

LOCAL

**Pupils get different view of political world in mock U.N. session**

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As the delegate from the United States, Tony Altman found himself under heavy attack as he attempted to defend his nation's anti- terrorism policies.

"Iran feels the U.S.A. is a nation of hypocrites" declared Pat Buck, representing that strife-torn nation on the Persian Gulf.

The emissary from Russia also was feeling heat, with several delegates accusing the Soviets of pressuring or cajoling smaller nations to carry out terrorist acts.

The scene yesterday was not some august chamber of the United Nations but the Convention and Performing Arts Center downtown, and the occasion was the 10th annual Junior Model United Nations, staged by San Diego city schools.

While a series of speakers offered cogent arguments in support of the positions of their government, pages filtered through the meeting room, passing messages from country delegations seeking support from uncommitted delegates.

The "delegates" include 750 students from 18 junior high schools, and the guiding spirit of this mini-UN is a 30-member "secretariat" consisting of students from Clairemont High School.

During the two days of sessions, which end today, the delegates have been tackling such thorny topics as population control, "Star Wars", the drug trade, apartheid in South Africa and, of course, terrorism.

Altman, 15, the U.S. spokesman at the "ad-hoc working group on terrorism," in real life is a ninth-grader at Muirlands Junior High.

In earlier editions of the junior model UN, Altman said he had been designated to serve such "rinky-dink" nations as Lebanon and Trinidad and Tobago, and yesterday he enjoyed being in the spotlight.

"This is a lot more fun," said Altman, who was on his feet constantly. "I get to rebut a lot of charges."

The Soviet delegate, Roland Pletsch, 14, from Standley Junior High, also enjoyed his role as Altman's main antagonist. "While I would rather represent the U.S., this gives me another side," he said.

Some 50 students took part in the terrorism debate, as the ad- hoc committee worked to formulate a position that could be presented at a later general assembly of all the delegates. Pat Buck, the critical Iranian delegate, is a 14-year-old student from Memorial Junior High School.

The local mock U.N. is the oldest such enterprise in the nation, said Sharman Farnes, an English teacher at Clairemont High who acts as adviser to the model U.N.

"It's really neat," she said. "It's the only program in the city providing international studies training for students of this age."

For Zondre Watson and Kristy **Ghodsee**, both 17 and juniors at Clairemont High, the sessions here are the culmination of many hours of work and years of studying how the real UN functions.

**Ghodsee**, the secretary-general, and Watson, the president of the general assembly, are the top officers of the secretariat that actually runs the convention.

**Ghodsee** said she comes by her bent for international diplomacy naturally, since her father is an expatriate Iranian and "I grew up in politics."

She has been taking part in the model U.N. here for five years, initially as a student at Marston Junior High. Watson, on the other hand, concedes he "knew nothing about what was going on in the world" until he entered Clairemont High. There he was assigned "by accident" to the social studies class which forms the nucleus for the secretariat that guides the model U.N.

Honor students Watson and **Ghodsee** were elected by their classmates to their current posts.

"The most important part about the whole thing is that they (the student-delegates) have to learn how to compromise," **Ghodsee** said. "The classical bad guys (on the international scene) don't always look bad."

Watson agreed, saying: "There are five different sides to every question here. All have some good in them and all have some bad. Our (U.S.) policies are not always perfect."

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Caption: Tribune photo by Tom Kurtz

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