

The U.S. National Security Council advises the president on how to keep the country safe and achieve its foreign policy goals. While the council shape and influence often change with each president, its members typically come from different agencies within the government, offering advice and perspectives on major issues based on the goals and interests of those agencies and their official responsibilities.

The secretary of state is the president's top adviser on foreign affairs. They manage the United States' reputation and relationships around the world and can offer insights into other countries' plans and priorities.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations works under the secretary of state and focuses on U.S. relationships and actions within the U.N.

The secretary of defense is a civilian who oversees the armed forces of the United States. They're tasked with keeping track of security situations in foreign countries and overseeing U.S. military strategies.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the highest ranking military officer in the U.S. armed forces and advises the president on the military's logistics and capabilities.

The attorney general is the head of the Justice Department and offers legal advice to the president.

The vice president is also a member, and other U.S. officials often attend council meetings when their areas of expertise are relevant to a national security issue.

And finally, the national security adviser guides the National Security Council and manages the hundreds of staff and experts who support the council. The national security adviser is supposed to act as an honest broker, providing the president with information that accurately reflects the views of the council and coordinating policy-making among council members so that the president's plans are faithfully carried out.

When the president faces an international crisis or policy dilemma, the National Security Council serves as a forum for differing government officials to debate and offer advice which the president can rely on to make major foreign policy decisions.