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WARGAMING HOMELAND SECURITY TO MEET THE CHALLENGES CONFRONTING 21st CENTURY AMERICA

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BACKGROUND

Throughout its existence, the United States Army War College has been at the forefront of national security thinking. After the traumatic events of September 11, the War College aggressively sought to engage in the national challenges born of the tragedy—specifically Homeland Security—in hopes of ensuring our students’ understanding of the challenges and help in contributing to a solution. The War College sought to accomplish this by replicating, as close to known reality, the emerging Homeland Security environment and playing it in the capstone student wargaming event, the Strategic Crisis Exercise (SCE).

HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE STRATEGIC CRISIS EXERCISE

The USAWC Strategic Crisis Exercise is a 10-day interactive exercise set in a future year with two simultaneous exercise “worlds.” There are over 300 student players and the exercise is run by nearly 250 faculty, staff, and outside subject matter experts. Twenty-two student cells in each world represent interagency, Pentagon military, regional combatant commanders, and supporting commands and agencies. Sixteen scenarios challenge the students to address the full range of possible military operations while simultaneously incorporating all elements of national power. By design, the exercise assists the War College’s development of strategic leaders by driving students to apply and integrate knowledge they’ve acquired during the academic year within an exercise framework that emphasizes crisis action planning and execution. The September 11 attacks and their aftermath caused the exercise staff to create a student military organization to protect the homeland and focus play on events and the aftermath of terrorism.

Player cells replicated newly defined homeland security responsibilities within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Office of Homeland Security, the Joint Staff, and created a U.S. Homeland Security Combatant Command named America’s Command (AMCOM). AMCOM was designed to replicate, as closely as possible, the current thinking on Northern Command (NORTHCOM) at the time the exercise began. Homeland Security controllers were drawn from the OSD, Department of Justice (DOJ), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), the U.S. Coast Guard, the Joint Staff, the Department of the Army staff, and many other subject matter experts.

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The Scenarios

The exercise included three plausible homeland scenarios. These scenarios were sequenced and overlapped in order to present varied types of threats and challenges to the student players and place significant stress on their homeland security organizations. The first scenario to confront the student homeland security cells was the reemergence of global terrorism. This scenario portrayed a new generation of terrorists that targeted the U.S. on its own soil as well as Western interests overseas. As U.S. authorities began to act upon warnings, the terrorists were able to execute three closely coordinated attacks using ships in the Great Lakes and on the Mississippi River. Following these terrorist events there were several successful terrorist attacks throughout Europe at NATO facilities. A follow-on scenario portrayed a series of asymmetric attacks in Canada by an unidentified adversary. A twist in this scenario created pressure on the U.S.-Canadian border as rumors built in the Province of Quebec of possible chemical attacks in the vicinity of Montreal. As the U.S. struggled with the issues brought about through the previous scenarios, still another significant event occurred. This time it was an act of nature in the form of an earthquake within the New Madrid Seismic Zone with the epicenter near Memphis, Tennessee. The size and scope of the disaster was well beyond the capability of local and state authorities who requested massive federal assistance.

These scenarios, working in complex interaction with the exercise's thirteen other scenarios, created situations that stretched national resources to the limit. This allowed an examination of how well or poorly the Nation's strategic structures and mechanisms might be able to cope, and permitted the identification of inhibitors to more efficient and effective organizations and processes. The scenarios raised issues of territorial defense, force protection, consequence management, prevention of terrorist attacks and response options available to the U.S. and its allies.

Game Analysis and Initial Findings

Post-exercise review proved that AMCOM, with minor differences, replicated the geographic and proposed functional responsibilities of NORTHCOM and that the game's strategic-level Homeland Security organization was also realistic. Thus, an analysis of issues raised in the exercise by AMCOM and the Office of Homeland Security can provide valuable insights to the "growing pains" that these new organizations will face. The overall homeland defense strategy was challenging to the students. The immaturity of this strategy, the newly formed organizational structures and disjointed organizational alignment within most layers of government at times led to frustration and confused responses among the student players. A belief that conflicts remain in the cooperation between military and civilian leadership compounded this frustration leading, at times, to poor decision-making.

Game play indicated that the United States homeland security structure is not clearly organized and as such it will be difficult to implement a comprehensive homeland security strategy. High-level mentors and subject matter experts from the field of homeland security added to the challenging events by providing a real world perspective which reinforced the debate over jurisdiction and widening current gaps in organization, oversight and authority. Students had difficulty understanding DOD's role in homeland security, both within the defense department and the interagency, which led to wide spread disagreements. Strategic leaders will be faced with these difficulties as our homeland security structures and policies develop and mature. SCE defined three primary challenges: 1) that all levels of government and the private sector must organize themselves for the challenges presented by terrorism and national disasters; 2) that homeland security needs defined requirements and a comprehensive understanding of the resources required; and 3) that divergent opinions and priorities must converge for the success of this important national effort.

More specifically, the wargaming methods employed during SCE uncovered the following Homeland Security issues:

1. Students noted that coordination of the multiple resources applicable to preventing, responding to, and managing the consequences of attacks on the homeland cannot be accomplished by an ad hoc organization. The establishment of NORTHCOM is a positive sign but the creation of a Homeland Security Agency, or better, a

Department of Homeland Security that can plan and coordinate all government activities could provide a more comprehensive solution.

2. Game play indicated there is a need to review Army National Guard unit apportionment and manning versus Army Reserve unit apportionment and manning. Homeland security apportioned units should have a preponderance of military police, medical, chemical, engineer, transportation and other like units instead of combat arms units.

3. The manpower required to fight a major long-term homeland security effort may not mandate military conscription even though the game indicated it would stress existing military manning ceilings. However, the battle for a secure homeland could lead to the establishment of volunteer civilian organizations that are responsible for designated security tasks such as critical infrastructure protection, at an acceptable cost to the Nation, thereby relieving the manpower costs to military units. DOD still needs to play a support role in the protection of critical infrastructure.

4. The exercise employed AMCOM subordinate commands that included standing joint headquarters representing North, South, East and West regional responsibilities and were aligned with FEMA regions. This structure worked well and should be considered by NORTHCOM.

5. It was apparent among AMCOM and DOD student role players that civil support is a homeland security function that DOD understands well from years of experience. Commander, NORTHCOM will be able to leverage this knowledge upon activation. However, homeland “defense” raised many new issues for the students at both the theater and national strategic level. Among the issues identified were:

- a. NORTHCOM must establish a robust “red teaming” capability in order to effectively plan to deter and defend against attack.
- b. Students determined that a major concern would be for Commander, NORTHCOM to have an accurate assessment of readiness across the spectrum of potential problems. This will require the combatant commander to have a good look down capability of readiness within the states. Consequently, there must be a robust liaison mechanism between the myriad Federal Government Agencies, DOD and NORTHCOM and the 50 States. Complicating this issue is the fact that states’ emergency response mechanisms and Guard policies vary considerably by state.
- c. It became evident during exercise play that interaction among government agencies in a training environment may be a key to working out interagency coordination issues. Training exercises, similar to those conducted by combatant commands today with foreign military forces, may provide a quality learning and training environment for the wide array of government organizations that will be working together when the next attack occurs. Commander, NORTHCOM would be well-served to develop a “security cooperation” plan (similar to current regional combatant command plans) but focused on military to military and military to state and local responder contacts.
- d. Students grappled with the issue of whether NORTHCOM should be responsible holistically for homeland defense or be supported by other combatant commands for certain critical functions. These critical functions include missile defense and information operations as well as the force provider function. The game showed that the doctrinal “supporting to supported” combatant command relationships worked well with regard to these homeland defense functions and there is probably no need to place these functions in the terms of reference for NORTHCOM.
- e. The defense of the National Information Infrastructure (NII) versus the Defense Information Infrastructure (DII) raised even greater national strategic issues than its information operations subset. Students identified the gap of responsibility for the defense of civilian networks. Of critical importance is the fact that in today’s environment the vast majority of defense information is carried over civilian transmission networks. The

Office of Homeland Security must come to grips with questions such as “how does the Nation respond to attacks on business interests and is an attack on a Wall Street firm an attack on America?” “Does it call for a civilian response or one from DOD?”

f. Students representing the Office of Homeland Security quickly recognized that the Federal and State governments and their supporting agencies will need to work together on identifying critical infrastructure. Determining how you define “critical” and prioritizing that criticality at the federal and state levels will be challenging when limited assets exist to defend the entire identified infrastructure. Disagreements between levels of government are a certainty. Political realities will make these decisions problematic.

THE WAY AHEAD

Homeland Security is and will continue to be a high priority for the Nation’s leaders. The Strategic Crisis Exercise serves as an important event by exposing future leaders to security challenges and offering them problem-solving mechanisms and option sets to work through the challenges toward comprehensive solutions. Workshops leading up to SCE 2003 will seek solutions to the concerns that surfaced during SCE 2002, and real world players will be brought in to help build and then analyze homeland security scenarios.

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