

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in a draped manner.

# EXECUTIVE DECISION

A WHITE-KNUCKLE GAME OF  
REAL-TIME POLITICAL CRISIS.

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Have you ever found yourself thinking, “I could do better than those fat cats in Washington?” With this game, you have the chance to prove it.

Executive Decision is a game for three to six players. It has no dice, no board and no cards: Instead, the board is your imagination. Instead of relying on random chance, you’ll have to achieve victory with your brains, your wits and – most important – your ability to convince.

Executive Decision is played in real time. Each game lasts exactly one or two hours, depending on which scenario you’re playing. When your time is up, the President must decide how the U.S. is reacting to a crisis – a crisis that has only come to your attention within 60 or 120 minutes.

To make his decision, of course, the Chief Executive needs input from his loyal staff (that is, the other players). They, in turn, have goals of their own – goals that place them in conflict with each other.

Can you figure out how best to fulfill your agenda? Can you persuade the President to follow your advice? If so, you can gain enough political clout to win the game.

## How to Play

### Setup

Before the actual nitty-gritty debate begins, decide which player is the President. (One obvious way to do this is by election, with the person who bought the game casting a tie-breaking vote if necessary.) The President's role is to moderate the discussion, weigh the arguments presented by the other players, and ultimately decide what action to take. The President's final score is determined by whether his decision is seen to ultimately harm or benefit the country.

The other players get appointed positions on the Cabinet by the President. The available Cabinet positions, and their default agendas, are as follows:

**Secretary of Defense** – Pro Military, unsurprisingly.

**Secretary of Commerce** – Development leads to happy businessmen, which leads to political support. Thus the Commerce Secretary pursues economic development.

**Secretary of Agriculture** – This is the one post without a set agenda. Pick a couple and try to fake people out!

**Attorney General** – Law enforcement is everyone's business, so the Attorney General supports political centrism, or at least its appearance.

**Secretary of the Interior** – Some noteworthy historical exceptions aside, the Secretary of the Interior can typically be counted on to favor conservation.

**Secretary of Labor** – Health coverage is a major issue in labor relations, so the Secretary of Labor generally supports a federal agenda that encourages healthcare spending.

**Secretary of State** – International prestige is the Secretary of State's concern, almost by definition. Even maverick White Houses privately recognize that it's easier to get things done if the neighbors like you.

**Secretary of the Treasury** – Everyone wants a balanced budget, but they typically want it balanced by goring the other guy's cow. The Treasury Secretary is typically the one who's least inclined to sacrifice it to other priorities.

**Vice President** – The VP has a lot to gain from tax revenue. Usually gearing up to be a candidate, he knows the current President will take the heat for the taxes, but the party reaps the benefits of spreading the wealth to supporters.

**Chief of Staff** – As the most political advisor, the Chief of Staff is the most concerned with voter satisfaction.

Each position brings with it certain associated agendas. All positions carry with them the opportunity to secretly align with other agendas as well. Once you know your position, write it down along with your agendas (public and secret). Depending on the results of the executive decision (results neither the President nor the other players know ahead of time), the advisors' agendas get closer or farther from completion. Their final score is based on how well their agenda (or agendas) got advanced. See Agendas for more information.

### Agendas

In addition to the agendas assigned by position, players can pick up to three more agendas, which they may share openly or keep secret. These must be written down in advance, however – you can't add an agenda in the middle of a crisis. Some groups may want to assign a few agendas randomly, so that every agenda is given to one player or another. The players then have the opportunity to decide if they're for or against. This is not mandatory, though having more than one agenda is a good idea.

**Balanced Budget** – Balanced Budget! Yeah! There's an issue to get the voters stoked. Even though there's no particular mental image that springs to mind, unlike the dramatic visuals of tanks and planes for the military, and acres of forest for conservation, and bravely optimistic bedridden children for healthcare. Still. Every thinking person realizes the benefits of a balanced budget, except for the thinking people who are busy thinking about all the great stuff they could buy on credit. The Secretary of the Treasury always wants a balanced budget.

**Conservation** – If you like the idea of unspoiled acres of virgin timber stretching from sea to shining sea, like it enough to do something about it, you're in favor of conservation. If you see America's bounty as a resource to be exploited for gain or financial independence, you might take a stand against conservation. The Secretary of the Interior is always pro conservation.

**Centrism** – In the past, there was a pretense that the business of government was to find the best solution to problems and implement the will of the people. If you still believe that, you are probably in favor of centrism. If you are a staunch partisan who realizes that no one who plays to the center has ever shifted anything to his side, you may be against centrism. Since compromise breeds cooperation, the Attorney General has an interest in supporting centrism.

**Development** – The Secretary of Commerce is always in favor of economic development. In theory, everyone should be. However, there are those who believe that some development strategies are more harmful than helpful, and that therefore these plans should be cautiously examined before implementation. Given the huge pressure to develop at any cost, many who don't want "development at any cost" have a knee-jerk reaction against any proposed stimulus.

**Military** – Got enough guns, bombs and tanks? If you do, are they the right kind of bombs, guns and tanks? Can you get them where they need to go and keep them working once they get there? If you like the idea of solving problems with military intervention, you're probably for defense spending. If all you're saying is "Give peace a chance" (or "No blood for oil!") then you're probably against defense spending. The Secretary of Defense is always in favor of military funding.

**International Prestige** – If you care what the French, Chinese and Russians are saying about you behind your back in the UN, you're probably for building foreign esteem by looking like a friendly, reasonable, Global Good Neighbor. If you're an isolationist, or just don't care what the rest of the world thinks, you're probably against (or just indifferent). The Secretary of State always wants higher international prestige.

**Voter Satisfaction** – In the end, the central tenet of democracy is that your audience is also your boss. Keeping the voters satisfied is, arguably, the job of the politician. Or so say those who constantly check opinion polls. There are few who directly oppose voter satisfaction, but there are a few who believe the White House should lead and do the right thing, no matter how unpopular that is. Regardless, the Chief of Staff is always in favor of high voter satisfaction.

**Tax Revenue** – The Vice President can always earn promises of future support by earmarking some tax dollars. Anyone can find a way to spend money, so many people are in favor of a robust revenue stream. On the other hand, many politicians gain wide support by promising to cut taxes, and some even think it's the right thing to do.

**Health** – The Secretary of Labor has an interest in health, to support the workforce. In fact, everyone has an interest in "health" and it's very easy to say you're "pro health". On the other hand, some question how useful it is to have the federal government pursue health care reform for a vast and diverse country where the dollar buys you a lot more (or less) depending on your zip code. Those who are "against health" are actually "against blue sky federal spending that will probably turn into a somebody's porkbarrel."

## Play Begins

Once the players have been assigned their positions and have chosen their private agendas, it's time to start the clock. The President picks a scenario out of those presented in this book. (You should never play through a scenario more than once because, after all, it's no fun if you know in advance how it's going to end.)

The scenarios are printed backwards, so they can only be read in a mirror. The President looks in the mirror and reads the "Start" section of the scenario aloud. This initial situation briefing sets the stage and introduces the crisis. Once that's done, the advisors and the President discuss the issue. The debate is free, unstructured and "in character" – that is, you don't speak as Martha the suburban professional, you speak as Martha the Secretary of Defense.

As part of the debate, advisors may make "assertions" – basically, you bet your credibility on some element of the issue. If your assertions play into the scenario, you gain points. If the scenario later contradicts your assertions, you lose points.

This conversation continues until it's time for the next part of the scenario to get read. (The President should be sure to note when the next development occurs. Setting a timer is a good idea.) Some groups may run out of things to say before the next development. If that happens and everyone agrees to skip ahead, you can read the next development early.

The second part of the scenario presents more information, developing the scenario further. It may be the last dose of data before the decision, or there may be more developments, depending on how complex the situation is and how long the President has to consider.

When the time runs out, the President considers the arguments and decides.

## How to be Presidential

The rules of "Executive Decision" are very simple. There is no element of luck, the way there is when you're shooting craps or playing poker. There isn't a concrete, hard-edged strategy like chess. It's all based on verbal persuasion, cajoling, debating, and screaming.

This means that the game stagnates if you all get along. Disagreement is the lifeblood of "Executive Decision." While we've tried to keep things lively, so that people incline towards disagreement and discussion, there will be a few times when things get quiet. Often the debate dies out just in time for



the next page to get revealed, but sometimes you're faced with a long stretch with nothing to talk about.

At this point, it's your presidential duty to make your cabinet fight. If they all agree with you, change your mind suddenly. Play devil's advocate. Get contrary. Start fretting out loud about all the terrible things that could go wrong with the planned course of action. Do what it takes to get discussion started again.

While I'm encouraging you to pour gasoline on any smoldering disagreements, I also urge you to never make a courageous stand based on principle. Always listen to your cabinet, and if they all agree that X is the best course of action, you should probably pick X when the hour of decision is at hand. Otherwise, your friends the players will be terribly disappointed and always wonder what would have happened if only that bonehead chief executive had listened. If they don't all agree, you can pick and choose among their advice, but you should always make a decision that at least one cabinet member supports. If you have no other reason, do it because it encourages them to play the game again.

You're the president in the game, but you're also the host of the game. That means it's your responsibility to make sure a good time is had by all. If this means playing along with the one dissenter so she won't feel left out, do it. If it means arguing against all of them so that they'll have something to do, do it. For you, good sportsmanship is more important than finding out what would have happened if you'd picked the outcome you wanted.

(Besides, you can always peek after they go home.)

## **The Winner**

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The winner is the person who gets the most points. You get one point for accomplishing each of the following:

- The outcome reads "up" for an agenda you favor.
- The outcome reads "down" for an agenda you oppose.
- One of your assertions of fact is supported by the printed outcome.

You lose one point every time one of the following things happen:

- The outcome reads "down" for an agenda you favor.
- The outcome reads "up" for an agenda you oppose.
- One of your assertions of fact is contradicted by the printed outcome.

If there's a tie, the President decides. After all, he should get to break ties because he can't win.

## Those Fat Cats in Congress

It's a surprise move from Congress. The House passed an acceptable health omnibus bill, with a little more pork than you'd like in the other party's states and some lean funding for priorities you stumbled for but it was good enough. It included improvements in veteran benefits, which was one of your issues. In the Senate, however, the committee has attached an elephant horn rider, and it's poison. Where the bill they got was pretty neutral about abortion, this rider regulates health-care providers on positions you consider matters of personal conscience. Your party is debating vigorously now, but it's quite possible that you'll get the bill with the rider intact and either need to sign it or veto it.

The Senate's crackling, but the lines are getting drawn. Despite heavy arm twisting and some offers that could come back to haunt the party, your rivals aren't budging. The options are becoming increasingly clear.

**1) Quiet Acquiescence:** Make a compact with the other side that you sign it without a fuss if they provide some other concessions and agree not to brag about it afterwards. It's a loss, but a quiet one, and you at least regain lost territory elsewhere.

**2) Veto Ambush:** Make the deal for the concessions and silence, then veto it anyway with huge fanfare and chastise them for delaying the health care of all Americans by turning it into a partisan issue.

**3) Veto With Mutual Anger:** Let them turn this into a big stink, veto the bill, and use your bully pulpit to ensure that they come out stinking worse than you do.

**4) Sign With Visible Regret:** Sign the bill under protest, making sure the public knows you're doing this for cancer research and to fund more treatment for meth babies – funding that's urgently needed and that the other party risked in order to cater to the most extreme elements of their base.

The bloggers have caught it from C-SPAN, so option #1 looks sketchier. Certainly this bill is going to swing a big sick with single-issue abortion voters in both parties, whether you pass it or veto it. It might still be possible to minimize its impact on the mainstream if you catch a lucky break with celebrity news.

The rider stayed and the bill's on its way. The most extreme groups on both the pro-choice and pro-life fringes are already sending emails full of overblown and hysterical rhetoric promising dire consequences at the voting booth and in terms of funding if you do or do not sign it. The world awaits your Presidential decision.

## Outcomes

**1) Quiet Acquiescence:** The silent moderates respect you for your compromise, but they're overwhelmed by the devastating outcry from your own constituency who feel you betrayed your principles without even a fight.

Health: up	Voter Satisfaction: down
Military: up	Development: nil
Conservation: nil	Conservation: nil
Tax Revenue: nil	International Prestige: nil
Balanced Budget: nil	Centrism: up

**2) Veto Ambush:** Give 'em hell, Mr. President! The voters like it that you spat in the other side's eye, and by taking them by surprise you seized the spin initiative and made sure the whole issue played your way. Of course, now they'll never trust you again. But the important thing is that the uninsured veterans are planning the other party.

Health: down	Voter Satisfaction: up
Military: down	Development: nil
Conservation: nil	Conservation: nil
Tax Revenue: nil	International Prestige: nil
Balanced Budget: nil	Centrism: down

**3) Veto With Mutual Anger:** With both sides spinning furiously, a great deal of mud winds up on everyone. Each of you blames the other for politicizing the issue and failing to take care of those meth babies. Surprisingly, the voters blame you both.

Health: down	Voter Satisfaction: down
Military: down	Development: nil
Conservation: nil	Conservation: nil
Tax Revenue: nil	International Prestige: nil
Balanced Budget: nil	Centrism: down

**4) Sign With Visible Regret:** Your people feel you sold out. The other side feels you whined and tried to turn a political profit off doing the right thing, by complaining about being forced to do the right thing – that won't bring any swing votes off the fence. But the veterans are happy as are a couple well-funded research oncologists.

Health: up	Voter Satisfaction: down
Military: up	Development: nil
Conservation: nil	Conservation: nil
Tax Revenue: nil	International Prestige: nil
Balanced Budget: nil	Centrism: down

## Whodunnit?

A well-coordinated terrorist attack has ripped apart an important American city. It delivered a well-designed one-two punch.

A single initial bomb was exploded in a small airport at the edge of the city. Immediate rumors that it was a "dirty bomb," were corroborated – both radiation and biological materials were released.

Just as the initial reaction to this information crested (about 12 hours), the event was followed up with a coordinated distribution of medical clinics throughout the area, mainly with simply-constructed, conventional bombs set off by cell phones.

That was yesterday. Today you start to get on top of it.

To understand this scenario, you must understand what a dirty bomb does – the actual human damage is minimal; the radiation levels are negligible even at ground zero after the passage of very little time, and the biologicals disperse and break down rapidly. What matters is the hysteria that overwhelms the infrastructure. Each person freaks out over a rash is using up medical time and expertise that's supposed to be going to accident victims and the truly ill. Crimes against medical facilities (break-ins, mob demands, etc) skyrocket.

The difficult wrinkle is that a significant number of the victims are of Arab ancestry. The targeted clinics in particular serve neighborhoods of many people of middle-eastern backgrounds.

National reactions and poll results provide a familiar, even comfortable context for familiar debate. You as president must negotiate the usual stuff, as follows.

Options:

- (1) impose martial law in the city
- (2) provide massive aid but keep hands-off
- (3) ramp up security in similar target zones
- (4) ramp up overseas military action against a suspected country
- (5) provide believable assurances that the government is on top of the situation
- (6) identify the culprits and find them.

The trouble is, you can't do them all. This emergency is social as well as physical, and dealing with it takes time and a lot of money. Choose compatible options and prioritize them (yes, literally in order 1-2-3-etc) based on the advice you're getting.

The phone rings, and it's Homeland Security. There's a new wrinkle.

Two very different groups have taken credit for the incident. One of them is an extremist terrorist group with ties to a variety of governments in Arab countries; according to them, they have struck at Arab-Americans whom they consider collaborators and traitors. The other is a band of home-grown fruit loops, recently graduated from crystal meth and gun-running into a well-run strike force. As you might imagine, they claim to be striking pre-emptively at the foreigners who are harboring a fifth column of terrorists.

Intelligence reports unfortunately cannot settle the issue. They can actually validate each claim in terms of M.O., opportunity, known suspects, and psychological motivation. Each group is equally plausible. Neither group has made an undeniable claim. Investigations are ongoing, but the people on the ground are more concerned with damage control than with preserving the evidence trail.

The polls and blogs are clear: to state that the government cannot tell who did it is political suicide. You have to decide who to ear-tag with responsibility. You have to decide whether to stick to the priorities you chose initially or whether to revise your policy.

It's the crucial moment. What do you do, and whom do you decide to do it to?

## Outcomes

Health down  
Voter Satisfaction up  
Military up  
Development down  
Conservation nil  
Did you emphasize direct military and police actions?  
Tax Revenue down  
International Prestige down  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism down

Health up  
Voter Satisfaction nil  
Military down  
Development up  
Conservation up  
Did you emphasize aid and recovery?  
Tax Revenue down  
International Prestige up  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism up

Health down  
Voter Satisfaction up  
Military up  
Development nil  
Conservation down  
The Arab terrorist international  
Which group did you choose to identify as the culprits?  
Tax Revenue up  
International Prestige down  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism down

Health nil  
 Voter Satisfaction up  
 Military nil  
 Development nil  
 Conservation nil  
 Tax Revenue nil  
 International Prestige nil  
 Balanced Budget double-down  
 Centrist nil

election. — still, no one seems to care. You've set a good stage for the next recovery seems strong, although the budget is beyond hope international interest, but voters seem to like it. Domestic It's a toss-up among most respondents, especially politicians and ist international?

Health double-down  
 Voter Satisfaction nil  
 Military double-up  
 Development down  
 Conservation nil  
 Tax Revenue double-down  
 International Prestige nil  
 Balanced Budget down  
 Centrist nil

groups someone else for the next election. carry out "actions," of their own. Your party ostracizes you and what you're standing for. Various extremist groups flare up and give both on the Hill and at the polls; no one can figure out target is the guy next door. Political debate becomes inconclud- Problems ensue quickly. No one wants to get tough when the the American locals?

Health double-down  
 Voter Satisfaction double-up  
 International Prestige double-down  
 Military double-up  
 Development down  
 Conservation down  
 Tax Revenue nil  
 Balanced Budget double-down  
 Centrist down

their internal differences to mount a killer opposition plan. ning, the election plans some early and your opponents but aside pinch over the next year. Despite high poll results in the begin- grows and solidifies, and all domestic special interests feel the military budget spirals up, the political wedge between parties The voters initially love it, but the long-term effect is ugly — the the Arab terrorist intentions?

Two ups or two downs count double for points purposes. a nil. An up or down will increase or decrease a nil, respectively. Combine these two sets of results. An up plus a down results in Health down  
 Voter Satisfaction down  
 Military up  
 Development nil  
 Conservation nil  
 Tax Revenue down  
 International Prestige up  
 Balanced Budget nil  
 Centrist up  
 The American locals

Health nil  
 Voter Satisfaction down  
 Military nil  
 Development up  
 Conservation up  
 Tax Revenue double-down  
 International Prestige double-up  
 Balanced Budget down  
 Centrist double-up  
 Did you emphasize aid and recovery planning the American locals?  
 H'm — personal political suicide, but many domestic and foreign interests are pleased, and your party is strengthened. Despite budget issues, no one in power is directly mad at you, and the problems caused by decreased taxes are far away to be someone else's problem. You won't be able to be elected dog-catcher, though, let alone Pres again.



## The Cavendish Memo

Mr. President, your former personal secretary (Ms. Doe) -- who you fired last week for gross incompetence -- has disappeared. Reported missing by an aunt in Pittsburgh, PA, her car was found abandoned on Interstate 70, near Clear Spring, MD. According to Doe's landlord, she was moving back to Pittsburgh and would be staying with the aforementioned aunt. No one has seen or heard a word from Doe in two days.

The White House IT Director reports that illegal copies were made of your personal correspondence files two weeks ago, unnoticed due to a recent server glitch. The IT Director has determined the list of copied correspondence contains a potentially explosive memo.

The Cavendish Memo is a six month old personal letter from your old college friend, the Cavendish Corporation CEO, suggesting that if certain environmental statutes were relaxed for the corporation, they could build a new factory in Montana.

A Cavendish factory would bring in new jobs, cause the local and state tax revenues to increase dramatically and lead to enhanced economic development throughout the region. Also, Cavendish is known for high worker satisfaction due to its extensive health benefits following your own Presidential recommendations -- a plank in your election platform.

At the time, you responded with tentative interest in pursuing further talks about the CEO's plan.

Unfortunately, giving Cavendish a pass on these environmental restrictions would directly violate the new Global Environment Treaty you signed just last month in Oslo.

The White House phone bank is being swamped with calls from voters about your secretary and the missing files. The White House Press Corps is demanding a statement. What will you do?

The Cavendish Corporation Memo has been released to the domestic and foreign media. The White House Press Corps is scrambling for a statement. The media and the internet blogs are alive with discussion of Ms. Doe's disappearance. The public, the media, and the international community demands answers of you, Mr. President.

Here are your options:

**1) Support the Cavendish Memo:** The benefits to the tentative agreement are substantial, even enough to balance the backlash from violating the Global Environment Treaty in this one isolated case.

**2) Revoke the Cavendish Memo:** Agreeing to the outlined plan is poison now that it's been widely disseminated; the loss of face in the international community would be tremendous.

## Outcomes

**1) Support the Cavendish Memo:** The substantial benefits of a new Cavendish Corporation factory in an economically-underdeveloped area is important to the well-being of the American Economy. (And to hell with the tree huggers, international critics, and conspiracy theorists.)

Health up	Voter Satisfaction down
Military up	Development up
Tax Revenue up	Conservation down
International Prestige down	Centrism down
Balanced Budget nil	

Conservation down

Development up

Military up

Voter Satisfaction down

Tax Revenue up

International Prestige down

Balanced Budget nil

Centrism down

The Press Conference.

Do you:

**1) Support the Cavendish Memo?**

**2) Revoke the Cavendish Memo?**

**4) Start the Spin Machine?**

**3) Refuse to Comment?**

**5) Resign?**

**3) Refuse to Comment:** The situation is too thorny for internal-betate speech; it's worth putting up with the cries of the public and the media until the whole problem can be unraveled from Ms. Doe's disappearance.

**4) Start the Spin Machine:** Refocus attention on the missing Ms. Doe (possibly trying to paint her as a political operative).

**5) Resign:** You're caught between a rock and a hard place because the existence of the memo -- and your as-yet-unrevealed reply -- is a political and diplomatic firebomb. Best just to step down.

The Cavendish Corporation has just issued a statement saying that the CEO's letter was not a corporate communication, but simply a personal discussion between old college chums. Furthermore, the CEO has resigned from Cavendish.

Ms. Doe is still missing, but the FBI has some sketchy evidence that connects her to one of your political opponents: she had been seen (after her dismissal) in his company having a late supper in Georgetown.

Your Press Secretary has scheduled a press conference for 5:25.

Mr. President, copies of the vaguely positive reply you sent to the Cavendish CEO have been issued to the media.



Crisis!

ALSO: The Vice President is now the President for the next

Health nil

**2) Voter Satisfaction up**

Military nil

Development nil

**Conservation up**

Tax Revenue nil

**International Prestige up**

Balanced Budget nil

**Centrism up**

Health nil

Voter Satisfaction nil

Military nil

Development nil

**Conservation down**

Tax Revenue nil

**International Prestige down**

Balanced Budget nil

Centrism nil

good of all three.  
United States. By stepping down, you sacrifice yourself for the  
of your political party and the office of the President of the  
2) **Resign:** You've tarnished not just your own image, but that

Health nil

**2) Voter Satisfaction down**

Military nil

Development nil

Conservation nil

Tax Revenue nil

**International Prestige down**

Balanced Budget nil

**Centrism down**

never become a public issue.

3) **Refuse to Comment:** This is a private matter than should have

**Health down**

**2) Voter Satisfaction up**

Military nil

**Development down**

Balanced Budget nil

Centrism nil

**Conservation up**

better overall politically (Worse for business, though!)  
better for the environment, better for retaining face globally  
2) **Repulse the Canadian Memo:** Better to stand by your word:

## Flown the Coop

The news has just spilled all over CNN -- the ruling party of Kazakhstan claims to have captured an American F-36 Joint Strike Fighter. Kazakhstan is a crumbling former satellite of the Soviet Union which ceased being a dip on America's radar when they surrendered their last warhead almost ten years ago, but now they're back in the headlines with a grainy picture of what could be a F-36 JSE on CNN.

Despite numerous phone calls to the Air Force, no one can give the White House a straight answer on the subject. Do the Kazakhstanis have a F-36 or not? The reply: We'll get back to you. The furor over this possible non-event is already reaching a dull roar; even though no one knows if it's actually happening or not. Events are rapidly taking on a life of their own. As the news piles up, it becomes more and more difficult to tell fantasy from reality.

Now Wolf Blitzer is flapping his gums about an American pilot on the ground in Kazakhstan. The story now is that he flew his jet from Turkey and landed it in Kazakhstan. They're flashing pictures of some corn-fed schoolboy from Nebraska named Lieutenant William Weeks Jr. -- a snapshot that looks like it was pulled out of a High School Yearbook from the 1980s. There's no video footage or anything like that; just a grainy cell-phone shot of Weeks, name painted on the side of the jet (which could be made out of cardboard on some back lot).

No answer at the Air Force command -- they're busy counting pilots and planes. That's what no one thinks about when they talk about the greatest military power on Earth: all the counting involved. But just then, the red-phone rings. The Russians want to know if the news is true; and, if so, what America is prepared to do about it. Kazakhstan and Russia have no love lost between them (which is why the Kazakhstanis aren't Russian anymore), and Russia has long had the upper-hand in their numerous border skirmishes. They feel a Mach 3 capable stealth fighter loaded with high-grade weapons could be a disruptive force in the region.

The Russian Prime Minister wants answers, and he wants them before Wolf Blitzer. The Russians will call back in 30 minutes. What's your call Mr. President?

1. Back the Russians: Yes sir, Mister Prime Minister, we're right there with you. We'll keep you apprised of the situation. Anything you need.
2. Neutrality: Well, that certainly sounds bad, but as far as we know now, it's just not happening. Sorry.
3. It's Russia's Problem: We might have lost the jet, but after that, it ain't our fault, so back up, buster.
4. Wave the Big Stick: Zip it, or uncle America will have to

break out the big guns and then someone's gonna get hurt. This is none of your business.

It's spreading. TASS and international news organizations have picked up and scattered the story like someone tracking a stain around a house. Still no word from the Air Force except: Yes, we have a Lieutenant William Weeks Jr. and yes he flies a F-36 in Turkey, but no, sir, we don't know where he is right now or if his plane is accounted for.

Someone wakes Weeks, mother up and interviews the woman on TV at 2 in the morning her time. She looks as if she's still dreaming. The White House Press Secretary is asking for a statement; and he implies that waiting is not an option. What's the White House have to say on the murky subject?

The Russians are back on the phone. What's your answer Mr. President?

In the meantime, your state department guys have roused the Kazakhstan ambassador who looks both frightened and ecstatic at the same time. It's the first time he's ever been in the White House. He knows nothing about any jet, pilot, or situation in his country. No, he can't get the Kazakhstan Prime Minister on the telephone, he's on his way to his summer house in Ladoga.

You send the Ambassador out of the room while you muster up a plan. What stance do you take Mr. President?

1. Polite; Polite: So, how's it going? Have you seen the news? Oh, I know, it's such a shame.
2. We Understand You Found Our Plane! Thanks so much; we'll just take that back now.
3. We're Not Saying You Have Our Plane: But if you do we want it back.
4. Get Me My Plane Back, Idiot: Or the Kazakhstan national dress will involve lead shielding.

The poor little ambassador comes back in. What's it going to be? The decision is yours.

## Outcomes

There were really two intersecting decisions here, your stance with the Russians and your stance towards Kazakhstan. Each has separate blowback. The combined result of those decisions determines the fate of the plane... and its pilot.

### Choices with the Russians

#### 1) Back the Russians

Within the hour the Russian minister of Defense is on CNN telling Wolf how the US military is looking to Russia in dealing with the Kazakhstan problem. Needless to say the world is uneasy that the US could misplace a jet, the people of the US are not pleased we're looking to Russia to fix things, and no one's happy with the military at all. And the jet's still missing right?

Health nil	Conservation nil
Development nil	Conservation nil
Military down	Balanced Budget nil
<b>Voter Satisfaction down</b>	Centrism nil
Tax Revenue nil	<b>International Prestige down</b>

#### 2) Neutrality

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Or in this case lost. Good move. But what about the damn jet?

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction nil	Conservation nil
Tax Revenue nil	Development nil
International Prestige nil	Military nil
Balanced Budget nil	Development nil
Centrism nil	<b>International Prestige nil</b>

#### 3) It's Russia's Problem

The Russians go on alert. America goes on alert. The public is thrilled America doesn't fool around.

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction Up	Conservation nil
<b>International Prestige Up</b>	Development nil
Tax Revenue nil	Military Up
Balanced Budget nil	Development nil
Centrism nil	<b>International Prestige Up</b>

#### 4) Wave the Big Stick

Oh, so it's that way is it? Russia complains to the security council; leaks occur. Within minutes your helming phone calls from the UN, Belgium, France, Spain, Norway, Italy, China and Japan. Their overwhelming message -- keep it in your pants; violence won't solve this. It's only a matter of hours before college students are protesting out front the White House and you're being lampasted on Meet the Press.

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction Down	Conservation up
<b>International Prestige Down</b>	Balanced Budget nil
Tax Revenue nil	<b>International Prestige Down</b>

## Choices with Kazakhstan

#### 1) Politic Politic

The Ambassador's caught by CNN as he goes back to his embassy. He gives a good sound-bite about what a great President you are, and how on top of the problem American seems to be.

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction Up	Development nil
<b>International Prestige Up</b>	Military Up
Tax Revenue nil	Balanced Budget nil
Centrism nil	Conservation nil

#### 2) We Understand You Found Our Plane!

Oh, of course, we'll look right into that, the Ambassador politely replies. But isn't that what your Air Force commander said forty-five minutes ago?

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction nil	Conservation nil
<b>International Prestige Up</b>	Development nil
Tax Revenue nil	Military down
Balanced Budget nil	Development nil
Centrism nil	<b>International Prestige Up</b>

#### 3) We're Not Saying You Have Our Plane

by your ever-optimistic press advisor. the footage of you talking the Ambassador leaked to the press they'll find the plane. The American people are impressed by course he'll get the Prime Minister on the phone; of course Politic but firm. Nice. The Ambassador bows and scrapes. Of

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction Up	Conservation nil
<b>International Prestige nil</b>	Development nil
Tax Revenue nil	Military nil
Balanced Budget nil	Development nil
Centrism nil	<b>International Prestige nil</b>

#### 4) Get Me My Plane Back, Idiot

movie. It ain't pretty. a chimpanzee. The Ambassador fees like the victim in a horror We want our jet. Now. It's kind of like a bull gorilla threatening Yeah, we could erase your country in under twenty minutes.

Within minutes America's threats are repeated into a camera. Wolf Blitzer is asking if the President has gone too far. No one seems happy with your decision.

Health nil	Conservation nil
Voter Satisfaction down	Conservation nil
<b>International Prestige down</b>	Development nil
Tax Revenue nil	Military down
Balanced Budget nil	Development nil
Centrism nil	<b>International Prestige down</b>



## Results with the Plane

The Prime Minister of Kazakhstan is finally on the phone (God knows where your Air Force people are) . His answer is determined by how well you've scored in the two previous choices.

★ +2 International Prestige: Of course we have your plane, we have not touched it and it will be returned to you -- along with its pilot; a very polite man -- immediately.

★ +1 International Prestige: We have your plane and are willing to return it shortly. Of course, we'd like to discuss some economic possibilities.

★ -1 International Prestige: We have your plane -- however, your behavior has enlightened us as to your imperialist motives. You will not get your plane Mr. President.

★ -2 International Prestige: What's a plane?

It's day 18 of a Waco-style standoff between armed religious fanatics – an Abolycyclic Christian cult – and law enforcement. The ATF, the FBI and local police have surrounded the cultists' compound and have been working to negotiate a peaceful end, but fruitlessly. The cult leader, John [Johannes], has promised several times to release the women and children in the compound (many of them his wives and children), but each time has failed to deliver.

One of the cultists – one of Johannes' wives – is a Swiss national. Eleven days ago, agents of the ATF came under fire from the compound when attempting to execute arrest and search warrants against Johannes. They returned fire. Three ATF agents were killed and 18 were wounded, along with an unknown number of cultists killed and wounded. The cultists have fired occasionally at the agents and officers on the scene since then, but there've been no casualties and no returned fire. On the morning of the second day, FBI agents in armored vehicles deployed to the compound's perimeter where they've remained, despite Johannes' strong objections and an official commitment to a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

FBI Special Agent Steven Mercer is the on-site commander, overseeing the ATF local law enforcement, and the FBI's hostage rescue team and negotiation team. He's been doing a poor job, it turns out: the various elements have acted without coordination or clear communication. The ATF element has been particularly aggressive, acting to increase the pressure on the compound, sometimes over the objections and sometimes without the knowledge of the negotiation team.

The negotiation team has been communicating with Johannes and with his right-hand man – his "Holy Spirit," – Alfred Carlton. Both cult leaders have repeatedly assured negotiators that no one in the compound will commit suicide. Johannes, demands include legal immunity for himself and his followers, including immunity from prosecution on illegal firearms, bigamy and child abuse charges; and the arrangement of an opportunity to preach his message on national television and to publish his revelations.

Power and telephone have been cut to the compound (excepting direct telephone to the negotiation team). It's estimated that the compound has enough water to outlast a prolonged siege, but that they're already running low on food. The FBI has been keeping the compound under floodlights and has been broadcasting messages that anyone coming out of the compound will be treated fairly.

The hostage rescue team has prepared four resolution plans. They're awaiting your approval, Mr. President.

FBI Plan 1 (lure) involves luring Johannes out of the compound with the promise of media exposure – an opportunity to preach on national television – and then arresting him, conducting a search of the compound afterward.

FBI Plan 2 (withdrawal) involves withdrawing law enforcement from the compound perimeter, waiting for Johannes to leave the compound, and arresting him then. This is Mercer's preferred plan.

FBI Plan 3 (pressure) involves maintaining position and increasing pressure on the compound's residence, waiting for Johannes to surrender himself and submit to search.

FBI Plan 4 (nighttime entry) is a "dynamic entry," raid into the compound, under cover of night, using tear gas and the armored vehicles.

A group of seven children have exited the compound, making their way toward the perimeter. The children are very sick, vomiting and fevered.

Carlton (Johannes, "Holy Spirit") contacts the negotiation team, insisting that the compound be supplied with fresh food and threatening "a reckoning in blood, such blood," if the cultists are further starved. He offers the release of four more sick children. Medical personnel on-site have examined the children. They suspect botulism. There was a note pinned inside one child's jacket, presumably by her mother or another adult woman: "get us out."

The Swiss Consulate identifies the Swiss national in the compound as Uta Krahennuhl. She married Johannes three years ago, in Switzerland. Together they have a two year old son, presumed to be also in the compound.

Special Agent Hugo Montego, the on-site commander of the ATF element, has just learned of the hostage rescue team's four plans. The ATF element has also prepared a resolution plan, a more aggressive and more dangerous daytime entry; he hopes that you will consider it. Mr. President, as an alternative to the FBI plans.

In any case, Montego recommends strongly against FBI Plan 1 (lure) and FBI Plan 2 (withdrawal), on the grounds that the law enforcement objective wrt the cult is the search of its compound and the seizure of its weapons hoard, not just Johannes' arrest.

One of the seven sick children released says that most of the children in the compound are sick, and "some are hurt real bad."

## Outcomes

### FBI Plan 1 (ruse):

The ruse works, and arresting Johannes goes off, but although Carlton had released the children without Johannes' knowledge, he remains loyal to the cult and capable in Johannes' absence. He prolongs the standoff – but with a new willingness to negotiate. Metcer manages (sometimes barely) to keep Montego from launching his own disastrous raid, and after another eight days Carlton surrenders. Unfortunately, the extended timeframe keeps several of the children, one woman, and three men from receiving medical aid in time to save their lives.

Johannes, Carlton and others, seize the cult's illegal weapons, and aggressive tactics to enter and secure the compound. Arrest ATF Plan (immediate entry): Use tear gas, the armored vehicles, and cover of darkness to enter and secure the compound. Arrest Johannes, Carlton and others, seize the cult's illegal weapons.

submit to search. Arrest Johannes, Carlton and others when they surrender and refuse food supplies, act to increase pressure on the cultists. FBI Plan 3 (pressure): Maintain the compound's perimeter, exit the compound to procure food, return later to search. FBI Plan 2 (withdrawal): Withdraw from the compound's perimeter, arrest Johannes and/or Carlton when either one the compound, return later to search the compound.

opportunity to broadcast his message, arrest him when he exits FBI Plan 1 (ruse): Provide food supplies, offer Johannes the Mr. President, which plan will you approve?

mented within the hour. Montego advises that his daytime entry plan can be implemented within the hour. and promising to “set fire to the whole world,” if he’s refused. Johannes contacts the negotiation team in a rage, demanding the return of all ten children, or else immediate food supplies and medical supplies plus immediate accession to his demands. Three children leave the compound – not four – released with no exchange of food. One is in critical condition, having received a gunshot wound during the initial exchange of fire eleven days ago.

windows. Agents on-site have seen armed men taking position within the compound, sawing gun ports into doors and boarded-up suggestion that more children be released than four. children exchange. Carlton has rejected out of hand any The negotiation team on-site is considering the food-for-

Health nil

Voter Satisfaction up

Military nil

Development nil

Conservation nil

Tax Revenue nil  
International Prestige down  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism up

### FBI Plan 4 (nighttime entry):

The cultists are prepared for the raid and put up good resistance. In the end, the death count tops 50, including several law enforcement agents and about 20 women and children, including Kshembuhl and her child. Despite the casualties, this is publicly seen as a successful FBI operation – a hard but necessary end to a terrible situation. Subsequent internal investigations focus on the ATF's aggressive stance and communication failures, and Montego is formally reprimanded.

Health nil  
Voter Satisfaction down  
Military up

Development nil

Conservation nil

Tax Revenue nil  
International Prestige down  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism down

### FBI Plan 3 (pressure):

Everyone from the Christian Right to the Libertarian Right to 50 women and children killed are Kshembuhl and her child, and few of the cultists live to face arrest. Among the nearly Ten law enforcement agents are killed, another 25 are wounded, coordinated and poorly supported, and it goes very, very badly days. But inevitably Montego leads his ATF raid, and it's poorly Metcer tries to hold back Montego, and succeeds for a few

Health nil

Voter Satisfaction nil

Military nil

Development nil

Conservation nil

Tax Revenue nil  
International Prestige down  
Balanced Budget up  
Centrism up

### FBI Plan 2 (withdrawal):

ment agents are killed, a few are wounded. near 40, most killed within the cult in its explosive final day; stabilizing influence and administration, the cult's fragile and vulnerable – but it's turned on itself. By the end the death toll's off Carlton's arrest and also manages to delay Montego's inevitable, but Carlton does, and that's pretty good. Metcer carries it turns out that Johannes himself doesn't emerge to secure

Health nil

Voter Satisfaction up

Military nil

Development nil

Conservation nil

Tax Revenue nil  
International Prestige nil  
Balanced Budget down  
Centrism up



Health nil

Vote Satisfaction up

Military nil

Development nil

Conservation nil

Centralism down

Balanced Budget up

International Prestige up

Tax Revenue nil

ATF Plan (immediate entry):

FBI suffers badly in public view. Mercer is forced to resign. Tensions between the ATF and the FBI get aired in public, and the and her child return to Switzerland. Unfortunately the grievous women. Johannes is arrested, Carlton killed, and Krashenbuhl are law enforcement agents, only 3 are children, and only 6 are released children. Of the 30 or so killed in the raid, only two organized, with Johannes and Carlton in a fierce fight over the The raid catches the cult in the midst of preparations and poorly