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Before, and during, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States had Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Italy. Nikita Khrushchev asked President Kennedy why he thought the Soviet Union could not place nuclear missiles in Cuba (90 miles from America) when the U.S. had positioned nuclear missiles in Turkey (where American and Soviet "sentries walk up and down and look at each other"). Image of Jupiter missile online via the U.S. Army Redstone Arsenal.

Trying to avoid war, [the two leaders](#) (follow the link to see them together in Vienna) continued to exchange letters.

The terms Khrushchev presented on October 26 actually produced some American optimism. But that optimism, even as the Joint Chiefs were urging an [air strike](#) by Monday morning, was short-lived. (Advance the recording to approximately 14:00 minutes to hear General Taylor's comments.)

While Khrushchev (on the 26th) seemed willing to remove the missiles in exchange for a U.S. commitment not to invade Cuba, Khrushchev ([on the 27th](#)) presented a completely different proposal. And the second proposal was one that Kennedy KNEW placed HIM in a box.

Khrushchev, for the first time, presented an argument that other countries would find reasonable. The Soviets were as [concerned](#) about missiles at *their* borders as people in the United States were concerned about missiles in Cuba. If America removed missiles in Turkey, the Soviets would [remove missiles in Cuba](#).

*You are worried by Cuba. You say that it worries you because it is a distance of 90 miles by sea from the coast of America, but Turkey is next to us. Our sentries walk up and down and look at each other.*

*Do you consider then that you have the right to demand security for your own country and the removal of those weapons which you call offensive and do not acknowledge the same right for us?* (Khrushchev, quoted by Alex von Tunzelmann, in *Red Heat: Conspiracy, Murder and the Cold War in the Caribbean*, at [page 193](#).)

Within minutes of reading Khrushchev's comments, the President expressed his concern:

*We're going to be in an insupportable position on this matter if this becomes his proposal.*

Even though the Jupiter missiles in Turkey were obsolete, Kennedy did not want to resolve the crisis by making a trade with Khrushchev. Notwithstanding, the President knew how most folks would react to the Soviet proposal:

*To any man at the United Nations or any other rational man it will look like a very fair trade.*

Meanwhile, U-2 and other low-flying reconnaissance flights provided evidence the missile launch sites were nearly operational. And there was other trouble brewing - known and unknown.

On Saturday morning, an Alaskan-based U-2 strayed over Soviet airspace. While American planes were dispatched to escort the U-2 back to safe territory, Russian MiGs were scrambled to intercept it. In the waters off Cuba, the Soviet ship Grozny crossed the quarantine line but stopped after U.S. Navy ships fired star shells across her bow.

Those were the *known* issues.

Recently released Russian documents (like this 26 October 1962 letter from Castro to Khrushchev) reveal the *unknown* trouble. Castro was tired of American flights over his country. An October 25 telegram from A.I. Alekseev, (the Soviet Ambassador in Cuba) to the USSR Foreign Ministry, states Castro's position:

*...Castro, in the course of conversations with our military experts, has expressed a belief in the necessity of shooting down one or two piratic American planes over Cuban territory.*

While Ex Comm was meeting on the 27th, and the President was struggling with Khrushchev's latest proposal, a Laughlin Air Force Base pilot and his U-2 were preparing to make another run over Cuba.

Major Rudolph Anderson Jr. - one of the first pilots to produce evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba - was about to fly his last mission.

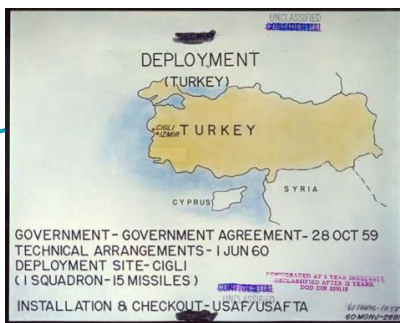
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CLOSE-TO-THE-EDGE-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CLOSE-TO-THE-EDGE-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

## Media Stream

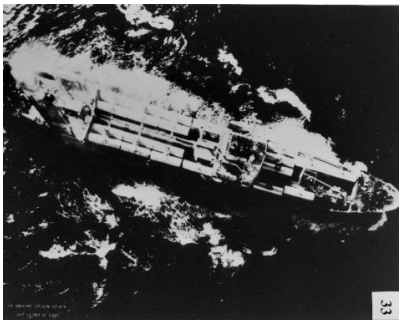


### Jupiter Missiles in Turkey - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy U.S. Army AMCOM website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Jupiter-Missiles-in-Turkey-Map-Locator>



### Grozny - Soviet Ship

Image online, courtesy The National Security Archive, George Washington University.

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