

A stylized world map in a light blue color, showing the outlines of continents and major landmasses. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean and serves as the background for the slide.

STRATEGIC WARGAMING

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This briefing is classified: **UNCLASSIFIED**

- Unit Mission: Wargames and research to inform US Strategic Command planning and planners.

“We don’t write the plans, we make the written plans better”

- Strategic Wargame Experience
 - **“Deterrence and Escalation Game and Review” (DEGRE)**
 - **What: Strategic/High Operational level wargame, free play, multi-sided, not a nuclear wargame – but against nuclear-armed adversaries, DIME, classified.**
 - **Who: ~4 star+ civilian/mil US team leader(s), 2-4 star equivalents lead other teams/functions. ~300 total participants from interagency.**
 - **Where: US Naval War College, Newport Rhode Island.**
 - **When: Since 2009, annually; 5 day/5-7 moves.**

Strategic Wargames – Approaches (Exemplar)

- 1. Problem Statement and Objectives:** What are the dilemmas and decisions that you want leaders to wrestle with? Epoch?
- 2. Design/Scope:** Equities (nations/domains) and roles (players) to fulfill objectives. You can't do everything; choose your battles.
- 3. Roles:** You need to recruit authoritative to the role, not "a guy".
- 4. Scenario:** Scenario must service the objectives. NOT step 1.
- 5. Logistics:** May have significant impact (bias) on your planning.
- 6. Order of Battle:** What are you fighting with? Where is it? Time?
- 7. Data Capture and Analysis:** DCAAT plan needs to be developed well before execution. If there's no record, it didn't happen. A game report written without data/references is without merit.

Lessons Learned

- **Sponsors/Leaders**
 - Generally, sponsors/leaders will conflate exercises and wargames. (Body / Mind)
 - Post Cold War; exercises for training continued, wargames atrophied.
 - Prerequisite: “Wargames, Exercises, and Analysis”, Peter Perla and Darryl Branting (1986) [11 pages]
 - Blue Team Leaders: Strategic level
 - Decisions/authorities are civilian/elected/appointed, not military. Civilian general knowledge and decision calculus is very different than senior military.
- **Consequences:** Leaders love to talk; force a decision & response (feedback).
- **Deterrence/Assurance:** “Eye of beholder”; recruit Red intel/ally SMEs.
- **Domains:** Nearly all “escalation ladders” have a strategic level and are intertwined with other domains. (Space, Cyber, Nuclear, Conventional+)
- **Gaming Tool:** Exponential improvement; moves, RFIs, chat, data, etc
- **Complexity:** Too many sponsors and too much complexity detracts. KISS

A Cautionary Tale – What Not to Do

- Most large US military wargames are operational in nature and do not include strategic consequences to military actions.
 - “This wargame will not address nuclear weapons or strategic effects” ☹️
- A wargame absent the risk of strategic consequences risks negative learning and potentially misinformed plan, policy, and acquisition decisions.

