

KEY QUESTION: How successful was US Containment in Cuba? Missiles in Cuba

Contextual Background:

- Until 1959, Cuba was closely allied to the United States under the leadership of the right-wing dictator, General Batista.
- There was considerable American investment in Cuba as many American companies had links there.
- Americans owned most of the businesses, banks, sugar and tobacco plantations, as well as a large naval base.
- The USA was the chief consumer of Cuba's sugar and tobacco.
- In 1959, Batista was overthrown in a revolution led by Fidel Castro.

US Cuban relations go sour.....who should be 'blamed'?

- 1959 – Eisenhower refuses to meet with Castro but he did meet with a Soviet ambassador at the UN and they offered their support for his new government.
- Castro had not been a communist before 1960, but was drawn to communism by the friendship and support offered by Khrushchev and his government.
- Castro nationalised all American-owned companies in Cuba, and refused to pay compensation. The USA then had a communist state 'in its own backyard'.
- Eisenhower imposed a trade embargo - This backfired badly on the Americans as it meant the Cubans then looked to the USSR for a market for their sugar.
- The Soviets were only too happy to oblige and were soon supplying Cuba with oil and weapons.

Discussion Point

Did the US create a problem for themselves in Cuba OR was Khrushchev sensing an opportunity?

US attempt regime change - Bay of Pigs = fiasco

- The Bay of Pigs: In April 1961, just after he was installed as President of the USA, John F Kennedy approved a plan to invade Cuba and overthrow communism.
- The CIA landed 1,400 Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs on the southern coast of Cuba with the aim of provoking an anti-communist uprising.
- Almost at the last minute, Kennedy cancelled an order that had promised the Cuban resistance US Air Force support for their coup d'etat.
- The lack of air support meant the rebels were easily defeated when they were met by 20,000 heavily armed Cuban troops. All were captured or killed within 72 hours!

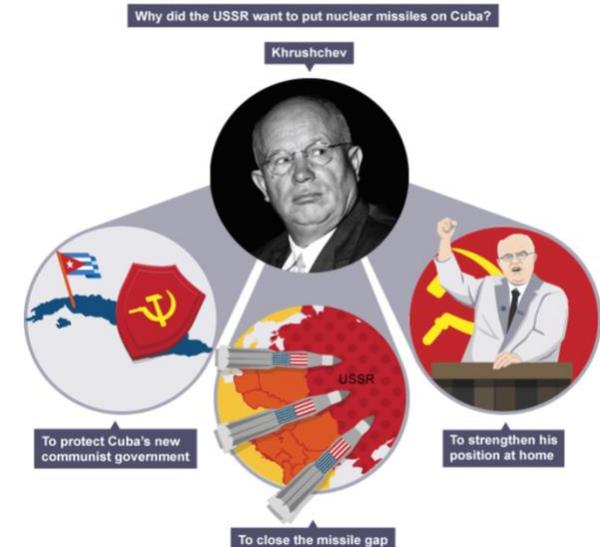
Why should the US care about Castro?

- ✓ Cuba only 90 miles off coast of Florida
- ✓ The US had a Naval base at Guantanamo Bay
- ✓ Monroe Doctrine: 1823 – The US would not tolerate potentially 'unfriendly' governments in their 'sphere of influence'.

Random – but useful stuff

- The struggle for Cuba was part of the worldwide Cold War and a US belief that communism was on the move and threatening the USA on its own doorstep. It had to be 'contained'
- JFK became President in 1961 promising to 'get tough' with communism
- JFK referred to Castro as a 'communist menace'
- The CIA called the 'Bay of Pigs' a 'perfect failure!'

Did you know? Operation Anadyr was the code name used by the Soviet Union for its Cold War secret operation in 1962 of deploying ballistic missiles, medium-range bombers, and a division of mechanized infantry to Cuba to create an army group that would be able to prevent an invasion of the island by United States forces – all under the noses of the US!



How many stars would you award the US for handling this part of the Cuban 'crisis'?



KEY TERMS

Monroe Doctrine / Nationalise / Trade embargo