The Cold War: In the 1950’s was the United States ever in
danger of nuclear attack on the mainland?

Middle School 8th grade
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DIRECTION: Analyze the following documents. Use the documents and your knowledge of American history, to answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers will help you write a short essay related to the documents.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:
The cold war was a pivotal era in the twentieth century. The term cold war itself, popularized in a 1946 speech by Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Britain, describes the ideological struggle between democracy and COMMUNISM that began shortly after the end of WORLD WAR II and lasted until 1991. For the foreign policy of the United States, the cold war defined the last half of the twentieth century. It was a war of ideas, of threats, and of actual fighting in the countries of Korea and Vietnam, pitting western nations against the Soviet and China and their Communist allies…….. The intensity of domestic fears grew in 1949, following the announcement by President Truman that the Soviets had developed the atomic bomb. Only a year later, the KOREAN WAR broke out. These events ushered in a period of bomb shelters; air raid drills in schools; civilian anti-Communist organizations; and suspicion of anyone whose ideas, behavior, personal life, or appearance suggested belief in or sympathy for Communism. Terms like Pinko, Red, and Communist sympathizer found their way into the national vocabulary.

http://law.jrank.org/pages/5352/Cold-War.html

QUESTION:
With superpowers in the east and west testing powerful nuclear weapons, the people of the United States race for protection in the 1950’s. The Soviet Union and its allies threaten American with mass destruction. Were these legitimate fears or was this more propaganda to keep the people in fear? Your answer will determine the viewpoint in your essay. Write an essay explaining the reasons why the historical resources show the United States’ mainland was in danger of nuclear attack, OR write reasons why the historical sources show there was not a nuclear threat to the United States mainland.
A PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

July 17, 1945

Disclosures of which the people of the United States are not aware may affect the welfare of this nation in the near future. The liberation of atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander-in-Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan.

We, the undersigned scientists, have been working in the field of atomic power. Until recently we have had to fear that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war and that her only defense might lie in a counterattack by the same means. Today, with the defeat of Germany, this danger is averted and we feel impelled to say what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not unless the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan was given an opportunity to surrender.

If such public announcement gave assurance to the Japanese that they could look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuits in their homeland and if Japan still refused to surrender our nation might then, in certain circumstances, find itself forced to resort to the use of atomic bombs. Such a step, however, ought not to be made at any time without seriously considering the moral responsibilities which are involved.

The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. The atomic bombs at our disposal represent only the first step in this direction, and there is almost no limit to the destructive power which will become available in the course of their future development. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

If after this war a situation is allowed to develop in the world which permits rival powers to be in uncontrolled possession of these new means of destruction, the cities of the United States as well as the cities of other nations will be in continuous danger of sudden annihilation. All the resources of the United States, moral and material, may have to be mobilized to prevent the advent of such a world situation. Its prevention is at present the solemn responsibility of the United States—singled out by virtue of her lead in the field of atomic power.

The added material strength which this lead gives to the United States brings with it the obligation of restraint and if we were to violate this obligation our moral position would be weakened in the eyes of the world and in our own eyes. It would then be more difficult for us to live up to our responsibility of bringing the unleashed forces of destruction under control.

In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition: first, that you exercise your power as Commander-in-Chief, to rule that the United States shall not resort to the use of atomic bombs in this war unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan have been made public in detail and Japan knowing these terms has refused to surrender; second, that in such an event the question whether or not to use atomic bombs be decided by you in the light of the considerations presented in this petition as well as all the other moral responsibilities which are involved.

[Signatures]
1. According to the first paragraphs who has the power to allow the use of bombs during the Japanese and U.S. war?

2. In second paragraph which country has ended it’s war with the U.S?

3. What would happen if U.S. chose to use the atomic bomb?

4. What date was this written?

5. What might happen to the U.S. cities an other cities in other countrys, if the President chooses to use nuclear force?

Document #2

1945 Timeline

October 18: Lavrentii Beria, head of the Soviet secret police and in charge of the Soviet nuclear program, is provided top-secret details on the U.S. plutonium bomb by a spy working inside Los Alamos, USSR

November 23: The USSR concludes a secret agreement with Czechoslovakia granting the Soviet Union exclusive rights to all uranium mined within Czechoslovakia. USSR

December 24: U.S. Embassy in Moscow warns of an all-out effort by USSR to build atomic bomb. US

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/timeline/indextxt.html

6. Who was responsible for this timeline?

7. What was the USSR doing with their nuclear program and how did they get U.S. information?

Document #3

Timeline of the Nuclear Age

1950

January 27 - Klaus Fuchs confesses that he gave atomic secrets to the Soviets while working at the Manhattan Project.
January 31 - President Truman announces the decision to proceed with development of the hydrogen bomb.

1951

January 27 - The first nuclear test occurs at the Nevada Test Site.  
June - First British nuclear reactor goes critical.  
Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted and sentenced to death for passing information on atomic weapons to the U.S.S.R.

1952

September - A second U.S. nuclear weapons laboratory is established in Livermore, California.  
October 3 - First British atomic bomb, "Hurricane," was tested at Monte Bello Islands, Australia, with a yield of 25 kilotons.  
October 31 - U.S. explodes first thermonuclear or fusion device, "Mike," at Eniwetok Atoll. It had a yield of 10.4 megatons.

1953

August 12 - First Soviet layer cake design bomb explodes on a tower in Siberia. It was not a "true" hydrogen bomb.

1954

March 1 - The first deliverable hydrogen bomb design is tested at Bikini Atoll. "BRAVO" has a yield of 14.8 megatons. Radioactive fallout affects local islanders and a nearby fishing boat.  
April 12 to May 6 - Hearings regarding Oppenheimer's loyalty cause him to lose his security clearance.  
September 30 - The USS Nautilus, the first American nuclear powered submarine, is launched.

1955

The U.S.S.R. deploys two strategic bombers, Bear and Bison.  
The United Kingdom announces the decision to develop thermonuclear weapons.  
November 22 - The first true fusion device test is achieved by the Soviet Union; it has a yield of 1.6 megatons. The development is lead by Andrei Sakharov.

1957

May 15 - First British H-bomb exploded at Christmas Island. The yield was between 200 - 300 kilotons. It was less than expected.  
July 29 - The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency is created. The agency inspects nuclear reactors and plants to ensure they are being run for peaceful purposes.  
August 26 - The Soviet Union announces the successful launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.  
September 19 - First underground nuclear test, "Rainier," occurs at the Nevada Test Site. It had a yield of 1.7 kilotons.  
November 8 - Britain's first truly successful thermonuclear bomb test. The bomb had a yield of 1.8 megatons.  
October - Fire destroys the core of a reactor at Britain's Windscale nuclear complex, sending clouds of radioactivity into the atmosphere.

1958

July 2 - President Eisenhower signs amendments to the 1954 U.S. Atomic Energy Act which opened the way to a bilateral agreement between Britain and America on nuclear weapon design information.  

1959

June 9 - The first U.S. Polaris nuclear missile-capable submarine enters into service.  
October 31 - The U.S. deploys the first operational intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Atlas D.
8. In 1950 who confesses to being a spy while working on a U.S. nuclear project?

9. What event happened in 1953? Was it a cause for fear in the United States? Why or Why not?

10. In 1955 which country was successful in testing their nuclear weapon?

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**Document #4**

**Cold War Alliances**

This map shows how the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies formed opposing blocs of power during the Cold War. Europe was split between the communist allies of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the non-communist allies of the United States in Western Europe. Other communist countries, such China and Cuba, sided with the Soviet Union during parts of the Cold War.
11. Who occupied more territory, according to the map, United States or Communist countries?

12. What do you think the United was trying to prevent based on this map?

**Document #5**
Effects of Atomic Weapons

**RESIDUAL NUCLEAR RADIATIONS AND CONTAMINATION**

**EFFECT OF LOW AIR BURST**

8.64 Atomic bombs were exploded experimentally at low altitudes at Alamogordo and at Eniwetok. Radioactive contamination of the ground was many times greater than for the high-altitude bursts, due to the fact that the ball of fire touched the earth’s surface. The radioactivity near the center of the explosion resulted partly from condensation of fission products upon contact with the ground, and partly from radioactivity induced by neutrons. The approximate radiation dosage rates, in roentgens per hour, measured on the ground at Alamogordo, 1 hour after the detonation had taken place at a height of 100 feet, are given in Table 8.64 for various distances from ground zero.

**Table 8.64**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from ground zero (feet)</th>
<th>Dosage rate (r. per hr.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. What does the chart prove about radiation in bombs?

14. Who was responsible for this document?
SEVEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

In the seven days between October 21st and 27th, 1962, the world was dragged nearer to nuclear war than ever before.

This was the most dangerous week in the history of mankind. If nuclear war had broken out, Britain would have been obliterated. About 400 megatons—a small fraction of the Russian stock of H-bombs, but equivalent to 20,000 Hiroshima bombs—would be ample to rub Britain off the map.

FOR BRITAIN IS TO AMERICA WHAT CUBA WAS TO RUSSIA: AN ADVANCE MISSILE BASE, NEAR ENOUGH TO HIT RUSSIAN CITIES WITH INTERMEDIATE-RANGE MISSILES.

But note that the British Government was not consulted during the world's biggest-ever crisis week. The British bomb, intended to give us prestige and influence with the Americans, made not the slightest bit of difference. President Kennedy made his plans first, and told Macmillan about them afterwards.

Crisis week is now over. BUT IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN. The missile bases in Cuba are being dismantled—but there remain missile bases all over the world. AND NOWHERE IS THERE A HIGHER CONCENTRATION THAN IN BRITAIN.

The next crisis may not end like the last. The world will not be safe until ALL nuclear bases are dismantled, and ALL nuclear weapons are abolished.

DON'T JUST SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR THE NEXT CRISIS. YOU HAVE A VOICE: USE IT. WE ARE WORKING FOR A BRITISH LEAD. WHY NOT JOIN US?

--- Tear off here ---

If you wish to help and want further information about our activities fill in this form and send it to the

CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
2 Carthusian Street
London, E.C.1

NAME ............................................. AGE ............
ADDRESS ........................................... (C)

DONATION ............................................

Published by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 2 Carthusian Street, London, E.C.1.
Printed by O.L. Ltd., Newspaper Printers, Croydon, Surrey.

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/modules/protest/mss.21-3369-20.jpg

15. Who was responsible for this document?
16. What were the dates the document referred to?
17. What was the United States and Great Britain compared to?
18. What crisis does this document indicate and what are they urging the citizens
to do?

Document 7

http://warandgame.files.wordpress.com/2008/12/phjkk2.jpg

19. List the items found on this aerial picture of Cuba?

20. What do you think these missiles were doing in Cuba?

21. Was Cuba a Capitalist country or Communist?

22. Why do you think the U.S. took this picture of Cuba?
**Document #8**

Nuclear Explosion Survival kit

- **Step 1**: Know the effects of nuclear explosions.
- **Step 2**: Know the facts about radioactive fallout.
- **Step 3**: Know the warning signal and have a battery-powered radio.
- **Step 4**: Know how to take shelter.
- **Step 5**: Have fourteen days emergency supplies.
- **Step 6**: Know how to prevent and fight fires.
- **Step 7**: Know first aid and home nursing.
- **Step 8**: Know emergency cleanliness.
- **Step 9**: Know how to get rid of radioactive dust.
- **Step 10**: Know your municipal plans.
- **Step 11**: Have a plan for your family and yourself.

http://www.ki4u.com/survive/index.htm

23. Where do you think they advertised this list?

24. Who was responsible for creating this list, the government or citizens?

**Document #9**

Part of the Cold War Document and Speech Meta Node

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Kennedy's radio and television address

President John F. Kennedy
October 22, 1962

Good Evening, My Fellow Citizens:

This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup 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
Upon receiving the first preliminary hard information of this nature last Tuesday morning at 9 a.m.,
I directed that our surveillance be stepped up. And having now confirmed and completed our
evaluation of the evidence and our decision on a course of action, this government feels obliged to
report this new crisis to you in fullest detail.

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 traveling 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.

This urgent transformation of Cuba into an important strategic base -- by the presence of these
large, long-range, and clearly offensive weapons of sudden mass destruction -- constitutes an
explicit threat to the peace and security of all Americas, in flagrant and deliberate defiance of the
Rio Pact of 1947, the traditions of this nation and hemisphere, the joint resolution of the 87th
Congress, the Charter of the United Nations, and my own public warnings to the Soviets on
September 4 and 13. This action also contradicts the repeated assurances of Soviet spokesmen,
both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms buildup in Cuba would retain its original
defensive character, and that the Soviet Union had no need or desire to station strategic missiles
on the territory of any other nation. ...

But this secret, swift and extraordinary buildup 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
-- the sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for 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. ...

Acting, therefore, in the defense 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 buildup, 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. This quarantine will be
extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carriers. We are not at this time, however,
denying the necessities of life as the Soviets attempted to do in their Berlin blockade of 1948.

Second: I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military
buildup. The foreign ministers of the OAS, in their communiqué of October 6, rejected secrecy on
such matters in this hemisphere. Should these offensive military preparations continue, thus
increasing the threat to the hemisphere, further action will be justified. 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 and to invoke articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty in support of all necessary action. The United Nations Charter allows for regional security arrangements -- and the nations of this hemisphere decided long ago against the military presence of outside powers. Our other allies around the world have also been alerted.

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. He has an opportunity now to move the world back from the abyss of destruction -- by returning to his government's own words that it had no need to station missiles outside its own territory, and withdrawing these weapons from Cuba -- by refraining from any action which will widen or deepen the present crisis -- and then by participating in a search for peaceful and permanent solutions. ...

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 in which both our patience and our will will be tested -- months in which many threats and denunciations will keep us aware of our dangers. But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing. ...

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.

http://everything2.com/title/Cold%2520War%2520Document%2520and%2520Speech%2520Meta%2520Node%2520

25. What date was this Radio address given?

26. Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you know?

27. According to the 3rd paragraph what did the surveillance find in Cuba?

28. Could the missiles reach the United states if launched from this area based on this radio address.? How do you know?
29. What was the sixth thing the president called for?

Document #10


30. What state did this newspaper come from? What was the date of the paper?

31. What threat was aimed at the United States?

32. Was the citizens of the United States aware of the missile threat?
33. Why did the reporter think the Nuclear threat was over?

Now you are ready to write your essay, using your own knowledge and the answers you have found in the documents. Based on the historical document write reasons why the historical resources show the United States’ mainland was in danger of nuclear attack or write reasons why the historical sources show there was not a nuclear threat to the United States mainland.

**Rubric Checklist**

Does your essay:

- Address all aspects of the question by analyzing, and interpreting at least four documents.
- Include information provided by the document.
- Incorporate relevant background information that addresses your theme
- Support your arguments with facts.
- Include a clear and logical format
- Have a summation of the theme.