Hofstra University Model United Nations Conference

EXCOMM  October, 1962

Crisis Committee

Timothy Lachapelle
Chairperson
Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Hofstra Model United Nations, and the West Wing Crisis Committee. My name is Tim Lachapelle. I worked on the staff of the first HMUNC Crisis Committee, which re-created the West Wing in the post 9/11 Era. After two days of fast paced debate, and constant threat of nuclear Armageddon, the Hofstra Model UN club quickly discovered that the HMUNC delegates were up to any challenge that we throw at them. This year we are presenting another historical crisis scenario.

In this committee you will all be acting as members of the Oval Office during the JFK era. The leaders of the nation are faced with many challenges during his presidency and this committee will be responsible for managing two potential crises: the first is the threat of Soviet missiles off the coast of Florida; the second is the constant threat of an attempt on the President’s life. Although this committee will rely on historical fact to solve these crises, the events will not play out exactly as they did in the history books. Some events or people involved may change depending on how the committee resolves each issue.

I am currently a sophomore at Hofstra University, studying Political Science. I have been doing Model United Nations for one year. My first Model UN conference was at the University of Pennsylvania and I represented Iran in the World Health Organization. I discovered a passion for crisis committees when I worked on the staff of the crisis committee during the first Model UN conference ever hosted by Hofstra University. I especially enjoy the fast paced and often chaotic atmosphere of crisis. It was a lot of fun thinking of new ways to challenge the young students. I look forward to playing a new role in the committee this year as the chair.

In my spare time I like to play ultimate Frisbee and basketball. I am interested in American politics and I am a registered democrat (but don’t hold that against me). In the future I would like to have a job as a public defender. I am a member of the College Democrats and I am in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program at the school.

I am looking forward to an exciting weekend filled with intriguing debate and fun twists and turns. I encourage you to research any information from the time period. This committee will be a test of both your knowledge of historical events and your decision-making skills in crisis situations. I wish you all the best of luck with your research and I look forward to meeting all of you.

Sincerely,

Tim Lachapelle
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Introduction to the Committee

Welcome back to the White House. I hope you spent your recess relaxing and resting up because we have a lot of work to do over the next few days. The information we will discuss is highly classified. Thus, we will be meeting exclusively in the Oval Office for the entirety of the conference. Please make sure to receive the location of the office from a Secret Service member. Our time is limited and precious. Don’t be late. Our first Oval Office meeting will take place on October 15, 1962.

The West Wing

Duties of the Body and Voting Policies and Procedures

You are all members of President John F. Kennedy’s inner circle, a group known as the Executive Committee (EXCOMM). The young and charismatic Kennedy has ascended to the most powerful position in the U.S. government at a time when the nation is most vulnerable to an attack from the Soviet Union. The President will rely heavily on your experience and decision making skills to guide the country through this crisis. While the President may overrule your decisions based on compelling arguments and the opposition may shape the debate on rare occasion, most Presidential decisions will be determined by a majority vote of EXCOMM. So, please speak and vote wisely. The President and this body will also be able to consult and discuss with members outside the cabinet, including relevant government agencies. The body and outside members have the ability to influence administration policy within the confines of the legal functions of
the Executive Branch given to it by the Constitution as well as shape public opinion throughout the crisis.

Character List

- Robert F. Kennedy - Attorney General
- J. Edgar Hoover - FBI Director
- Dean Rusk - Secretary of State
- Robert McNamara - Secretary of Defense
- John McCone - Director of CIA
- Kenneth O’Donnell - Presidential Aide.
- Adlai E. Stevenson - U.S. Representative to the United Nations
- McGeorge Bundy - Special Assistant for National Security Affairs
- Ted Sorensen - Presidential Advisor/Speech Writer
- Paul Nitze - Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
- George Ball - Undersecretary of State
- Llewellyn Thompson Ambassador to the Soviet Union

Act I: Cuban Missile Crisis

Setting the Scene: The United States on the Precipice of Nuclear War

The United States and the Soviet Union have been locked in a dangerous competition for global leadership since the end of World War II. With its roots in the ideological incompatibility of the U.S. and the Soviet systems combined with the desire of each to spread its own economic and political system, the Cold War was a period of
incredible tension between the former allies. The U.S., witnessing the Soviets impose communist systems on Eastern Europe after World War II, perceived the Soviets to be unlimitedly expansionistic and feared the spread of Soviet-style communism throughout the globe. In an effort to block perceived Soviet aggression, President Harry S. Truman introduced a policy of containment in 1947:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions. . . . The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression. . . . I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugations by armed minorities or by outside pressure.\(^1\)

At first only applied to Europe, Soviet gains in other regions of the world led the U.S. to eventually expand containment globally.\(^2\)

The ideological competition also had a military component: the U.S. and Soviet Union were engaged in a risky arms race. With the American development of nuclear weapons in 1945 and the Soviet attainment of them in 1949, the attempts of both sides to increase their security by deploying more and more nuclear weapons not only exposed both states to the threat of nuclear apocalypse but the entire globe.

This dangerous game between the Soviets and Americans played out in multiple regions of the world. As the United States was making investments to promote capitalism and democracy globally, the Soviet Union sought an ally in the western


hemisphere. Latin America and the Caribbean, areas of traditional American influence, thus became hotly contested battlegrounds between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Cuba in particular became strategic location that both countries sought to acquire in their sphere of influence. Led by Fidel Castro, the 1959 Cuban revolution deposed President Batista, a long-time American ally. In 1960, Castro aligned Cuba with Soviet domestic and foreign policies. With the Cuba-Soviet relationship quickly becoming stronger, by the time President Kennedy entered office in 1961 the U.S. perceived a significant communist threat only ninety miles off the coast of Florida.

Only a few months after assuming the presidency, Kennedy decided to launch a covert operation to overthrow Castro’s communist regime in Cuba. The U.S. suffered a massive national security embarrassment in what became known as the Bay of Pigs invasion. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) trained a group of Cuban exiles who attempted to invade Cuba in April 1961 in an effort to trigger an anti-Castro rebellion. Just before the launch of the operation, Kennedy decided not to provide U.S. military support for the invasion. As a result, Cuban military forces routed the Cuban exile group. In addition, few Cubans rose up against Castro and more than one thousand Cuban rebels were captured. This failed U.S. attempt to oust Castro was perceived by the communist regime in Cuba as proof of U.S. aggressive intentions and thus drove the Cuba to cultivate even closer ties to the Soviet Union.

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With Castro still in power and the Cuba-Soviet relationship growing stronger, the U.S. closely monitored developments in Cuba. Early in 1962, there were indications of increasing Soviet-bloc arms deliveries to Cuba. The New Year’s Day parade in Havana, for example, included Soviet-made tanks and rocket launchers. As 1962 wore on, a particular group of Soviet ships that set sail from the Black Sea in early-mid July that eventually arrived in Cuba was tracked by the U.S. and found to have had false destination declarations and declared tonnages well below their capacities. Because the Soviets clearly intended to cover-up the final destination of the shipments and the ships themselves “rode high in the war,” which is typical of ships transporting military equipment, the U.S. strongly suspected that large quantities of Soviet arms were being shipped to Cuba. With the U.S. growing more concerned about the Cuban-Soviet relationship, on July 24, 1962 Castro claimed that the Soviet Union has invested greatly in Cuba’s defensive capabilities and pronounced that the communist regime would take steps to make any U.S. attack on Cuba the equivalent of a world war. Shortly thereafter, at a high-level meeting of presidential advisers in August 1962, CIA director John McCone expressed his belief that Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM)s had been deployed in Cuba.

This is where the crisis management will begin. Members of EXCOMM will be responsible for investigating the truth behind these reports and deciding how to respond if this intelligence is accurate. The U.S. may be facing a threat like no other in history, and this committee’s first priority should be to avoid a nuclear attack.
Potential Conflicts

*Nuclear War:* The Soviets may have moved weapons closer to the United States than ever before, and the threat of nuclear war is greater now than ever before. If the United States takes military action against Cuba, and the rumors of missiles in Cuba prove to be false, the U.S. will be seen as the aggressive actor and face potential retaliation from both Cuba and the Soviet Union. In addition, unless it can prove that the Soviets have placed nuclear weapons in Cuba, the U.S. is unlikely to have the support of the United Nations to act against Cuba. The consequences of inaction by this committee, however, may result in fully functional Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba.

*The Continued Spread of Communism:* The U.S. policy of containment is aimed at stopping the spread of communism by giving aid to countries that were in danger of falling under communist rule. Part of the strategy of containment is predicated on the Domino Theory, which asserted if one country falls under communism the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. Therefore, the continued spread of communism beyond its current is a significant threat to U.S. interests.

The United States is particularly worried about additional countries in Latin America and the Caribbean falling under communist rule. If the spread of communism is not stopped, the United States could be surrounded by communist countries – countries that will be much more likely to ally with the Soviet Union than the U.S. and thus significantly American security in the western hemisphere. Even worse, the unthinkable could happen: the American system itself could be threatened.
Act II: Protecting the President

Setting the Scene

The Cold War has instilled fear of a nuclear attack in the heart of every American. The country suffered through the dark time of McCarthyism and the excesses of the House Committee on Un-American Activities that accused many of being disloyal communist sympathizers capable of subversion and treason. Moreover, the Cuban Missile Crisis is fresh in the minds of every American. The actions and leadership of President Kennedy guided the country through this last, exceptionally tense episode. Any potential threat to the President must be taken extremely seriously as the country would be thrown into further turmoil if the worst would happen. While the secret service has been able to foil prior threats, an attempt on the President’s life is an ever-looming possibility. There are multiple parties, both domestic and foreign in nature, who may benefit from the death of the President. It is the duty of this body to ensure the protection of the President and to respond effectively to any unforeseen events.

Potential Conflicts

Threats to the President’s life could come from multiple sources. In any system of authority or power there are disgruntled and disillusioned constituents that may want to violently protect their interests. President Kennedy’s political positions and policies may threaten vested interests within the U.S. itself, by way of jeopardizing individuals’ influence or jobs within the government, jeopardizing the authority of established government offices, or antagonizing powerful domestic actors that are not afraid to use violence. Foreign threats cannot be discounted either. Especially during the height of the
Cold War, any American President would be a prime target of enemies of the United States.

*Domestic Threats – Organized Crime:* The Kennedy family has often been associated with organized crime, namely the Mafioso. It is speculated that Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. established ties with organized crime during the prohibition era. Joseph Kennedy’s connections with organized crime may in fact have later been the key to John F. Kennedy getting the crucial union vote in many battleground states such as Illinois and West Virginia in the 1960 election. Given these alleged ties, the mob may be feeling as if the Kennedy family betrayed them given that both Robert and John Kennedy were members of the McClellan Committee to investigate mob activity and Robert Kennedy used his position of Attorney General to become one of the greatest prosecutors of organized crime. Indeed, during his time as Attorney General, convictions of mob members went up by 800 percent. Although organized crime would be taking a very serious risk by threatening the President, every threat should be taken seriously.

*Domestic Threats – Inside the Government:* Even persons within the United States Government may be considered threats to the President’s life. Persons tied to the State Department have been found to be acting as moles for the Soviet Union, as well as other countries in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. At this time of the Cold War,

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the United States is constantly teetering on the brink of actual war. The threat of espionage from within the U.S. could prove to set the stage for larger threats against the President and the country.

*Domestic Threats – Terrorism:* The President’s life may also be threatened by the American people. Some individuals may be trying to stir up a communist revolution in the United States. While the threat of a domestic terrorist is slightly smaller than the threat of espionage from other countries, the committee must be prepared to protect the president under any and all circumstances.

*Foreign Threats: Escalation of the Cold War:* If the President is the target of a Russian or Cuban operative, our country may be facing more danger than ever before! Attempts to disrupt the continuity of government in the United States may provide a window of opportunity for the Soviet Union and its allies to further extend their influence and confront a U.S. government in a state of turmoil to exploit the situation.

**Character Description and General Positions**

Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General: Robert F. Kennedy was born on November 20, 1925 in Brookline, Massachusetts. Kennedy attended Harvard but he took a break from his studies during World War II. Enlisting in the Navy in November 1944, the war was over before he was called into action. He returned to Harvard and graduated in 1948. After receiving his bachelors, Kennedy received a law degree from the University of Virginia. In 1951, Kennedy joined the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of
Justice. He resigned after a year with the Department of Justice to help his brother John F. Kennedy run a successful campaign for Senate. In 1953 the controversial Senator Joe McCarthy appointed him as an assistant counsel to the Senate subcommittee on investigations. He became well known to the American people after his investigation of Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters Union. When his brother was elected President in 1960, he was given the office of Attorney General. During his time as Attorney General, Kennedy became an important ally to the civil rights movement. He spoke out in support of the Congress of Racial Equality during the Freedom Rides. During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy helped his brother develop the strategy to set up a blockade.⁶

**J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director:** John Edgar Hoover was born on January 1, 1895. He obtained both a law degree and a Masters of Laws from George Washington University. He began his career in law enforcement with the U.S. Department of Justice and was promoted to head of the Enemy Aliens Registration Section. He was highly involved in the Palmer Raids during the first “Red Scare”. During the raids more than 500 radical left leaders and foreign citizens were deported from the country. Hoover worked tirelessly, and was promoted to deputy head of the Bureau of Investigation in 1921, and by 1924 he became the Head of the Bureau. When Hoover took over, the Bureau of Investigation had approximately 650 employees, including 441 special agents who worked in field offices in nine cities.⁷ By the end of the decade, there were approximately thirty field offices.

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⁶ “Robert F. Kennedy,” Spartacus Educational, [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAkennedyR.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAkennedyR.htm).

offices, with divisional headquarters in New York, Baltimore, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Chicago, Kansas City, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Portland. The Bureau of Investigation became the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935, and Hoover was appointed as the first director. Hoover built the Bureau significantly and is credited for his work in taking down criminals like John Dillinger and Machine Gun Kelly. Some of Hoover’s tactics for investigating criminals were considered questionable. He was known to exaggerate the threats of many radicals, and used his power to spy on suspected threats to national security. His tactics thus led to the arrests of many criminals, but it also infringed on the rights of many Americans who were not guilty of any wrongdoing. Hoover believed that some people should be prosecuted for their political opinions. He targeted civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King and members of the SCLC, CORE, and the Black Panther Party. Hoover was known as a man who would stop at nothing to catch his man.

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense: Robert Strange McNamara was born on June 9, 1916 in San Francisco California. He graduated in 1937 from the University of California (Berkeley) with a degree in economics and philosophy and earned a Master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration in 1939. When McNamara was offered the position as Secretary of Defense, he was ascending the ladder to become president of Ford Motor Company. He was not particularly experienced in defense, but he quickly immersed himself in the subject and became a valuable asset in Kennedy’s cabinet. The Kennedy administration placed particular emphasis on improving ability to counter Communist "wars of national liberation," in which the enemy avoided
head-on military confrontation and resorted to political subversion and guerrilla tactics. McNamara was a pioneer of counterforce, or the “no cities,” technique of nuclear war. "General nuclear war," he stated, "should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population”

Adlai E. Stevenson, U.S. Representative to the United Nations: Adlai Stevenson was born February 5, 1900 in Los Angeles, California. He was an undergraduate at Princeton University and attended Harvard Law School, but dropped out after only a few classes. He decided to finish his law degree at Northwestern University School of Law after a year writing for The Pantagraph, a newspaper founded by his great grandfather. He served as governor of Illinois from 1948 to 1952. He ran two unsuccessful campaigns for president in 1952 and 1956. Stevenson was a fiery orator, his most notable moment as U.S. Representative to the United Nations came during his “Over My Dead Body” speech during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In one of the most memorable moments in UN history Stevenson asked the Soviet Representative if he was installing nuclear weapons in Cuba, and said that he was willing to wait for his answer until hell freezes over. When the

Soviet representative denied the accusations, Stevenson showed pictures - irrefutable evidence - of the Soviet missiles in Cuba.\(^9\)

**John McCone, CIA Director:** John McCone was born on January 4, 1902 in Los Angeles California. McCone studied engineering at UC Berkeley. Early in his professional career McCone had success as a sales manager for Consolidated Steel, selling over 55 million tons of steel that was used to build the Hoover Dam. He eventually went on to form the Bechtel-Mc Cone Corporation. McCone was appointed to CIA director after the botched Bay of Pigs invasions. McCone was a devout Roman Catholic and Anti-Communist. With his right-wing tendencies, McCone accused American scientists of being "taken in" by Soviet propaganda and of attempting to "create fear in the minds of the uninformed that radioactive fallout from H-bomb tests endangers life."\(^10\)

**Dean Rusk, Secretary of State:** Dean Rusk was born in Georgia in 1909. He attended Davison College where he earned an AB in Political Science. From 1940 to 1946, Rusk served in the Army, initially as a Captain in the Military Intelligence Branch of the War Department. Rusk rose to become deputy chief of staff in the Operations Division of the War Department’s General Staff. After his discharge from the Army, Rusk held many positions in the state department, including Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, Deputy Under

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\(^9\) “Adlai Stevenson,” Spartacus Education, [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAstevensonA.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAstevensonA.htm).

\(^10\) "John McCone." *Spartacus Educational*, [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKmccone.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKmccone.htm).
Secretary of State, and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Rusk’s style of diplomacy directly reflected the wishes of John F. Kennedy. He asserted that the Secretary of State should serve at the pleasure of the President. Rusk was an advocate of providing humanitarian aid to other countries around the world. Rusk believed in “dignified diplomacy” between the United States and the Soviet Union, espousing the idea that, even if there were disagreements, negotiations between the two countries should be civil and communicative.\(^{11}\)

McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: McGeorge Bundy was raised in Boston Massachusetts by a wealthy family that was involved in Republican politics. He graduated from Yale with a degree in mathematics and was a member of the Political Society and the debate club. Unlike his family, Bundy was known as a liberal. He was an intelligence officer in World War II and helped plan the invasion of Europe. Bundy was a strong advocate of talks with Fidel Castro and advised Kennedy that they should have “a gradual development of some form of accommodation with Castro. He was also a key player in devising U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia.\(^{12}\)

Kenneth O’Donnell, Presidential Aide: Kenneth Patrick O'Donnell was born on March 4, 1924 in Worcester, Massachusetts. Known as Kenny, O’Donnell studied at Harvard University where he met and befriended Robert F. Kennedy. In 1960, O’Donnell was the


\(^{12}\) "McGeorge Bundy." Spartacus Educational, [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKbundyM.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKbundyM.htm).
Organizer and director John F. Kennedy’s successful campaign for President, earning him the job as the President’s special assistant and a place in the group of Kennedy's close advisors called the "Irish Mafia". O’Donnell was outspoken against the war in Vietnam and encouraged the president to bring an end to the conflict.\footnote{Kenneth O'Donnell. "Spartacus Educational, http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKodonnell.htm.}

**Theodore (Ted) Sorensen, Presidential Advisor:** Ted Sorensen was born on May 8, 1928. He earned a Bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He later attended law school at the same school and graduated first in his class. His political career began as Attorney General of Nebraska. From that position, he went on to become John F. Kennedy’s presidential aide and speechwriter. He played a large role in the Cuban missile crisis, as a member of EXCOMM. In addition, he was President Kennedy’s personal speechwriter and thus greatly influenced what information was passed from EXCOMM to the American people.\footnote{Theodore (Ted) Sorensen,” Spartacus Educational, http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKsorenson.htm.}

**Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs:** Paul Nitze was born on January 16, 1907 in Amherst, Massachusetts. After attending Harvard University, he began a career in investment banking. Nitze began a long career in politics during the Second World War. One of his early government assignments was to visit Japan in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear attacks and assess the damage. This experience framed many of his later feelings about the power of nuclear weapons and the
necessity of arms control. In 1961 President Kennedy appointed Nitze Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and in 1963 he became the Secretary of the Navy, serving until 1967.15

George Ball, Undersecretary of State: George Ball was born on December 21, 1909 in Des Moines, Iowa. He lived in Evanston, Illinois and graduated from Northwestern University. He was well known for his strong opposition to increasing military involvement in Vietnam. After Kennedy decided to send 16,000 trainers into Vietnam, Ball was the lone dissenter in Kennedy’s inner circle. Ball was a strong advocate of peace during the Cuban missile crisis, and he constantly reminded others of the danger of irreversible actions against other countries.16

Llewellyn E. Thompson, Ambassador to the Soviet Union: Thompson was born in Las Animas, Colorado, He earned a BA in Economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Thompson spent his entire career as a diplomat. His diplomacy with the Soviet Union began when he was sent to Moscow as Second Secretary and council in 1941. Thompson remained in Moscow as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Thompson was highly trusted by Premier Nikita Khrushchev. The two men spent a great deal of time together, professionally and with their families.


16 “Kennedy’s Advisors: The Executive Committee,” The Cuban Missile Crisis, ThinkQuest.org, http://library.thinkquest.org/11046/people/ex-comm.html.
**Portfolio Powers**

Please note that specific portfolio powers are not assigned to the members of the EXCOMM. Constantly worrying whether a directive, motion or other plan of action is under your specific purview hinders progression and stifles debate. However, members of the EXCOMM should stay true to their character and their specialties. Keep things reasonable, professional, and logical but do not worry yourself too much with your specific powers.

**Senior Staff Protocols**

**Briefing the Press:** As members of President Kennedy’s senior staff, you are expected to brief the White House Press Corps on a regular basis when urgent or important information should be conveyed to the public. Briefings should be short statements giving most – but not necessarily all – relevant information on a given topic or discussion.

**Media Appearances:** You are the face of the Kennedy Administration and it is your responsibility to successfully promote your President’s policies through press conferences. It is especially important to promote the administration’s agenda given the expected opposition in the media, and potential criticisms from international bodies. As such, the President may ask you to appear on such a show or write a journalistic piece.

**Documents and Internal/External Communication:** All documents, notes, letters and written forms of communication are on the record. The government has the authority to
subpoena any piece of paper passed in the White House. Communication outside the Oval Office is not normally subject to search.

How to Prepare Yourself

The committee will move between multiple topics very quickly, so it would not be a wise use of your time to focus too much attention on any single topic. In addition to consulting the sources in the citations throughout this background guide, here are a few books, articles, and links that may be useful for basic preparation:


