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Crisis in Cuba

Standard/Objective

- Students will analyze examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations. (NCSS)
- Students will analyze the events and positions of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Materials

Copies of both sides of the *Cuban Missile Sites* photograph card; Copies of the historical background information (page 24)

Discussion Questions

- How do you think this photograph was taken? Who do you think took it?
- What do the four markers on the photograph indicate?
- What do you think *MRBM* stands for?
- What would a photograph like this be used for?

Using the Primary Source

Distribute copies of the *Cuban Missile Sites* photograph to students or project the photograph so that the class can easily view it. Have students examine the photograph. Ask the discussion questions above. Then, have students read the historical background information (page 24).

Organize students into pairs, with each student playing the role of either President Kennedy or Premier Khrushchev. If you have an odd number of students, have one group of three include the position of Cuba's President Fidel Castro. Each student within a group will write one letter. Khrushchev's letter should address Kennedy's concerns and justify the defense of Cuba. The student representing Kennedy should be specific in a letter to Khrushchev as to actions planned by the United States as well as concern for American safety. The student representing Castro should write a letter to Khrushchev asking for Soviet assistance in protecting Cuba from an invasion. After the letters are written, have students share them within their groups. Have student volunteers read their letters to the class.

As a final activity, have students read the historical background information from the back of the photograph card. Then assign various activities from the card.

Extension Idea

Have students identify a post-1962 event that affected United States and Cuban relations. Then have students research the current diplomatic status between the United States and Cuba.

Crisis in Cuba *(cont.)*

Historical Background Information



The Cold War began as World War II came to an end. The United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) were the two superpowers of the world, and each was armed and ready to defend themselves and their allies. However, prior to 1962, confrontations between the United States and the USSR took place mainly in Europe. Americans felt safely removed from any direct conflict.



The only Communist country close to the United States was Cuba, an island 90 miles (145 km) south of Florida. On January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro (fee-DEL KAS-troh) overthrew the government of Cuba and proclaimed Cuba a Communist state. The United States planned a secret attack on Cuba. This attack took place in April 1961 at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. The plan failed, and President Kennedy had to admit that the United States made a mistake.



Even before the Bay of Pigs invasion, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (nih-KEY-tah KROOSH-chev) had been planning to transport nuclear missiles. The Bay of Pigs invasion only made Khrushchev more determined to place nuclear missiles in Cuba. He wanted his missiles close to the United States because America had weapons in Turkey along Soviet borders. He also believed that Cuba needed to be able to protect itself against further American-sponsored invasions. On October 14, 1962, an American spy plane photographed nuclear missiles in Cuba. These missiles had the ability to be fired anywhere from 1,300 to 2,500 miles (2,090 to 4,020 km), which put almost every city in the United States at risk of nuclear attack.



In an announcement to the public, Kennedy demanded that Khrushchev withdraw the missiles. He also told the Soviet leader that the United States was imposing a quarantine (KWAWR-uhn-teen) zone in the waters surrounding Cuba. All ships were subject to inspection, and any ships with weapons would be turned back.



During the crisis, Kennedy put the military on high alert, a position called DEFCON 2. DEFCON stands for defense readiness condition. DEFCON 5 is the normal readiness level for the military. DEFCON 1 is the maximum readiness level and means that war is imminent.



President Kennedy continued to communicate with Khrushchev through telegrams and phone calls, but both leaders refused to back down. The crisis seemed to be at a standoff, when finally, after 13 long days, both sides reached an agreement. Khrushchev called the ships back to the USSR and agreed to remove the missiles in Cuba if Kennedy would pledge not to invade Cuba and remove American missiles in Turkey. Kennedy agreed, but under the condition that the Soviets keep the missile removal in Turkey a secret so as not to make the United States look weak.



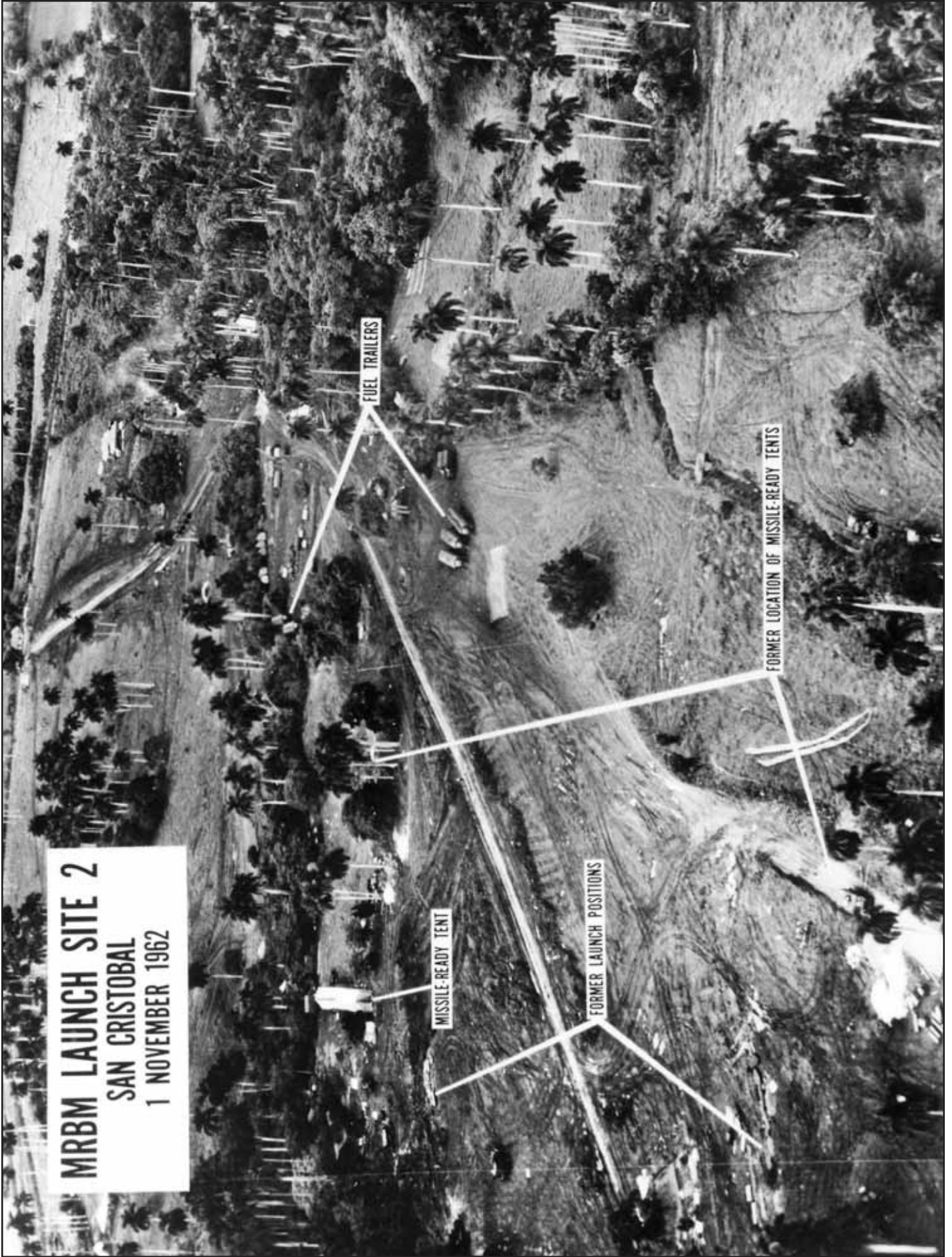
MRBM LAUNCH SITE 2
SAN CRISTOBAL
1 NOVEMBER 1962

FUEL TRAILERS

FORMER LOCATION OF MISSILE-READY TENTS

MISSILE-READY TENT

FORMER LAUNCH POSITIONS



Cuban Missile Sites

Historical Background Information

The world moved close to a nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union during October 1962. Photos taken by United States U2 spy planes showed that the Soviet Union was helping Cuba install nuclear missiles, just 90 miles (145 km) from the United States. President Kennedy ordered a quarantine zone in the waters surrounding Cuba. Tensions grew as American warships patrolled Cuban waters. The crisis ended without incident when Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba. The United States agreed never to invade Cuba and to remove missiles from Turkey.



Analyzing History

Knowledge

How do you know that this photo was taken after the crisis had passed?

Comprehension

Why were missile sites in Cuba a concern for the United States?

Application

The United States was spying on countries using photos taken by U2 spy planes. Today, governments use photos taken from space satellites. Do you agree with government policies of using spy photography? Defend your position.

Analysis

Compare and contrast the issue of missile placements in Europe by the United States to Soviet missile placements in Cuba.

Synthesis

Two ships were stopped by American patrols and checked without incident. Assume that you are the captain of an armed U.S. patrol ship and a Soviet freighter has refused to let you and your crew board his ship. Make a plan on how you would deal with this issue.

Evaluation

In your opinion, how much military strength should a country be able to use to defend itself and its allies?

Historical Writing

Fiction

Imagine you were living during this time. Write a letter to President Kennedy telling him how you feel about the way he handled this crisis.

Nonfiction

Defense readiness condition (DEFCON) has five levels. Find out about the five levels of defense. Create a poster showing the five levels and write a summary of each level on the poster. Find out what DEFCON level was reached during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and label it on the poster.

History Challenge

The United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain signed a treaty in 1963 that limited the testing of nuclear weapons. Find out the name of the treaty and at least two specifics about the agreement.

Staying Neutral

Standard/Objective

- Students will explain conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations. (NCSS)
- Students will study U.S. isolationism by examining the work of Dr. Seuss. They will create a class chart on isolationist policies and draw their own cartoons.

Materials

Copy of the facsimile *World War II Dr. Seuss Cartoon* document; Copies of the historical background information (page 48); Copies of the *Just Ignore It* activity sheet (page 49); Copies of *World War II Dr. Seuss Cartoon* (page 50); Large sheets of paper

Discussion Questions

- What type of bird does the bird sitting in the tree resemble? Why do you think the artist chose that type of bird?
- What country do you think the bird sitting in the tree represents? What country do you think the little bird pecking the other tree represents? What evidence supports your claim?
- Why does each tree have a country's name on it? Why doesn't the central tree have a country's name on it? Which country do you think this tree is meant to represent? Why?
- What do you think the quote means?

Using the Primary Source

Display the *World War II Dr. Seuss Cartoon* facsimile or project the document so the class can easily view it. Explain that this cartoon was drawn by Theodor Geisel. Ask students if they recognize the cartoonist. Most will recognize the cartoonist as Dr. Seuss. Tell them his real name was Theodor Geisel. Ask students why a famous children's author would draw political cartoons. Then ask the discussion questions above.

Distribute copies of the *World War II Dr. Seuss Cartoon* (page 50) and the historical background information (page 48) to students. Write the word *isolationism* on the board while students read the historical background information. Have students define *isolationism* when they are finished reading. Review the United States' position on isolationism between the two world wars. Under the word *isolationism*, make three columns with the headings *political*, *economic*, and *social*. With students, fill in information, focusing on specific isolationist policies that fit with each column heading.

Next, have students work in groups of three or four to figure out what point Geisel is making with the cartoon, and how his position relates to the isolationist belief of the time. Have groups share their thoughts with the class. Write these ideas on the board.

Distribute copies of the *Just Ignore It* activity sheet (page 49) and one large sheet of paper to each group. Follow the directions on the activity sheet.

Extension Idea

Have the class create a list of topics that Theodor Geisel either supported or opposed. Around the list, have students glue copies of Geisel's cartoons that show these views.

Staying Neutral *(cont.)*

Historical Background Information

Suffering from the losses of life and capital, or money, as a result of World War I, the United States began a period of isolationism (ahy-suh-LEY-shuh-niz-uhm). Isolationism is a foreign policy in which a country isolates itself from the affairs of other countries. It refuses to be in allegiance (uh-LEE-juhns) with other countries and does not help other countries economically. A nation that practices isolationism focuses on its own advancement and remains neutral in world affairs.

During the 1920s, the United States did not want to focus on other country's issues. It also feared that immigrants might bring some of their problems into the United States with them. As a result, Congress passed laws known as quotas (KWOH-tuhz). The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 limited the number of people allowed to immigrate to the United States. This act was followed by the National Origins Act of 1924. This law set new quotas that were even lower than before. Now, only two percent of people from any one country would be allowed entry into the United States. This act also blocked immigrants from Asian nations. Then in 1927, Congress passed another National Origins Act. This one limited the total number of immigrants into the United States to 150,000 in any year.

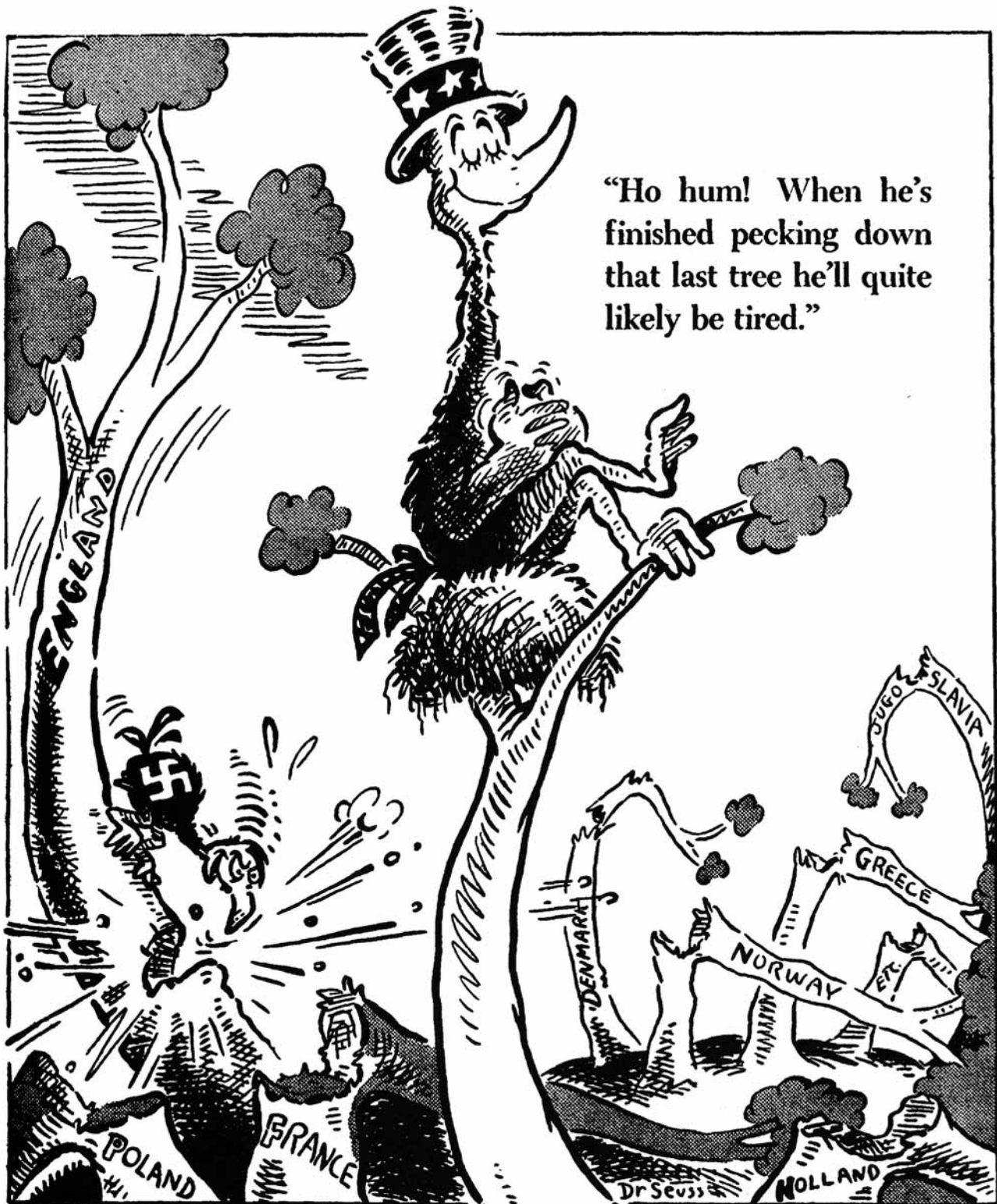
With the borders closing for immigrants, the United States turned its attention on ending its economic ties with foreign countries. Even though more than 1,000 economists signed a letter urging President Hoover not to sign the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930, he did exactly that. This act raised the duty, or tax, on more than 20,000 imported goods. The economic impact was felt in Europe as well as in Latin America. Countries in both regions responded by placing high taxes on American goods shipped out.

Although the world's social and economic problems concerned Americans, nothing worried them more than the fear of returning to war. The Washington Naval Treaty, or Five-Powers Treaty, was signed in 1922. This treaty decreased the size and strength of the navies of the countries who signed it. In 1927, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand (AR-uh-steed bree-AHN) authored the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The pact called for countries to denounce the concept of war. It was signed by 63 nations.

By the mid 1930s, it was becoming apparent that Japan and Germany were arming themselves in preparation for expansion and war. However, Congress continued its isolationist position of neutrality, passing Neutrality Acts in 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939. These four neutrality acts focused on limiting sales and shipments of military arms and equipment to foreign countries. The acts also reinforced that the United States would not risk American ships as transports. The Neutrality Act of 1935 was intended to keep the United States out of any actions that would involve the country in a war.

After more than 23 years of isolationist policies, principles, and laws, the United States was forced into international action with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

World War II Dr. Seuss Cartoon



Source: The Granger Collection, New York

Name _____

Foreign Policy in the Persian Gulf

Directions: Read the background information about foreign policy during the Persian Gulf War. Study the image closely and then answer the questions below.

Background Information: The Persian Gulf War lasted from August 1990 to February 28, 1991. The United Nations authorized and organized the war with 32 nations. Iraqi forces had taken over the nearby country of Kuwait. The 32 nations, which included the United States, fought against Iraqi soldiers and removed them from Kuwait. One controversy of the war occurred on this main highway, called the Highway of Death. On February 26 and 27, 1991, Iraqi forces left Kuwait in defeat. The U.S. Navy and Air Force bombed the civilian and military travelers on their way back to Iraq.



Source: Public Domain

1. Why is this highway called the Highway of Death?

2. Why would this incident be a controversy in the Persian Gulf War?

3. What kind of effect does this event have on relations between the United States and other nations in the Middle East?
