



Crisis Management ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

The School for Ethics and Global Leadership

YOUR CHALLENGE: To prepare and deliver a short White House briefing on a mock crisis and to answer questions (as White House Press Secretary) on the crisis from former White House press secretary Mike McCurry. Your group will receive one of three hypothetical crises based on this week's current events. Using your knowledge of past Ethics and Leadership case studies, you and your group will attempt to craft a clear and effective statement about the Trump Administration's response. Your group will then choose a representative to act as a press secretary, reading the statement and then fielding questions posed by Mr. McCurry.

FORMAT: Your group's statement should last no more than 45 seconds. After the conclusion of your statement, Mr. McCurry will have 8-10 minutes to question your chosen press secretary about the issue.

SCENARIOS: Each of the three scenarios involves a mock crisis drawn from actual current events. Effective preparation will involve familiarizing yourselves with the topic and the relevant ethical and strategic questions involved. Your scenario brief will provide you with basic information about your issue, but you will need to draw upon your real-world knowledge of the issue to fully prepare. Begin with the information provided and see what else you might be able to find. Mr. McCurry will receive a copy of each scenario in advance – you may assume he knows what you know, and perhaps more. Remember that being caught off-guard at the podium is one of the hazards of being a Press Secretary; be sure to prepare for this eventuality, because it *will* happen.

MIKE McCURRY'S FIVE C'S OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (more info coming):

1. Credibility
2. Candor
3. Clarity
4. Compassion
5. Commitment

Your assigned scenario is found on the next page. You should assume that your press secretary will take the podium on Friday, October 19th to address the day's news. In the briefs on the next page, the real-life information about each crisis is written in normal type; the "mock" part of each scenario is written in **bold**.

Good luck!

Groups:

- 1: TBA (**Scenario 1**)
- 2: TBA (**Scenario 1**)
- 3: TBA (**Scenario 2**)
- 4: TBA (**Scenario 2**)
- 5: TBA (**Scenario 3**)
- 6: TBA (**Scenario 3**)



SCENARIO ONE: Saudi dissident and *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi's ominous disappearance has caused serious diplomatic tension between the Trump Administration and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In response to Turkish assertions that Saudi agents murdered Khashoggi, a U.S. resident, on October 2, President Trump has put the Saudi royal family – long a complicated ally of the U.S. – on notice: “severe punishment” will follow if the Saudis are to blame. In response, Saudi Arabia has strongly denied the accusations and threatened to limit U.S. access to its oil. |

FRIDAY: Turkish officials release footage from Khashoggi's Apple Watch demonstrating beyond doubt that a Saudi team of assassins killed and dismembered him. Meanwhile, WikiLeaks releases documents contradicting the Saudi regime's position (which the President has echoed) that a “rogue” group of Saudis killed the journalist. The Trump Administration backtracks on its “severe punishment” threat, agreeing to go through with a major weapons sale to the Saudis, claiming the video footage and WikiLeaks documents could be fake. Many members of Congress (Republicans and Democrats) are livid, but the Republican leadership stands with the President, arguing that the U.S. cannot involve itself in every international event and that Khashoggi was not an American citizen. Meanwhile, some cable news commentators have called this an escalation of Trump's war on the mainstream media.

YOU are Trump's Press Secretary preparing for a press briefing at the White House at 1300 EST. You are certain that Khashoggi will be a major topic of conversation. Using the information above and what you know about the issue, you must A) craft a brief (no more than 45 seconds) statement on the issue and B) navigate questions posed by the press.

SCENARIO TWO: Since the beginning, the Trump Administration has endured more early high-profile departures than any Presidential administration in history. Adding to the long list, in August President Trump announced White House Counsel Don McGahn's impending departure and last week UN Ambassador abruptly announced her resignation. Though both announcements were relatively smooth, there have been undercurrents of tension. On Sunday night, President Trump gave an interview to the influential television program 60 Minutes in which he called Defense Secretary James Mattis “sort of a Democrat.” The remark was seen as furthering a rift between the man Trump once called “one of the most effective generals that we've had in many, many decades” and an increasingly isolated White House. According to Bob Woodward's recent blockbuster *Fear*, Mattis claimed Trump “had the understanding of a fifth or sixth-grader,” a quotation Mattis has denied. The President has floated several names to replace Haley, including his daughter's, and once tried to replace McGahn with his former staff secretary, the now-disgraced Rob Porter. |

FRIDAY: Secretary Mattis announces that he is resigning effective January 1, 2018. The press statement is brief, thanking the President for the opportunity and expressing a wish to spend more time with family. Commentators on the left are calling this a leadership crisis, as three of the so-called “adults” (those seen as standing up to Trump's more controversial impulses) are now leaving three positions of enormous influence. Senator Lindsey Graham has been mentioned as a possible replacement for Mattis, raising suspicions that Graham's recent full-throated defenses of Trump are a *quid pro quo*.

YOU are Trump's Press Secretary preparing for a press briefing at the White House at 1300 EST. You are certain that the Mattis resignation will be a major topic of conversation. Using the information above and what you know



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about the issue, you must A) craft a brief (no more than 45 seconds) statement on the issue and B) navigate questions posed by the press.

SCENARIO THREE: In the last year several devastating hurricanes—most recently, Hurricane Michael—have swept over U.S. soil, causing billions of dollars of damage, lost productivity, and heartache. Most scientists blame global warming for the increase in storm frequency and severity, and urge government agencies like FEMA to rebuild only in areas that will be safe from, and only in ways that will limit, future damage. These recommendations are controversial, as they require policymakers to resettle U.S. citizens who have abiding attachments to their homes. Thus far, the Trump Administration has largely refused to take global warming seriously, arguing that science is mixed and that China is behind much of the so-called evidence. It has directed federal dollars to rebuild hurricane-stricken communities exactly as they were. Meanwhile, several high-profile recent studies argue that the global warming threat is far more dire than scientists once thought. A UN report says there is only 12 years to save the planet, while a report from the Union of Concerned Scientists says 1 million homes will be lost in Florida at a cost of 321 billion dollars. |

FRIDAY: Estimates set the total cost of Hurricane Michael's devastation at \$30 billion. Yesterday, the President gave an interview on Fox News doubling down on the "climate change is a hoax" line, and promising the U.S. government would help all Michael victims rebuild their homes exactly as and where they were before the storm. Florida voters are paying special attention to the President's stance on this issue; two key races (a governor's race and a key Senate race) are neck and neck and both Republican candidates will likely side with the President (or risk an angry Tweet that could cost them the election!).

YOU are Trump's Press Secretary preparing for a press briefing at the White House at 1300 EST. You are certain that Hurricane Michael clean-up and global warming will be a major topic of conversation. Using the information above and what you know about the issue, you must A) craft a brief (no more than 45 seconds) statement on the issue and B) navigate questions posed by the press.