



# SELECTING, PLAYING AND ASSESSING A COTS WARGAME

6 Sep 18

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## PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Selecting a Game
- Preparation & Playing
- Assessment
- Conclusions

## SELECTING A GAME

### APPLICATIONS OF WARGAMING

- Education and Training
- Planning
- Executive Decision Making

### TYPE OF WARGAME

- Seminar Game
- Course of Action Wargame
- Matrix Game
- Kriegsspiel
- Historical and Hobby Game
- Business Wargame



### WHY DISTANT PLAIN?

What we wanted – ‘the requirement’:

- An education and training event
- Contemporary situation, with resonance
- Able to generate a ‘Safe to Fail’ environment
- Challenge through a theme of dealing with complexity
- Cost effective
- Able to play to a meaningful finish

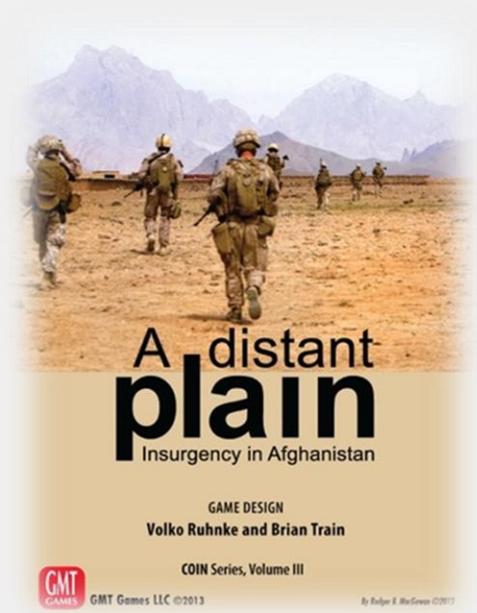
→ A COTS solution

- Hard design work done

+ We wanted to explore ADP better ourselves with a full compliment of 4 players!!

## CONVINCE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

- Training Objectives
  - Improved understanding of the Afghanistan theatre of operations at the strategic and operational level
  - Experience Afghanistan from 4 different perspectives [Coalition Forces, Afghan Government, Taliban and Warlords]
  - Experience some of the complexity of planning and directing contemporary insurgency and COIN operations
  - Demonstrate an ability to adapt to a constantly changing situation
  - Exhibit a competitive edge
  - Develop a better understanding of the utility of wargaming
  - Enjoy an opportunity to develop professionally



## CONVINCE THE PLAYERS

- The Experience
  - Complex operational situation simplified, to a degree, into a board game [Think Risk on steroids!]
  - Designed by a CIA employee with first hand experience of Afghanistan
  - Will require you to:
    - Make assessments on what needs to be done to achieve your faction's objectives with the information in your possession
    - Negotiate with other factions to strengthen your position
    - Make timely decisions
    - React to a constantly changing situation
    - Find your way through complexity



It will be; “Difficult to know what to do and how to do it!”

## THE TUTORIAL

- Game Mechanics Overview [20 mins]
- Mentor Guided Practice Session [120 mins]
- Game 'Re-Cock' and Setup [10 mins]
- Draw Factions [5 mins]
- Issue of reading for preparation [Own Time]
  - Game Rules
  - Game Playbook
  - Draw attention to faction notes/ top tips



# PLAYING THE GAME

“Where I fought (Helmand) is only population level 1 and is totally in the background.”

“I do feel compelled to do something!”



“That, was a kick in the sack!”

“And I was writing Assignment Orders to send people out there.”

“You have got to re-think your strategy every move – and I don’t like change!”

## ASSESSMENT - EXERCISE DELIVERY

- Set number of players required (4/game). Planned to run 3 x games, for 12 x players.
- On the day only 10 x players available.
- Ran 2 x games with 5 x players. Doubled up with one faction/game. Impact:
  - Increases time & complexity
  - Enables discussions on strategy – increasing teamworking.
- Must be flexible and not fixed by player numbers.
- Chose not to use "bots". Found them more complex to understand and therefore mentor.

- After Action Review
  - Initial participant reactions
  - Capture some words and phrases (and during play)
- Issue Questionnaire (we used an online survey with 12 questions)
  - 12 x Questions
  - 90% response rate
  - Linked directly to the Training Objectives

ASSESSMENT – SURVEY OUTCOME

IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE (1)

Question	Average Score	Player Comments
<p>How successful was the Exercise in giving you a better understanding of the conflict in Afghanistan? (1 = low to 5 = high)</p>	<p>4.22</p>	<p>I didn't have any experience working with the ANP, so it was good to play them as I was limited in my FoM around the board.</p> <p>I have a better idea of the terrain, Also, I feel that Helmand loomed larger for us at the time than it probably should have.</p> <p>It has helped me to understand/sympathise with the other "actors" involved... but it has not necessarily helped me understand the history, politics, tribal factions, religious tensions, financial dealings, etc that make it such a complex conflict. But useful and enlightening nonetheless.</p>

ASSESSMENT – SURVEY OUTCOME

IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE (2)

Question	Average Score	Player Comments
<p>How successful was the Exercise in giving you a better understanding of Counter Insurgency Warfare? (1 = low to 5 = high)</p>	<p>3.78</p>	<p>The complexities are numerous and this game demonstrates this in a time efficient and engaging manner.</p> <p>It is useful to get a better understanding of the complex nature of the other actors involved but it is not a substitute for studying COIN doctrine.</p> <p>It demonstrated how difficult it was to remove them for any time, as well as the insurgents ability to spread into areas which were previously unaffected. It also demonstrated the importance of realising the value of diplomacy, both the broader international and local inter-tribal/faction negotiations to achieve or deny effect.</p>

ASSESSMENT – SURVEY OUTCOME

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
Question	Average Score
How successful was the Exercise in allowing you to practice risk taking and learning from mistakes? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.13
How successful was the Exercise in allowing you develop Effective Decision Making? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.13
How successful was the Exercise in allowing you to develop Collaborating & Partnering skills? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.22

ASSESSMENT – SURVEY OUTCOME

**THE EXPERIENCE**

Question	Average Score
How successful was the Exercise as an Educational/Training experience? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.67
How important was the Mentoring to enable you to successfully participate in the Wargame? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.67
How enjoyable was the Exercise? (1 = low to 5 = high)	4.67

## ASSESSMENT – SURVEY OUTCOME

### FINAL COMMENTS

Very useful tool for considering wargaming of a complex situation.

It's hard finding teambuilding exercises that appeal to both Mil and Civ Staff, while remaining cost effective and have an L&D element.

Excellent. While the scenario of Afghanistan was contemporary and familiar, the lessons and development opportunities transcend this.

In summary, it was a very enjoyable exercise and extremely useful in terms of developing "red teaming" skills, and learning negotiation and partnering skills. The pre-brief / mentoring was essential and is the only obstacle to rolling this out more widely.

This is something which I would recommend to anyone and I found the exercise very beneficial.

It was great to have a civilian and military mix as it provided a platform to interact together outside of the normal working day and helped recognise the other skills and attributes that each player had.

# CONCLUSIONS

1. COTS Wargame works for Professional Development of mixed mil/civ workforce.
  - Hard design work done.
  - Preparation still required to learn the game and confirm suitability.
  - Cost Effective.
2. Supportive Chain of Command Essential.
  - Wargaming still far from mainstream.
  - Wargaming Handbook really helps – gives credibility.
3. Mentoring Key.
  - Players do not have time/inclination to learn rules.
  - Allows use of more complex COTS game.
  - Mentors must be experienced Wargamers.
4. Intent to further develop use of COTS wargames for professional development.  
Options include:
  - Next War – Poland
  - Churchill
  - A recommendation from Connections UK....?

“Reinforces the tragedy of the whole thing!”

“Really depressing. It shows how difficult obtaining an outcome actually is!”



“Every time you play it will be different.”

“A good platform for practising a combat estimate.”

“Really shows how the opposition gets a vote.”

## QUESTIONS?

Helped me realise the number of stakeholders involved.”

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“Has helped me to better understand the terrain of Afghanistan.”

“This has been a good opportunity to integrate better with our civilian staff.”