Crisis 101

VMUNC VIII

What is Crisis?

- A Model UN Crisis operates differently than GA (Duh)
- In the real world an international crisis can flare up at any moment and they must be dealt with accordingly or things could get much worse. When this happens, emergency sessions take place at the highest level of government. You must think on your feet.
- A regular Model UN topic ends when a resolution is passed. You do not see the outcome of the resolution. You clap and move on to the next topic. In a crisis, much smaller (or larger) decision are made which work like mini resolution except that you immediately see the outcome and have to deal with it.
- It is dealing with the consequences of your actions which makes crisis so unique and compelling.

Important Terms

- A crisis committee and a crisis scenario are not the same thing
- A crisis scenario can be a surprise news update that is given to a conventional static GA committee some new factor to consider. This can be a nuclear attack, a riot, an earthquake or something else
- A Crisis committee has constant news updates and each decision impacts the story moving forward

Metaphorical Spaces

Front room:

The committee room in which you speak and debate.

Where you will interact with other delegates, and only know limited information.

Back room:

Where the crisis team goes to manage your crises, and read your crisis notes.

You will only be brought into the back room if your character dies, or if you're meeting with someone fictional.

Front Room

In room: Procedure

- Crisis committees follow parliamentary procedure using moderated and unmoderated caucuses, but debate moves much faster than in a General Assembly committee.
- Instead of opening speeches, committees begin with a round robin, where every delegate briefly introduces their character, priorities, and initial strategy.
- Rather than writing full resolutions, delegates draft committee directives that outline specific actions for the committee to take.
- Once a directive is introduced and reviewed, the committee debates and votes on it. If it passes, the Crisis Staff determines the outcome and releases new updates that shape the next stage of committee.

The Crisis Flow of Debate

Crisis update: new information changes the situation.

Debate: delegates identify the immediate problem and argue for a response.

Write: directives are drafted while speeches continue.

Vote or submit: committee directives go to a vote; personal and joint actions go to Crisis Staff.

Consequence: Crisis Staff announces what happened, and the cycle starts again.

In-Room Speaking

- Speak more often than you would in GA. Crisis committees are smaller, so silence stands out.
- Each speech should accomplish something
  - Introduce a plan
  - Respond to an update
  - Challenge a weak idea
  - Pushing a directive
- Don’t repeat what everyone already knows. That's just talking to talk. Bring a new action, argument, or piece of information
- Keep writing while people speak. In crisis, debate and directive-writing happen at the same time.

In room: Directives

- Committee Directives are the committee's official actions and replace traditional GA resolutions.
- Usually, a directive is written by 3 sponsors with 5 signatories and submitted to the Chair for review.
- After debate, the committee votes on the directive. If it passes, the Crisis Staff immediately determines the outcome and updates the committee.
- Strong directives are specific, realistic, and clearly explain the intended result.

Committee Directives – Example

Components:

1. Memorable Title (can be funny or serious, but needs a name)
2. Specific orders or actions that you would like to see undertaken
3. What you expect/hope will be the result (So the Crisis Staff can figure out what the result will be if they don't understand your goal)
4. Signatures, with portfolios of all signatories/sponsors (Note: 5 signatories, 3 sponsors)

Goals:

- Demonstrate innovative ideas that the rest of the committee isn't thinking of
- Position yourself as the leader of the idea, and defend it against opposition
- Pass it as a committee to positively impact the crisis with your ideas

Sponsors, Signatories, and Clauses

- Sponsors helped write the directive and should be ready to defend its main ideas.
- Signatories want the directive discussed or voted on; signing does not mean they support every clause.
- Crisis directives usually skip long preambulatory clauses. Focus on operative clauses that clearly state what the committee will do.
- VMUNC VIII uses 3 sponsors and 5 signatories unless the Chair announces otherwise.

Back Room

Back room: Writing

- The back room is where the Crisis Staff manages the committee and processes delegate actions. You may communicate with the backroom through crisis notes and directives.
- Also, ensure all of your submissions should have a clear purposes that advances your character's goals or influences the committee. And please stay realistic—your actions should match your character's authority, resources, and abilities.

Crisis Arcs

Build resources and relationships your character could realistically access: funding, political support, media access, information, or useful contacts. Then raise the stakes through several connected notes instead of trying to do everything at once, build your momentous actions over multiple notes, not just one. Your most dominant move should derive out of what you built earlier and be important enough that the committee has to react.

Don’t forget to be original, realistic, and abide by your character’s role/goals/abilities/limitations.

Press Releases

- A press release is a public statement, not a full action plan.
- Use it to explain your position, calm public concern, announce a policy, respond to accusations, or shape how people understand an update.
- Keep it short, clear, and consistent with what your character or committee can publicly claim.

Note: A personal press release represents your character. Conversely, a committee press release represents the whole body and presumably requires committee approval.

General Advice

Sneaky tricks

Because the committee is so small, get to know the other members well. What's their real name? Where are they from? Form personal connections. Unfortunately, members of a crisis committee often lie to one another or play mind games. All you can take for certain is that you can trust no one. This is the nature of many crisis committees.

Don't be afraid to take personal initiative. If you're causing chaos in the back room don't be afraid to pass personal directives that go against committee.

Some crises allow for assassinations, if this is the case use it sparingly and only when absolutely necessary, but be sure that you're completely prepare to live with the consequences.

Prep

For VMUNC, Crisis will not have a position paper. However, if you still would like to prep here are some suggestions:

- Outline who your character is, what parts of their past serve as motivation for their actions. What do they believe in?
- Describe your character's intent for the crisis. How do they think it should be solved, if at all, or what do they want to personally achieve?
- Make sure you have a sense of what powers your character has, as well as a deep understanding of the topic at hand.

Policies

Technology : Allowed, but we expect everyone to be paying attention to speeches and participating in unmods.

Note Taking : Encourage taking of notes, but also highly discourage people from taking too many notes. We want everyone to be paying attention to the speakers. Notes are only to be used as a reminder of the MAIN points a speaker discussed.

Note Sending (To Peers/Backroom) : Encourage note sending, but at a moderated amount. Use the provided paper when sending notes to each other/directives, and backroom. NO BACKROOM EMAIL FOR NOTES.

Vocab

Round Robin : Hear from everyone in the committee (1 minute speech about your position at the beginning of committee)

Motions:

1. Motion to open/close debate
2. Motion for a ## min moderate caucus with # second/min speaking time
3. Motion for a ## min unmoderated caucus
4. Motion to vote on directives (applicable when committee directives are on the floor)

Personal Directives (Crisis Notes) and Joint Personal Directives

Directives and Notes

Unlike committee directives, personal and joint directives do not require a committee vote. They are reviewed directly by the Crisis Staff.

Committee Directives	Crisis Note/Personal Directive	Joint Directive (JPD)
Committee Directives are the committee's official actions and replace traditional GA resolutions. – we covered this earlier...	A private action submitted by one delegate. Used to secretly advance your own objectives.	A private action submitted by 2–3 delegates. Used to coordinate with trusted allies without involving the entire committee.

Crisis Notes (Personal Directives)

Format:

1. Memorable Title (can be funny or serious, but needs a name)
2. Addressee (Somebody under your command, or just their title)
3. Specific orders or actions that you would like to see undertaken
4. What you expect/hope will be the result (So the Crisis Staff can figure out what the result will be if they don't understand your goal)
5. Signature, with your title

Goals:

1. Demonstrate expertise and thorough planning to impress Crisis Staff
2. Clearly state what you want, and why, so they can decide to grant or deny it
3. Do it so well that the crisis staff is afraid to shoot you down without good reason

Crisis Notes (Personal Directives) Example

Operation Nautilus

TO: Admiral of the 7th Fleet, Thomas Fitzwallace

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Under my authority as Commander, USPACOM, move the following ships from the US base in Yokosuka, Japan to 15 nautical miles NE of the Straits of Malacca in the South China Sea:
  - 2 Arleigh Burke Class Destroyers: Fitzgerald and Stethern
  - 1 Virginia Class Submarine: USS Texas (SSN-775)
  - 1 Nimitz Class Aircraft Carrier: George Washington
- They will be moved on the 15th of September, 2015 at 21:30 (GMT+9)
- They will patrol the area and protect oil trade to the Philippines, a close US ally

Through these measures, I expect all piracy against commercial and military vessels in the area to cease, and any pirates to be captured and reported to me.

SIGNED: Commander Harper, US Pacific Command

Joint Directives

- Use a JPD when an action needs resources or authority from 2–3 delegates and would be difficult to carry out alone
- Make each person's contribution clear: who provides what, who controls which part, and what the shared goal is
- Be careful about revealing your whole plan. A joint action gives allies information they may later use for their own strategy

JPDs go directly to Crisis Staff and do not require a committee vote! They are NOT voted upon like directives. Treat them as a crisis note (personal directive) that has 2-3 people on it.

Resources

Example Committee Directive

Best Delegate: How to Write a Crisis Directive

Best Delegate: All about Crisis commitees

SFMUN: Intro to crisis

The crisis-note framework and “Operation Nautilus” example were adapted from Caroline Bello’s “Lessons from MUNI: How to Write a Crisis Directive,” published by Best Delegate.

Portions of VMUNC’s delegate-training materials were adapted from educational resources published by San Francisco Model United Nations and Best Delegate. All materials have been modified to reflect VMUNC VIII procedures and policies.