

Lesson 3

Student Handout 3.2—Reconstructing the Cuban Missile Crisis

Background: On October 16, 1962, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy revealed to President John F. Kennedy photographic evidence of both Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) in Cuba. If fired, the MRBMs



could reach Washington, DC, and the IRBMs could reach major US cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Realizing the urgency of the situation, President Kennedy immediately gathered his closest advisors, who together became known as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or simply, EX-COMM. With the help of EX-COMM, Kennedy had to make a decision about what action to take in response to the Soviet placement of missiles in Cuba. The thirteen days including October 16 through October 28, 1962, are now referred to in the

United States as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cuban Missile Crisis was one of the most intense chapters in the Cold War, and one in which the “three worlds”—the US and Soviet superpowers, and a part of what became known as the Third World—collided.

The Task: Your task is to help reconstruct the thirteen days of the Cuban Missile Crisis. You and your group members will be assigned ONE of the thirteen days. Using primary and secondary sources, you will reconstruct the events of the day to present to your classmates in *no more than 10 minutes*. Your goal is to better understand, and help your classmates better understand, the urgency of the “crisis” for all parties involved. You can represent the day through a PowerPoint presentation, a dramatic presentation, or a narrative, as long as you include the following:

- A synopsis of the day, either at the beginning or end of your presentation.
- Consideration of both the United States and Soviet points of view.
- Evidence from primary sources and, when appropriate, an explanation of each primary source
- A bibliography including primary and secondary sources used.