

Options in Brief

Option 1: Pursue Diplomacy

The United States should pursue purely diplomatic actions through the United Nations (UN) in order to pressure the Soviets to remove the missiles from Cuba. This would reduce the likelihood of military conflict. Any other steps could be too dangerous. We should also work with the Organization of American States (OAS) to bring pressure on Cuba from other Latin American states. As a means of resolving the crisis, the United States would be publicly willing to eliminate U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

Option 2: Blockade Cuba

The U.S. Navy should blockade Cuba. This action would prevent the arrival of Soviet ships carrying materials necessary to make the missiles operational. A naval blockade represents a combination of diplomatic and military responses, but minimizes the risks to U.S. military personnel as well as Cubans and Soviets. The United States will demonstrate its willingness to fight if necessary, but there would still be room for a peaceful solution if the Soviets and Cubans are cooperative.

Option 3: Airstrike and Invade

The U.S. military should launch an air strike followed by an invasion to destroy the missile sites. Although such an action would risk American lives and is likely to kill Soviet and Cuban military personnel and Cuban civilians, it is worth the cost to preserve our safety and our credibility as an opponent of the Soviet Union. Failure to respond to the missile build-up will lead to a loss of confidence in the United States, particularly in Latin America, and provide encouragement to pro-communist forces there. The free peoples of the world are depending on us. We cannot appear to be weak or indecisive.