Created by Yoav Duman

The Tunnel Opens in Six Months



50–60 minutes / Asynchronous assignment

A lunar freight tunnel will cut a 12-hour trip to 48 minutes. Advise Marel before a rival gains control of the shortcut, test two gate rules, and decide what a late-night warning actually supports.

Learning goals

- Identify how a shift in control can weaken the incentive to honor an earlier promise.
- Compare an assurance with an enforceable rule by tracing who can stop a departure.
- Distinguish a strike against a future shift in power from a strike against a specific imminent attack.
- Update advice as intelligence changes and apply the same reasoning to a new route.

Assign and pace

The game includes the case, dispatches, and vocabulary. No advance reading is required.

Opening decision · 8–10 min

Read the cabinet file. Choose a recommendation and record the concern driving it.

Tunnel trials · 12–15 min

Test the civilian pledge and shared gate. Ask who gets the final release action in each trial.

Night alert · 12–15 min

Advise on the evidence available before the reveal. Open the later record and consider whether it changes the target, timing, or confidence.

Memo, ferry, and export · 18–20 min

Write the three final memos, check the report, and save the PDF for Canvas.

Set up Canvas

Choose For Class at the start. Enter your name and, if you wish, your class or section. Finish the responses and checks to open your report. Choose Download Class PDF in your finished report. If needed, use Print or save as PDF. Open the PDF to check your name and responses, then upload it to Canvas.

To pause or change devices, open Save & resume and download a JSON backup. Use the same activity and mode to restore it.

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Read the class report

Grade the causal reasoning in the cabinet memos. Use the gate prediction and trial record to diagnose where a student's explanation diverges from the model.

What to look for

The promise and the gate

The civilian pledge leaves Ordan able to release the train alone. The shared gate requires both approvals. When Marel withholds approval, the departure stops. Ask what an emergency bypass would do to the veto.

The timing of force

The tunnel's future opening changes bargaining leverage over months. The alert concerns an operation at 04:00. A student should connect the label to the evidence and timing, then explain whether a particular strike would actually address that threat.

The two alert records

R-1, the civilian dispatch roster, accounts for two of the six tracked items. W-2 identifies a relay operation and preparations relevant to the warning. Accept a revised recommendation or a defended original one when it uses both records and the remaining uncertainty.

The ferry transfer

Identify who can stop departure under the stated rule. The proposed change should move actual authority. Advice about the threatened tower should follow the route and evidence in the transfer case.

Suggested rubric · 10 points

Opening and alert reasons · 2 points

Name a tradeoff, cite a detail available at the time, and explain a risk or an unresolved question.

Tunnel memo · 3 points

Trace the first changed action, identify Ordan's incentive after opening, and name a cost borne by a specific actor.

Alert memo · 3 points

Weigh a detail from both records, justify the advice, and distinguish the two strike timings.

Ferry memo · 2 points

Locate the veto, propose an enforceable change, and connect tonight's advice to the tower and route.

Award full credit when the response meets the stated criteria, partial credit for incomplete reasoning, and zero for a missing or unsupported answer.

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Debrief and extend

- When would Ordan honor the pledge even if it still controlled the gate? What evidence would you want?
- If shared approval makes a promise credible, when might it also make a routine emergency harder to handle?
- Which change to the record would make you revise your advice about 04:00?

A follow-up activity

Ask students to design one emergency release rule. Have them name who can invoke it, who can audit it, and how it could be abused after the tunnel opens.

Scope of the case

The lunar case and freight figures are fictional. Use the trial to isolate control over departure, then ask what evidence a government would need about real intentions and capabilities.

Sources for instructors

Robert Powell, War as a Commitment Problem

A research article on how shifts in power can undermine a bargain.

Stacie E. Goddard, Good to Know: Preemptive Strikes

A short introduction to the timing and evidence behind preemption.

Activity and downloads

Activity, student guide, and teaching pack on yoavduman.com

Activity, student guide, and teaching pack on Trouble in Common

For Fun allows you to explore with an optional name. The class report is available through For Class. To change modes, save a backup of any work you want to keep and start a new run.