

The Cuban Missile Crisis

The U.S. came very close to a nuclear war in October 1962. It all started when the U.S. confirmed that the Soviets had unfinished nuclear missiles in Cuba. At that point, the CIA estimated they'd be operational in only 10 days. The US went into high alert and many high level meetings were held.

The U.S. point of view – that we were responding to a threat by the Soviets:

The U.S. felt its choices were to bomb Cuba or to blockade Cuba.

The U.S. view of the Soviets' choices were that they would either withdraw their missiles or maintain (and actually arm) them.

Assumptions:

- The U.S. would prefer that an airstrike persuade the Soviets to withdraw their missiles than that a blockade succeed, as they would then have both demonstrated military superiority and had the chance to cause some collateral damage. However, if the Soviets stand firm, then an airstrike could result in a nuclear war.
- The Soviets do not want the U.S. bombing Cuba. Nuclear war is also their greatest fear, but neither do they want to bow to the U.S.' military strength by withdrawing after an airstrike. They would, however, prefer to maintain the missiles in the face of a blockade than to give in in the face of a blockade.