



The Alien Outbreak Background Guide

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Hello everybody! My name is Pramith Pradeep, and I am currently a senior at North Penn High School. This will be my fourth year participating in Model UN, and I couldn't be more excited to be your chair for this year's crisis committee.

I am the co-president of my school's Model UN club and have competed at PMUNC and ILMUNC. In my year at ILMUNC, I was a delegate of Tanzania in DISEC, and in my year at PMUNC, I served as a delegate of Burkina Faso in UNODC. We had some unforgettable experiences trying to solve the problems of the world and made tons of friends.

Outside of school, I love to bike and engage in artistic activities. Some of my favorite artistic mediums are ink, ceramics, and graphite. I also love watching movies! Some of my favorites are *Catch Me If You Can*, *Django Unchained*, and *3 Idiots*. If you have any movie recommendations, I would love to know during conference breaks or committee downtime.

My goal is to create an environment where we can have fun and find some creative resolutions to the topic that we have chosen this year. This year's crisis topic, "The Alien Outbreak," is a fictional crisis exploring a bacterial outbreak from outer space. I enjoyed making the premise behind this crisis, and I am so excited to share it with all of you! Hope to have a great time with you all at KNIGHTMUN 2026!

Sincerely,

Pramith Pradeep

Head of Chairs

KNIGHTMUN 2026

BACKGROUND: THE EUROPA MISSION

Jupiter's moon Europa has fascinated scientists for decades. Beneath its frozen surface lies a vast liquid ocean kept warm not by the Sun, but by the gravitational pull of Jupiter itself. This ocean contains twice as much water as all of Earth's oceans combined, and near its floor, hydrothermal vents may create conditions remarkably similar to environments on Earth where life thrives in total darkness.

In 2031, a joint international space mission launched a sample-retrieval probe to Europa. The goal was to drill through the ice, collect water and sediment from the subsurface ocean, seal it in a triple-redundant biocontainment capsule, and return it to Earth for analysis. The mission was the most expensive and ambitious space exploration project in human history. The capsule landed on March 3rd, 2043, at the International Sample Containment Facility (ISCF), a purpose-built laboratory in Chile's Atacama Desert, operated jointly by multiple space agencies.

THE INCIDENT

March 5th, 2043. 03:17 local time.

An automated biosensor alarm was triggered inside the facility's maximum containment chamber. Cameras revealed that a fine particulate mist, later identified as microbial spores, had breached the inner seal of the sample capsule. The breach is believed to have been caused by microscopic cracks in the probe during atmospheric reentry; damage that fell within designed tolerances but proved catastrophic in practice.

Before staff could respond, an automated airlock between containment zones cycled twice due to a firmware error, which allowed particles to migrate between levels. Seventeen researchers were in the adjacent zone at the time.

The facility director ordered a full lockdown at 04:10 and notified space agencies and health ministries simultaneously.

It is now 48 hours later. The committee convenes.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

Confirmed:

- 214 facility staff are under mandatory quarantine inside the facility.
- 17 individuals present during the airlock error are showing early symptoms: mild fever, skin irritation, and in three cases, patches of faint sparkling on their forearms.
- 2 researchers who left the facility before lockdown are cooperating voluntarily with health authorities nearby; both are currently asymptomatic.
- The organism has been confirmed as alive and reproducing.
- Leaked scientific data has appeared online and triggered global panic.
- At least one nation is believed to be considering a unilateral military response.

Not yet confirmed:

- Whether the organism is lethal to any Earth biology
- How it spreads
- Whether the two outside researchers have been exposed
- Whether contamination exists beyond the facility perimeter

THE ORGANISM: EUC-1

The organism, designated EUC-1, is unlike anything in Earth's biological record. Its protein structures do not correspond to any known life form, it seems to be silicon-based rather than carbon-based, and it does not appear to use DNA or RNA in any recognizable form. It is extraordinarily resilient: standard sterilization methods are only partially effective, and it survives radiation, temperature extremes, and pressure conditions lethal to any known Earth microbe.

Beyond that, scientific understanding is limited. Researchers do not yet know how it spreads, whether it poses any threat to human biology, or what the sparkling patches appearing on symptomatic staff actually represent.

What is known is that EUC-1 is behaving in ways that do not map neatly onto any existing scientific framework. The chair will be introducing additional findings about the organism as the committee progresses.

LEGAL AND SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT

This scenario is fictional, but it is built on real debates. The following are actual documents and events delegates should understand before arriving.

- I. The Outer Space Treaty (1967): the foundation of international space law, signed by over 100 nations. Article IX requires that space exploration avoid "harmful contamination" of Earth and that nations take "appropriate steps" if contamination occurs. It offers no enforcement mechanism and no definition of "harmful." The critical question: Does this treaty give anyone clear authority to act, and if so, who?
- II. The WHO International Health Regulations (2005): the legal framework for global health emergencies. The WHO may declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and authorize emergency measures. The critical question: Does EUC-1 qualify, given that no harm has been proven yet?
- III. The Apollo Quarantine (1969): NASA quarantined returning Moon astronauts for 21 days despite widespread confidence the Moon was lifeless. No traces of a real unknown pathogen were detected in the facility, and the program was quietly dropped after Apollo 14. The critical question: Was the precaution worth it, and does that precedent apply here?
- IV. The SARS Outbreak (2002–2003): A novel virus spread globally within weeks. Early suppression of data by one government delayed international response and cost lives. The critical question: What happens in this crisis if a major power decides it benefits more from withholding information than sharing it?

COMMITTEE GOALS

The overarching mandate of this Crisis Committee is to establish a unified global response to the biological anomaly designated EUC-1. Delegates are expected to look beyond national self-interest to prevent a global catastrophic event while navigating unprecedented scientific, legal, and military realities.

The committee must successfully address the following operational goals and primary areas of debate:

- I. 1. Bio-Containment and Quarantine Protocols
 - A. The Immediate Isolation Strategy: Delegates must determine the fate of the 214 facility staff currently under mandatory quarantine. How long should this hold last given that EUC-1 standard sterilization methods are largely ineffective?
 - B. Tracking and Vector Control: Formulate an immediate action plan to isolate and test the two researchers who left the facility prior to the lockdown. Committee members must decide if regional or national border closures are required around the Atacama Desert to ensure contamination hasn't breached the facility perimeter.
 - C. The Symptom Dilemma: Address how to treat or handle the 17 individuals showing early symptoms, specifically investigating the biological significance of the faint, sparkling skin discolorations.
- II. 2. Legal Jurisdictions and Institutional Authority
 - A. Enforcement of Space Law: Evaluate the boundaries of Article IX of the *Outer Space Treaty (1967)*. Because the treaty mandates avoiding "harmful contamination" but lacks explicit definitions or enforcement mechanisms, the committee must establish who holds ultimate jurisdiction over the International Sample Containment Facility (ISCF).
 - B. Declaring a Global Emergency: Decide whether the World Health Organization should officially declare a *Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)*. Delegates must consider whether this framework applies to a non-terrestrial anomaly when lethality to Earth biology has not yet been scientifically proven.
- III. 3. Geopolitical Stability and Crisis Management
 - A. Information Sharing vs. National Security: In light of the leaked scientific data triggering worldwide panic, the committee must create a centralized communication protocol. Delegates must address the historical precedent of data suppression (such as the 2002–2003 SARS outbreak) and decide if full transparency or information control is necessary to maintain global public order.
 - B. Deterrence of Military Action: At least one major power is currently considering a unilateral military response (e.g., a tactical strike to completely incinerate the facility). The committee must negotiate diplomatic or collective security measures to deter rogue actions that could accidentally scatter the resilient silicon-based spores into the atmosphere.
- IV. 4. Scientific Ethics and Crisis Research
 - A. Resource Pooling: Establish an international coalition of scientists to safely study EUC-1's resilient, non-DNA/RNA biology without risking further atmospheric exposure.

- B. Risk vs. Reward Evaluation: Debate the ethics of continuing to analyze a sample that has already bypassed modern maximum biocontainment protocols. The committee must vote on whether the potential astrobiological breakthroughs are worth the systemic risk to Earth's biosphere.

CRISIS POSITIONS

1. **The Mission Powers:** *United States, Japan, France, Germany, Italy*

These nations funded, built, and operated the Europa mission. They bear the greatest political and legal responsibility for the breach and have the most advanced scientific and military resources to lead the response. Expect them to push for control over containment and research decisions. Will they cooperate fully with international oversight, or quietly protect their own agencies from liability first?

2. **The Host Nation:** *Chile*

Chile sits alone in this, and that is part of what makes it powerful. The breach happened on Chilean soil. The exclusion zone covers Chilean territory. Chilean citizens are affected. No decision about the physical facility can be made without Chile's cooperation, which gives it significant leverage despite being a smaller power than most nations at this table.

3. **The Non-Mission Major Powers:** *China, Russia, India*

These are spacefaring nations with enormous resources, their own planetary exploration programs, and very strong opinions about how international space governance should work, none of which involve letting the United States and Europe write all the rules. They have no obligation to rescue the nations whose mission created this problem. They will cooperate when cooperation serves them and obstruct when it doesn't.

4. **The Regional Powers:** *Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia*

These nations are influential within their regions, have meaningful military and economic resources, and are not willing to simply follow the lead of either the Mission Powers or the major non-mission blocs. They represent a genuine swing vote in committee, and they know it. They may use their resources to try and swing any conclusions in their favor, whether it be by force or diplomacy.

5. **The Global South:** *Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, Philippines*

These nations have the least direct stake in the facility and the fewest resources to respond unilaterally, but they face the consequences of a spread event just as much as any major power. They are the most vulnerable to a response that prioritizes the interests of wealthy spacefaring nations, and they have the most to gain from a strong international framework. Their combined vote share in any binding directive is significant.

6. **The Scientific Advocacy Nations:** *Canada, Sweden, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea*

These nations prioritize scientific integrity, multilateral cooperation, and transparent governance above almost everything else. They are likely to be the loudest voices against destroying EUC-1 samples and the strongest advocates for open international research access. They tend to punch above their weight diplomatically because they are trusted by almost everyone.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does your country believe the precautionary principle justifies extreme action without proof of harm, or does action require evidence?
- How does your country weigh the irreversible loss of destroying EUC-1 against the irreversible risk of spread?
- If the development of a cure requires open international data sharing, is your country willing to give up exclusive access to what it knows?
- What does your country do if a more powerful nation acts unilaterally in a way you oppose?
- At what point, if any, does national interest give way to the interest of humanity?

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