



PEAMUN XV

The 1951 Commission of American Mafia

Crisis Committee Background Guide

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to PEAMUN XV! My name is Tanya Syed, I am a senior at Exeter and I will be acting as your chair for this committee. I am originally from Mumbai, India and I have attended Model UN conferences in the United States, India and Dubai since the 8th grade. Outside Model UN, I serve on the board of Exeter's International Student Alliance and am an active member of the Dance Company and Exeter's Business Club!

Our committee, The Commission of the American Mafia, is a historic crisis set in the 1950s. Our topic is multifaceted, looking at the disappearance of one of the most powerful Mafia bosses in America and involvement in the narcotics trade. Looking at the ever changing dynamics of this committee, a good delegate is a delegate who can think on their feet and respond to new crisis developments in a bold and decisive manner. Be creative, have fun playing the power dynamics and alliances in committee! I am so excited to see how you make the characters your own. Well crafted and detailed crisis notes, collaborative paperwork, persuasive and powerful speeches and good lobbying are things the dais looks forward to seeing from delegates. While this background guide covers many subtopics regarding the agenda, I strongly urge all delegates to use this as a starting point for their research and not rely on it completely.

Whether this is your first Model UN conference or you're an experienced delegate, feel free to reach out to me any time via email. Looking forward to meeting you all in November!

Warm Regards,

Tanya Syed
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Introduction to the Commission

The Mafia Commission traces its origins to the Castellammarese War in New York City during the early 1930s: a bloody power struggle for control of Mafia operations between the factions of then leader, Joe “the Boss” Masseria and Salvatore Marazano. When Maranzano won the Castellammarese War, he set himself up as *capo di tutti i capi* or the “boss of all bosses” and ordered every Mafia family to pay him tribute. As a result, he was murdered in September 1931 on the orders of Lucky Luciano.¹ Following the murder, Luciano called for a meeting of all the Five Families in Chicago and proposed the idea of forming the Commission that would function as a “board of directors”² for the American Mafia, with the function of overseeing all Mafia operations in the United States and mediating disputes between Mafia families. It was also decided that the Commission would hold meetings once every five years and instances where a meeting was requested by a family³. Additionally, all new bosses required approval from the Commission before they could officially take over. The New York Five Families also decided that the names of all new proposed members must be approved by the other families. After the new proposed member was approved by the other families, he could become a made man.

¹ "Lucky Luciano: Criminal Mastermind," *Time*, December 7, 1998

² “THE COMMISSION’S ORIGINS” *The New York Times*. Published November 20, 1986. Retrieved February 22, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/20/nyregion/the-commission-s-origins.html>.

³ Critchley, *The Origin of Organized Crime in America: The New York City Mafia, 1891-1931*, p. 232



Subtopic 1: The Disappearance of Vincent Mangano

On April 19, 1951, Philip Mangano was found dead in the tall grass of a marshland near the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn.⁴

“He was dressed only in a white shirt, white shorts, white undershirt, black socks and black tie. Police noted three close-range bullet wounds to his head – one at the top rear of the neck, one in the right cheek and one in the left cheek. Time of death was estimated at 10 to 20 hours earlier. There were no identifying papers on the body. He was identified through an examination of fingerprint records.

Finding no dirt on the bottoms of Philip’s socks, detectives concluded that he was murdered at another location and carried to the Bergen Beach marsh for disposal. They surmised that a ten-foot length of rope found near the body was used in its transport.

When police attempted to contact Vince Mangano to inquire about the fate of his brother, they were unable to reach them because **Vince had also gone missing**. For a while at least, the authorities believed he was hiding out. He would never resurface.”⁵

Philip Mangano’s death will not rock the mafia world like Vincent’s disappearance could. Vincent Mangano was one of the original 5 founders, founding the Mangano family in 1931. His death marks the first of the original five founders; there is no set process currently for replacing a family boss. The next in the line of succession for head of family is Albert Anastasia, who is also the primary suspect for Mangano’s murder. Anastasia was Mangano’s underboss, co-managing racketeering efforts in NY ports and carrying out other family business like kill orders and mafia relations. Anastasia and Mangano had started to butt heads in the past few years, with heated, almost physical fights between the two mafia members. It was usually a death sentence to lose your cool in front of your boss in the mafia, but Anastasia had garnered power behind Mangano’s back, building relationships with Lucky Luciano and Frank Costello. Anastasia also had great power as one of the heads of Murder Inc. along with Louis Lepke- Murder Inc. was

⁴ Jacob Stoops, “#5: Vincent ‘the Executioner’ Mangano, the Original Gambino Crime Family Boss,” The Members Only Podcast, January 8, 2022, <https://membersonlypodcast.com/vincent-mangano-the-original-gambino-crime-family-boss/>.

⁵ Ibid



the assassination company of the Mafia Commission, employing upwards of 100 Jewish hitmen to kill for hire. Anastasia used his Murder Inc. employees to “Schlam” union workers who were not complying with their racketeering: he cracked their heads open.⁶

The Mangano family had many assets and operations. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact value of these operations, so assume these estimates are accurate figures. First, racketeering operations on the NY seacoast: the Mangano family charged mafia fees on any goods coming into NY ports. If the ships did not comply, the family had a team of dock workers –who they paid or threatened to do mafia bidding– that would ransack the ship in the port. This operation leveraged the massive amount of goods flowing into NY harbors- \$4.6B, and assuming a mafia tax of 3%, these operations were worth 140 million dollars a year.⁷ Along with racketeering, illegal gambling was a large Mangano operation. Bringing in 80 million dollars a year, Mangano family members like Louis Lepke built up a fortune- Louis amassing some 500 million dollars of his own.⁸ He got the electric chair in 1941 for involvement in Murder Inc.. These gambling operations came in many forms: horse betting, running numbers, and other covert operations like slot machines. Running numbers is an illegal, mafia run lottery where winning numbers are usually selected based on the payoff results of horse races. The mafia would skew the winning numbers by betting heavily on certain races, resulting in extra payout for mafia members. A good estimate would be that horse betting was worth 40% of the mafia gambling payout, running

⁶ 1. Joseph Bruno, “Murder Incorporated,” Legends of America, November 2022,

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/20th-murderinc/>

⁷ “Ships of U.S. Gain in Foreign Trade; Cargoes Rise 9.76% in Value to \$13,847,900,000 in 1950, New York Still Leading.” The New York Times, August 3, 1951.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1951/08/03/archives/ships-of-us-gain-in-foreign-trade-cargoes-rise-976-in-value-to.html>.

⁸ *Gambino crime family*. Gambino crime family - Academic Kids. (n.d.).

https://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Gambino_crime_family



numbers was 30%, and the rest was 20%, making horse betting worth 32M, running numbers 24M, and other operations worth 16M. With Mangano's death, it was yet to be decided how these operations would be distributed. Should it all go to the next boss? Should other bosses get a share in the operations? Since the death of a boss had not happened during the Commission era, the Commission's decision was free from precedent and simply needed to facilitate a safe and peaceful power transfer.

Finally, the boss' replacement. When the Commission was created, one of the cardinal rules was that a boss couldn't be murdered.⁹ Earlier that year, the mob bosses had called Anastasia for a meeting. "They knew what happened to Mangano, and they called Albert in for a sit down. Albert broke Lucky's rules. It was forbidden to take power by killing the man above you. Lucky made Mangano boss, and it wasn't up to Albert to undo that."¹⁰ Under pressure, Anastasia remained firm in denying responsibility for Mangano's death. *"But Mangano had a contract out on me. Even if I did it, which I didn't, it was kill or be killed. What could I do?"*¹¹ Frank Costello confirmed that Mangano did indeed have a contract out to kill Anastasia at the time. Even factoring in Anastasia's self defense claim, he broke the rules, and mafia rules dictate he be punished. A possible punishment is to deny him his succession to the Mangano family. His assets could also be seized. The way the mafia deals with Anastasia will set a precedent for boss assassination in the future. If Anastasia doesn't replace Mangano, should it be a boss who takes over the operations? Would this be temporary, just to punish Anastasia? There are a lot of options, and it is imperative that the mafia deal with Magano's replacement in the right manner

⁹ Jacob Stoops, "#5: Vincent 'the Executioner' Mangano, the Original Gambino Crime Family Boss," The Members Only Podcast, January 8, 2022, <https://membersonlypodcast.com/vincent-mangano-the-original-gambino-crime-family-boss/>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid



to preserve the mafia's principles of honor and loyalty whilst maintaining the wealth that Mangano's operations brought in.

Subtopic 2 - Mafia Involvement with Narcotics/Drugs

It is well known by those familiar with The Commission or the American mafia as a whole that it did not heavily participate in narcotics trafficking. A large public stigma kept many of the families away from drugs, fearing some kind of retribution for it. Thus, every group claimed moral reasons for their decision to steer clear from drugs.¹²

Despite this dishonor that utilizing drugs in organized crime brought, there was still plenty of it done during the early 1900s by the La Cosa Nostra (LCN). For example, in the 1920s Lucky Luciano was famous for his involvement in drug trafficking, and later the Bonanna and Genovese took part in the lucrative business as well. But in 1948 the LCN decided to crack down on all this. The Commission issued an edict banning drug trafficking for member families which greatly changed the organized crime world in the U.S., as the groups were directed towards other means of money-making. Regardless of this order, many families still continued to use narcotics and drugs to their benefit because of the possible profitability.¹³

Either way, this edict had an instant effect that the LCN seemingly did not see coming. The void that their new rule left was quickly filled by other rivaling crime groups seeking

¹² P. Jenkins, "Narcotics Trafficking and the American Mafia: The Myth of Internal Prohibition," *Crime, Law, and Society* 18, no. 3 (November 1992): accessed June 21, 2023, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/narcotics-trafficking-and-american-mafia-myth-internal-prohibition>.

¹³ Timothy S. Bynum, *Organized Crime in America*, [31-41] accessed June 21, 2023, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/la-cosa-nostra-drug-trafficking-organized-crime-america-p-31-41>.



success in narcotic trafficking. Thus, the LCN has since softened their grip on drug trafficking so as not to give their competitors the edge, but the damage was done.¹⁴

At present, the Commission is split between two factions: a liberal American faction and a more conservative older Sicilian faction.¹⁵ Vincent Mangano's disappearance has resulted in a shift in power from the conservative older Sicilian faction to the liberal American faction. The liberal American faction, led by Frank Costello, Albert Anastasia and Tommy Lucchese, are open to working with non-Italians and in the narcotics trade if necessary to secure the future of the Commission and La Cosa Nostra. All members of the Commission must answer these questions of if and how deeply should the Mafia engage in narcotics, for the fate of the organization rests on their decisions.

Subtopic 3 - Government Interference and the Future of the Mafia

While the Mafia was omnipresent in the American imagination, before the 1950s mafia gangsters and organizations were generally seen as local groups, limited to a city or a small region rather than being an organized national crime syndicate. Under J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI started surveilling individual gangsters and modernizing their investigation tactics, and by the late 1930s many notable members of the Mafia had been arrested or killed. However, due to the escalating tensions of the Cold War, intelligence agencies and the Department of Justice (DoJ) turned their attention away from domestic crime organizations as dedicated resources to wartime counter-intelligence work and subversion of communism. Whenever possible, J. Edgar Hoover

¹⁴ History.com Editors, "History of Drug Trafficking," History.com, last modified June 10, 2019, accessed June 21, 2023,

https://www.history.com/topics/crime/history-of-drug-trafficking#section_2 .

¹⁵ Selwyn Raab. *Five Families The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires*. St. Martin's Publishing Group. pp. 704



dismissed the existence of a national network of criminals like the Mafia. In the FBI's New York field office, 400 special agents were assigned to ferreting out "subversives," while only four were charged with investigating organized crime. Many cities and states called for federal help in dealing with organized crime, yet federal law provided few tools for the U.S. government to do so. In particular, many cities and states were concerned with the way organized crime had infiltrated interstate commerce, and how it threatened to hold the American economy hostage through labor racketeering.

On January 5, 1950, Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee introduced a resolution that would allow the Senate Committee on the Judiciary to investigate the role played by the Mafia and other organized crime in interstate commerce. After heated debate on the Senate floor, the resolution passed with a compromise that established a special committee of 5 senators from the Senate commerce and judiciary committees. In 1951, The Kefauver Committee held hearings in 14 major cities across the United States, with over 600 witnesses testifying including members of the Commission such as Frank Costello and Tony Accardo. Many of the Kefauver Committee's hearings sought to prove that the Sicilian-Italian Mafia centrally controlled a vast organized crime network in the United States. Additionally, most of the committee's hearings were televised, with over 30 million Americans tuning in and thus making Kefauver and the Mafia household names. It was almost as if the Senate investigation was "the sole subject of national conversation."¹⁶

Due to the increasing government scrutiny, certain Mafia families such as the Chicago Outfit started to phase away from more traditional sources of income such as labor racketeering

¹⁶ "U.S. Senate: Special Committee on Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce." n.d. [www.senate.gov/https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/investigations/kefauver.htm](https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/investigations/kefauver.htm).



and extortion by expanding business to the Midwest and West Coast. And while the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover continue to deny the existence of the Mafia publicly, increasing government scrutiny and media exposure from the Kefauver trials undeniably makes it harder for the organization to conduct business in certain areas. Thus, the Commission must look at possible new sources of income and ways to stay under the government radar to protect its members, families and day-to-day operations.

Portfolios

1) Frank “The Prime Minister” Costello

Boss of the Luciano Family, one of the Five Families of New York City

One of the most powerful and influential mobsters of his era, Frank Costello became a gang member when he was 13 years old. While originally involved in petty crime, he discovered his underworld niche of gambling and slot machines through which he earned millions for the Luciano family. His operations spread far and wide, infiltrating not just New York but also Florida and Louisiana. He was later on serve as *consigliere* or top advisor to Lucky Luciano, the founder of the Commission. Currently, he is leader of the Luciano family, the liberal faction of the Commission and is open to working with non-Italians and expanding Mafia business into narcotics. He is known for his political power and connections, especially to politicians, policemen and judges in New York City. In March 1951, Costello was subpoenaed to the Kefauver Committee where he testified with only his hands televised, making him a household name across America.¹⁷

¹⁷ “Frank Costello | American Organized Crime Boss | Britannica.” n.d. [Www.britannica.com. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frank-Costello.](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frank-Costello)



2) Tommy “Three Finger Brown” Lucchese

Boss of the Lucchese Family, one of the Five Families of New York City

One of the “founding fathers” of the American Mafia, Tommy Lucchese rose to power during the Prohibition Era and became the boss of the Lucchese crime family in the year 1951. He has close relationships with many New York City politicians, focuses on keeping a low public profile and avoiding criminal prosecution. The Lucchese family continues to dominate Manhattan's garment district and the related trucking industry while simultaneously also controlling a narcotic trafficking network with the Tampa crime family, thus making Lucchese open to expanding Mafia activities into narcotics.¹⁸

3) Tony “Big Tuna” Accardo

Head Boss of the Chicago Mafia

Tony Accardo was recruited into the Chicago Outfit as a teenager by Jack “Machine Gun” McGurn, one of the most powerful hitmen of Chicago Outfit and rose to leadership during the 1940s. Under Accardo's leadership in the late 1940s, the Chicago Outfit greatly expanded its influence, moving into slot and vending machines, cigarette and liquor trade. By the 1950s, the Chicago mob was fully under his control. Even its public image was acceptable to most people in Chicago because the organization didn't deal in narcotics and it kept many areas of Chicago under control.¹⁹

¹⁸ Selwyn Raab. *Five Families The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires*. St. Martin's Publishing Group. pp. 105–106.

¹⁹“Tony Accardo - Crime Museum.” 2017. Crime Museum. 2017.

<https://www.crimemuseum.org/crime-library/organized-crime/tony-accardo/>



4) Vito “Don Vitone” Genovese

Longtime associate of "Lucky" Luciano, founder of the Commission

A ruthless, ambitious and widely feared mobster who came to Manhattan at the age of 15. During his teenage years, he formed a strong friendship with Charles “Lucky” Luciano and became his most reliable enforcer and hit man. In 1937, he escaped to Italy to avoid prosecution on a murder charge and became an ally of Benito Mussolini, financing several Fascist operations while also engaging in narcotics smuggling to the United States.²⁰

5) Stefano Magaddino

Head of Magaddino Crime Family of Buffalo, NY

Stefano Magaddino was an Italian-American mobster and the boss of the Buffalo (aka Magaddino) crime family. Born in 1881, he immigrated from his home of Sicily to the United States in 1909. Magaddino rose the ranks to mafia prominence within the Buffalo crime family during Prohibition, when the mafia profited immensely from illegal alcohol trade.²¹ He became the boss of the family in the 1930s and has held that position ever since. Under Magaddino's leadership, the Buffalo crime family became extremely powerful and influential, also a part of the Commission. Magaddino was known for his shrewdness, intelligence, and ability to maintain a low profile, which allows him to avoid public scrutiny and the law. He built a strong relationship with fellow crime boss Joe Bonnano. Magaddino was involved in various illegal activities including extortion, illegal

²⁰ “Vito Genovese | American Gangster | Britannica.” n.d. [Www.britannica.com. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vito-Genovese.](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vito-Genovese)

²¹ 1. Mike Dickson, “Stefano ‘the Undertaker’ Magaddino,” American Mafia History, June 1, 2020, <https://americanmafiahistory.com/stefano-the-undertaker-magaddino/>.



gambling, narcotics trafficking, and union racketeering. He maintained a strong influence over labor unions, particularly in the trucking industry, and used his power to control and exploit these organizations for personal gain.²²

6) Joseph Bonanno

Head of Bonanno Family of New York City and Arizona, one of the Five Families of New York City

Bonanno rose to power managing bootlegging operations against former mafia boss Salvatore Maranzano, who was assassinated by Charles Luciano in 1931 along with Joe Masseria in the Castellammarese war. This left Bonanno with the large organization of the Maranzano family, which became the Bonanno family. Rather than avenge Maranzano, Bonanno made peace with Luciano and they formed the commission. Bonanno was involved in gambling, loan sharking, and drug trafficking, making the family rich, but he also managed real businesses like a cheese factory and a ladies coat company to stay under the radar. Bonanno maintained close relations with Joe Profaci, and remained a symbol of peace for creating the original commission.

7) Albert Anastasia

Underboss of Gambino Family of New York City, one of the Five Families of New York City

Albert Anastasia is currently the underboss of the Mangano family, and the next in line to become the head of the Mangano family. However, he is also highly suspected to be the

²²1. Mike Dickson, "Stefano 'the Undertaker' Magaddino," American Mafia History, June 1, 2020, <https://americanmafiahistory.com/stefano-the-undertaker-magaddino/>.



one who killed Mangano, and the commission has never dealt with the assassination of a boss, so his promotion is not currently guaranteed. Anastasia is known for being brutal and killing to get whatever he needs, and is also cohead of Murder Inc., an organization of Jewish hitmen that carry out assassinations for the Commission.²³ He also manages the racketeering efforts of the Mangano family on the NY seacoast, which have garnered him a fortune. In all, Anastasia was known for his involvement in gambling, loan sharking, narcotics trafficking, and other organized crime operations. Anastasia maintained good relations with Lucky Luciano and Frank Costello.²⁴

8) Joseph Zerilli

Head Boss of Detroit Mafia

When he was young, he and other young men who lived in Detroit created The Purple Gang, which took advantage of Michigan's prohibition laws to smuggle alcohol into the state and the city. After years of The Purple Gang controlling organized crime in Detroit, Zerilli rose to the top and became the conductor of it all. Despite his large role in the American Mafia, in 1951 he and the Detroit mafia family are not members of The Commission.

9) Jack Dragna

Head Boss of the Los Angeles Mafia

²³ Joseph Bruno, "Murder Incorporated," Legends of America, November 2022, <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/20th-murderinc/>.

²⁴ Ibid



Dragna immigrated with his family to the United States in 1898 at the age of seven where he stayed in Harlem for ten years before returning home to Sicily to join the Italian army and then the Sicilian Mafia. He then went back to the States, where after being suspected for a murder in New York, he fled to California. After a few years going in and out of jail and running liquor distillation operations, he became the head of the L.A. crime syndicate in seemingly shady ways. In 1951 he is now supported and favored by The Commission.

10) Carlo Gambino

Member of Gambino Family, Associate of Anastasia and Genovese

Born in Sicily in 1902, Carlo Gambino lived with his family there until 1921 when he immigrated as a stowaway to the U.S.. Once there, he joined his cousins in New York and joined Joe Masseria's crime family. After Masseria was killed in the Castellammarese War, Gambino joined Vincent Mangano's gang.

11) Joe Profaci

Founder and Boss of the Colombo Family, one of the Five Families of New York City

After being arrested at the age of 22, Profaci left Sicily for America, where he settled in Chicago to open a bakery and grocery store. This endeavor failed and Profaci turned to the mafia and to selling and importing Olive Oil. During a mob meeting in Cleveland in 1928, the Profaci Family was voted to have power in Brooklyn, with Joe at the head of it. He was granted a seat on the governing board of The Commission by Lucky Luciano in 1931. Profaci continued as the head of the family until now in 1951, and is famous for being the "Olive Oil King".



Committee Proceedings and Voting

The Commission, 1951 is a crisis committee hence we will NOT be having resolutions. Instead, committee members will be writing directives to tackle issues and crises. The voting procedure of the Commission: even though in the original commission, only Sicilian members could vote, for the sake of this committee, we will not be following this rule and that all members in this committee will have a vote.

Crisis Notes

Crisis Notes are messages from the entire committee or a certain delegate to any individual, organization, person, head of state, cabinet member or nation outside of committee. These help delegates take actions to further their agenda and solve the crisis. Crisis notes often include negotiations, threats, requests for assistance, formation of alliances but are not limited to these topics. Delegates are encouraged to take meaningful actions that steer the committee in a certain direction while tackling the crisis at hand and maintaining the personal agendas of their characters. The dais would not look favorably upon communiques that simply replicate past historic events. We have also attached a sample crisis note below for your reference.



Position Papers

At PEAMUN XV, we believe that position papers are crucial in encouraging delegates to have a thorough understanding of their delegation and the topic. In addition, they will help you think of solutions and possible talking points. However, it is not required for our one-day conference. If you would wish to submit one, please email to to tsyed@exeter.edu before the conference begins. Feedback from the dais will be available upon request, though the timing of feedback is at the chair's discretion due to the potential for the volume of requests to exceed the dais's capacity.



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