

### **President Kennedy's Speech**

- These extracts come from a speech broadcast by President Kennedy live on prime time US television on October 22nd 1962.
- For some time before the announcement, Kennedy had to pretend to have a cold. This explained why he cancelled several meetings. The real reason, of course, was that he was deciding what to do about Cuba.
- He first found out about the missiles on October 14th. At that point he created a special committee of advisers called Excomm to advise him.
- Excomm was divided between those who wanted to use force (Hawks) and those who preferred negotiation (Doves).
- Kennedy made it clear that he was in charge of events by opting for the blockade. This made it clear to the American people and Khrushchev that he was taking firm action. On the other hand, the blockade was much less likely to spark off a war than bombing the missile sites or invading Cuba.

Good Evening, My Fellow Citizens:

This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military build up on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere.

The characteristics of these new missile sites indicate two distinct types of installations. Several of them include medium range ballistic missiles, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for a distance of more than 1,000 nautical miles. Each of these missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the southeastern part of the United States, in Central America or in the Caribbean area.

Additional sites not yet completed appear to be designed for intermediate range ballistic missiles -- capable of travelling more than twice as far -- and thus capable of striking most of the major cities in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson Bay, Canada, and as far south as Lima, Peru. In addition, jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons are now being uncrated and assembled in Cuba while the necessary air bases are being prepared.

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Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute a maximum peril. Nuclear weapons are so destructive, and ballistic missiles are so swift, that any substantially increased possibility

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of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to the peace.

For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States recognising this fact, have deployed strategic nuclear weapons with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which ensured that those weapons would not be used in the absence of some vital challenge. Our own strategic missiles have never been transferred to the territory of any other nation under a cloak of secrecy and deception, and our history – unlike that of the Soviets since World War II – demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people. Nevertheless, American citizens have become adjusted to living daily on the bull's eye of Soviet missiles located inside the U.S.S.R. or in submarines. In that sense, missiles in Cuba add to an already clear and present danger – although, it should be noted, the nations of Latin America have never previously been subjected to a potential nuclear threat.

But this secret, swift and extraordinary build-up of Communist missiles in an area well-known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the western hemisphere, in violation of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy – this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil – is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be trusted again by either friend or foe.

The 1930s taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war. This nation is opposed to war. We are also true to our word. Our unswerving objective, therefore, must be to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country, and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the western hemisphere.

Our policy has been one of patience and restraint, as befits a peaceful and powerful nation, which leads a world-wide alliance. We have been determined not to be diverted from our central concerns by mere irritants and fanatics. But now further action is required – and it is underway.

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Acting, therefore, in the defence of our own security and of the entire Western Hemisphere, and under the authority entrusted to me by the Constitution as endorsed by the resolution of the Congress, I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately:

First: To halt this offensive build-up, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation and port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back

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Second: I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military build-up. ... I have directed the Armed Forces to prepare for any eventualities; and I trust that in the interest of both the Cuban people and the Soviet technicians at the sites, the hazards to all concerned of continuing the threat will be recognized.

Third: It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

Fourth: As a necessary military precaution, I have reinforced our base at Guantanamo, evacuated today the dependents of our personnel there, and ordered additional military units to be on a standby alert status.

Fifth: We are calling tonight for an immediate meeting of the Organ of Consultation under the Organization of American States, to consider this threat to hemispheric security

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Sixth: Under the Charter of the United Nations, we are asking tonight that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convoked without delay to take action against this latest Soviet threat to world peace. Our resolution will call for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba, under the supervision of U.N. observers, before the quarantine can be lifted.

Seventh and finally: I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and to transform the history of man.

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Finally, I want to say a few words to the captive people of Cuba, to whom this speech is being directly carried by special radio facilities. I speak to you as a friend, as one who knows of your deep attachment to your fatherland, as one who shares your aspirations for liberty and justice for all. And I have watched and the American people have watched with deep sorrow how your nationalist revolution was betrayed – and how your fatherland fell under foreign domination. Now your leaders are no longer Cuban leaders inspired by Cuban ideals. They are puppets and agents of an international conspiracy which has turned Cuba against your friends and neighbours in the Americas – and turned it into the first Latin American country to become a target for nuclear war – the first Latin American country to have these weapons on its soil.

These new weapons are not in your interest. They contribute nothing to your peace and well-being. They can only undermine it. But this country has no wish to cause you to suffer or to impose any system upon you. We know your lives and land are being used as pawns by those who deny you freedom.

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Many times in the past, the Cuban people have risen to throw out tyrants who destroyed their liberty. And I have no doubt that most Cubans today look forward to the time when they will be truly free, free to select their own system, free to own their own land, free to speak and write and worship without fear of degradation. And then shall Cuba be welcomed back to the society of free nations and to the associations of their hemisphere.

My fellow citizens: let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out, no one can foresee precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred. Many months of sacrifice and self-discipline lie ahead – months in which both our patience and our will be tested – months in which many threats and denunciations will keep us aware of our danger. But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing.

The path we have chosen for the present is full of hazards, all paths are – but it is the one most consistent with our character and courage as a nation and our commitments around the world. The cost of freedom is always high – but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose is the path of surrender or submission.

Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right – not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.

Thank you and good night.

**Activity (Both activities #1 and #2 will be required)**

1. One historian has called the speech 'the most alarming ever delivered by an American President' and said that it 'frightened the American people'. Others believe the speech was designed to reassure the American public. Provide four examples of evidence from this speech from **both** sides of the argument by quoting directly from the speech.

\*\*\*\*\*You must explain why the quote you selected frightened or reassured the American people.

2. Now you must decide if Kennedy's speech was intended to alarm Americans or keep them calm? Choose one side of the argument and explain how you concluded that this was the intention of Kennedy. The explanation should explain your position by providing evidence and reasoning to support the position. It should be at least one hundred and fifty words.

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### Rubric for President Kennedy's Speech

Category	Does Not Meet Expectations 1	Adequately Meets Expectations 2	Fully Meets Expectations 3
<b>Four Pieces of Accurate Evidence that Speech Frightened Americans are provided and explained</b>	Section is incomplete and lacking accurate evidence.	Section is complete, but evidence selected may not be accurate examples of frightening evidence	Section is fully complete and evidence selected are accurate examples of frightening evidence
<b>Four Pieces of Evidence that Speech Re-Assured Americans are provided and explained</b>	Section is incomplete and lacking accurate evidence.	Section is complete, but evidence selected may not be accurate examples of re-assuring evidence	Section is fully complete and evidence selected are accurate examples of re-assuring evidence
<b>Decision on the Intention of the Speech is Clearly Explained and Plausible</b>	Student does not explain how they decided what the intention of the speech is, or/and the decision is not plausible	Student explains how they reached a conclusion and the decision is somewhat plausible, because it selects evidence that does not logically support conclusions	Student explains how decisions were made, and decisions are plausible and logical because they are supported with evidence.
<b>Quality of Explanation (Clear reasoning, explanation are provided)</b>	Explanation and reasoning is unclear or brief	Explanation and reasoning is either unclear, lacking detail or overly brief	Explanations and reasoning are clear, detailed and accurate
<b>Evidence Used to Support Your Conclusion in Activity #2</b>	No evidence is provided to support conclusion	Some evidence is used to support conclusions, but it is either inaccurate, or not enough evidence is used	Excellent amount of evidence is used to support conclusions. Excellent examples were selected