



Concerns about Professional Wargames

A “Red Team” view bigger than
COTS/MOTS.

William F. Owen

dakota.lake@gmail.com

Professional Wargame means...(in this case)



- “a bilateral (or multilateral) simulation of a military activity that represents real or hypothetical situations. A war game is designed to examine operational ideas, to assimilate plans and to analyze concepts and systems according to defined rules” - IDF Dictionary of Military Terms 1998
- Results will potentially impact large budgets and peoples lives, so...

being wrong matters!

What I believe about Wargaming



- It is a human activity requiring skilled execution, deep knowledge, plus the relevant understanding and experience.
- “Well executed wargames have delivered significant competitive advantage in numerous conflicts” = True.
- **Good Wargames** can and have saved money, saved lives, trained and educated soldiers.
- but **not** all Wargames are good and no one seems to talk about the bad ones.

I have found...



- No/very little body of peer-reviewed academic/scientific literature on Wargaming.
- No/very little **empirical evidence** to support the contention that Wargaming adds value.
- No/very little research into, or evidence concerning, what makes a good wargame (**v bad!**)
- ***Lots of opinions, books, anecdotes, belief, praise and claimed experience that don't answer those concerns.***

The “off the shelf game” problem



- High levels of abstraction to facilitate, fun, ease and speed of game play. (eg: “Hex”)
- Single player Level of Command issues.
- “Black Box,” “AI” and “Simulation” computer game issues.
- **Real world experience may not confer an advantage...**

Why?

What do I think?



- **How, Why, When, Where** and under **What Conditions** combat takes place, because...
-the *Combat Resolution Model may not be as important as people think* .
- The consequences of decisions is probably more important than the consequences of “combat.”
- Real world military training, skill and experience should count more than skill and experience in the game.

Good Wargames should;



- **Use the information that drives real military operations decision making!**
- Use real maps, of large areas, of real terrain.
- Use real planning, staff, data and orders procedures.
- Use real people, using their training.
- Use detailed tracking of logistics and casualties.
- Use multiple games and multiple teams of players.

In conclusion



- **Wargaming only works when done well!**
- **The greatest threat to effective and good Wargaming is probably Wargamers.**
- **If you can't spot the bad, you cannot recognise the good.**

