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The World on the Brink

<http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/>

This website which is sponsored by the JFK Library summarizes the Cuban Missile Crisis. The site includes various primary source documents in an effort to depict how JFK and his advisors carefully managed one of the greatest security threats in our nation’s history. Use the site and primary source documents to answer the following questions.

1. Explain what the crisis was. Include how and when the crisis materialized.
2. As the crisis developed the Kennedy administration focused on two courses of action, what were they? Who do you think supported the respective courses?
3. Look closely at the President’s schedule for October 16th. What hidden effort is reflected by his schedule?
4. What happened when Kennedy confronted the Soviet Foreign Minister regarding Cuba? What did the Foreign Minister maintain and what did Kennedy assert?
5. Read Ted Sorenson’s Memorandum from day three. What is being communicated within the memo?
6. Two items of significance occur on October 20th. Identify them.
7. Look at the minutes of the 506th meeting of the National Security Council. The meeting can be divided into three segments or topics – identify them.
8. Who served on the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (title not names). This was a temporary committee created to manage the crisis for JFK. They would discuss options and provide Kennedy with suggestions.
9. When Kennedy addressed the nation regarding the crisis there are two key items contained in the message, what are they?
10. The American people were not the only intended audience for the address. Who were the other intended recipients of his message (there are two)?
11. When Kennedy implemented the blockade he called it a “quarantine” why? When he sought international support for the action who did he seek it from?
12. As of October 25 the confrontation between the U.S.S.R and the U.S. was playing out in three venues. Identify them.
13. On Day 11 the Soviets present a diplomatic option in two different ways. What were they?
14. What made October 27th the most volatile day of the standoff?
15. On Day 12 Robert Kennedy met with the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. What two concessions did Kennedy offer in exchange for the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba?
16. Who does President Kennedy call to brief regarding the crisis on Day 13? Can you contemplate similar behavior occurring in the next four years? Explain.