

What is a Student Congress Scenario?

At some tournaments, such as Florida Blue Key and Harvard, the final round of Student Congress is debated using a “real life scenario” in place of various bills and resolutions. The general concept of the scenario is that it places the legislative body in a practical application situation, where a situation has taken place on the national or international market that the United States Senate either must deal with or would have a distinct interest in voicing its opinion and developing a solution.

Starting in 2006, the Palm Beach Catholic Forensic League has incorporated scenarios into its Barbara Dale Lauder McCall Grand Finals Super Congress. Generally, about 10-14 days in advance of the tournament, shortly after the full-text preliminary round legislation has been posted on the league’s website (www.pbcfl.net), four or five hints will be announced that legislators should begin to research and understand. The actual scenario will not be announced until the Super Congress participants are announced (the Saturday morning of Grand Finals), several hours before the legislative body convenes.

A scenario may be presented in its entirety, or can be split into multiple updates that take place during the Super Congress session. It may include one or more piece of legislation, but this is not an absolute. There is no guarantee of an affirmative/negative flow of debate, as the scenario may (and usually does) present multiple ideas and options to consider and argue.

Legislators must be able to take good notes, think on their feet, make rational arguments, incorporate clash effectively, and think outside the box. Use of prewritten “canned” speeches is not realistic and should not be done, since legislators will not know the specifics parameters of the scenario in advance.

Attached is the two-part scenario that played out during the 2010 PBCFL Grand Finals Super Congress. For your information, the hints given to all legislators in advance of the tournament were:

- US-Haiti relations
- US-Cuba relations
- US-South America relations (specifically: Colombia, Venezuela, and Nicaragua)
- Terrorism
- Drug Cartels

Top Secret Document
March 13, 2010
PBCFL Grand Finals “Super Congress”

Dear Legislator:

Congratulations on advancing to the 2010 PBCFL Grand Finals “Super Congress.” The top six speakers in this round will advance to the NCFL Grand Nationals in Omaha over Memorial Day weekend. The seventh and eighth ranked speakers will be alternates. This session will run for approximately 2 ½ hours. This time frame includes housekeeping matters, such as voting, briefing, and selecting a presiding officer. Below is a briefing and summary of our current situation.

APPROX. 10:45 A.M. – SCENARIO PRESENTATION (AFTER POSTINGS OF SUPER CONGRESS)

In the aftermath of January’s devastating earthquake in Haiti, numerous countries, including the United States, responded with volunteers, food, water, humanitarian supplies, other donation, and military personnel, in order to try and help with both the devastating losses of human life, as well as to try and rebuild what is considered by many the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere.

However, the United States governments’ show of concern has left a bad taste in some people’s proverbial mouths, in large part because of the historical animosity between the two nations. Hopefully, legislators have taken the opportunity to read the briefing provided previously on the history of U.S.-Haiti relations.

Given the historical problems, it was just a matter of time before disaster struck. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton landed in Haiti this morning to follow up on a visit she took to the impoverished nation after the earthquake in January. We have received reports that as Clinton’s motorcade was leaving the airport, an unidentified group of militants fired a series of rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) rounds at her and her entourage. Clinton was forced to flee the group, and Secret Service gave her cover for a brief period, but the terrorists eliminated the contingent. As of this moment, the status of Secretary of State Clinton is unknown.

Currently, no organization has claimed responsibility for the operation. However, an hour ago, our office received digital photographs which cannot be shown at this time, along with a statement from the director of the CIA, Leon Panetta, which reads as follows:

“Mr. President, our digital satellites and photographs have shown the motorcade incident with great clarity. We are not 100 percent certain this information is valid, but our intelligence personnel and photo-analysis center claims al-Qaida appears to have established a presence on the island nation and was behind the attack. Agents believe this action on the U.S. motorcade was taken to show violence and hostility toward the United States of America.”

President Barack Obama has not issued a formal statement on the attack as of yet. Thus, it is up to the members of this congressional body to determine what, if any, action should take place. Some questions to consider:

- Could al-Qaida set up shop in Haiti in such a short period of time? The United States has a strong presence there, but the poverty, devastation and general chaos could make creation of such a terrorist cell possible. Plus, the attack does not follow patterns the CIA has seen in previous al-Qaida terrorist activities, which usually take months or years to coordinate and carry out. Has al-Qaida changed its methods?
- Is this a backlash by Haitian Nationals against the U.S. for what the impoverished citizens believe a history of American racism, of the U.S. propping and supporting puppet dictatorships, and of frustration over humanitarian assistance trickling in too slowly?
- Speaking of Haitian Nationals, did Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, who was dictator of Haiti from 1971 until being overthrown in 1986 and currently living in exile in France, endorse this of his supporters in an attempt to gain favorable curry with anti-American Haitians and possibly pave a way back to leadership of his homeland as a hero?
- Are drug lords, particularly those associated with former Nicaraguan dictator Manuel Noriega, behind the attack, due to what they perceive as too much United States influence?
- Could Raul Castro and Cuba’s Communist government have had a role in the attack, thus potentially establishing a stronger hold on the region?
- What about Hugo Chavez and Venezuela? There is recent history of political unrest between the United States government and Chavez. Would Chavez authorize this as an opportunity to take more control of the Caribbean?

We encourage all legislators to speak on this issue, and will update this legislative body later in this session as to any events that might be taking place, which could impact the debate.

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APPROX. 1:15 p.m. – UPDATE

Reports have just come in that Secretary of State Clinton has died from the injuries sustained during the attack on her motorcade in Haiti this morning. Further, al-Qaida has claimed responsibility for the successful assassination, proclaiming in a statement it was in retaliation for the United States’ killing of a key al-Qaida leader during a military raid in Iraq, Saad Uwayid Obeid Mijbil al-Shammari. The al-Qaida operative, also known as Abu Khalaf, was killed Jan. 22.

It is further believed, but not confirmed, that the al-Qaida operatives have been granted asylum in Cuba by President Raul Castro.

President Obama has issued a statement on the matter that you will hear momentarily. He is also urging members of this senate to introduce legislation authorizing the use of military force in Cuba. However it is up to you to decide whether this action is too hasty, and whether you want this control in the hands of our president. We encourage all legislators to continue speaking on this issue, and will update this legislative body later in this session as to any events that might be taking place, which could impact the debate.

STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Today is a very sad day for all of our citizens. We have lost not only an important piece of the American machine, but we have lost a great friend. Hillary Rodham Clinton was one of the hardest working and most dedicated individuals the United States has ever seen. We have to respond to her death. Not only do we believe that al-Qaida is responsible for the death of Ms. Clinton, but we believe they threaten the security and peace here in America. In the words of John F. Kennedy, “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.” Not only must we assure the survival of liberty, but of all American citizens. Let us not sit back and watch in fear; rather, let us take action against al-Qaida, because it is they who we believe is responsible for this travesty. You have all read the briefing; you all know the known facts; now, it is time you decide whether or not we pass this piece of legislation.

A Resolution to Authorize Military Force Against Al-Qaida

1 *Whereas:* the United States has met with repeated roadblocks when attempting to
2 end terrorism; and

3 *Whereas:* intelligence reports from the Central Intelligence Agency and National
4 Security Agency name al-Qaida as the entity responsible for the
5 assassination of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and

6 *Whereas:* punitive strikes against al-Qaida cells in Cuba will demonstrate the
7 United States' commitment to bringing to closure al-Qaida's actions; and

8 *Whereas:* these strikes would help return stability to the region;

9 *Therefore, be it resolved by this Palm Beach Catholic Forensic League Student*

10 *Congress assembled here that:* the president is authorized to order military
11 force against al-Qaida cells in Cuba.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen. John F. Kerry
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee