establishing strategic dominance does not necessarily require direct military conflict. It may involve diplomatic leverage, psychological pressure, intelligence operations, alliance signaling, or the controlled demonstration of force. However, misjudging the balance between strength and restraint risks undermining Soviet credibility or provoking catastrophic escalation.

Soviet and Cuban objectives are aligned but not identical. While the Soviet Union may view the crisis through a global strategic lens, the Cuban leadership is primarily concerned with deterring U.S. invasion and preserving revolutionary independence. Managing this alliance under pressure will be a central challenge for the committee.

International perception also plays a critical role. Actions taken during the crisis will influence global views of Soviet resolve, U.S. reliability, and the legitimacy of revolutionary movements worldwide. Strategic dominance, therefore, must be established not only militarily, but politically and ideologically.

Questions to Consider:

- How can the Soviet Union shift the global balance of power without direct conflict?
- Should Cuban leadership be granted greater autonomy in military decision-making?
- What signals of strength or restraint will most effectively influence U.S. behavior?
- How can strategic dominance be maintained if the missiles must be withdrawn?
- What precedents will this crisis set for future Cold War confrontations?

References

- [AZMUN Short Research Guide: JCC 1: Cuban Missile Crisis - Soviet Politburo and Cuban Leadership](#)
- [National Security Archive — “Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: Documents”](#)
- [Cuban Missile Crisis Chronology \(Oct 26–Nov 15, 1962\)](#)
- [Wilson Center Digital Archive — Topic page: “Cuban Missile Crisis”](#)