

Wargaming the North American Contested Logistics & Sustainment Problem Set

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The overall classification
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UNCLASSIFIED



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment Agenda



- Strategic Context
- The Core Challenge
- VISTA GLADIATOR Wargame 2026
- Purpose
- Objectives
- Game Design & Key Concepts
- Play Sequence
- Key Insights
- Conclusion

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of War or the U.S. Government.



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment

Strategic Context: A New Era for HD

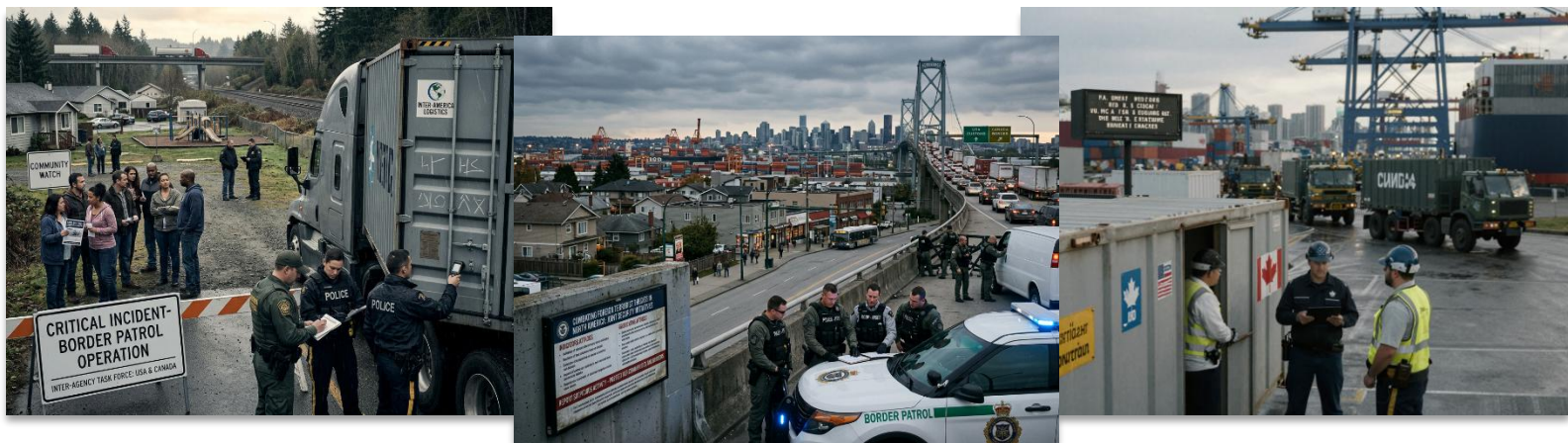
- The U.S. has traditionally operated with uncontested Lines of Communication (LOCs) for force projection.
- These LOCs are no longer safe, facing threats from peer and near-peer adversaries.
- Adversaries can hold critical logistics at risk through a variety of vectors.
- Threats include leveraging illicit trade networks, global terrorist activities, and cyber vulnerabilities.
- The evolving North American security landscape is marked by instability and threats from Transnational Criminal Organizations and Foreign Terrorist Organizations.
- This creates significant risk to military logistics, sustainment, and overall force readiness.
- To preserve strategic advantage, the U.S. and its allies must adopt a concept-driven, threat-informed response framework.



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The Core Challenge

- The evolving North American security landscape presents significant threats to the resilience of military logistics and sustainment operations.
- Key Drivers of Risk:
 - Transnational criminal and foreign terrorist organizations (TCOs/FTOs).
 - Associated illicit activities and networks.
 - Economic instability and heightened geopolitical turmoil.
 - Peer/near-peer adversary non-kinetic/grey-zone actions in the homeland.
 - Increased concerns over territorial integrity.
- These challenges require innovative mitigation policies, authorities, capabilities, and operational solutions.



Credit: OpenArt AI



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VISTA GLADIATOR Wargame 2026 (VGWG26)

- **VISTA GLADIATOR Wargame 2026** is designed to explore and address the complex problem set of contested logistics and sustainment in North America.
 - **Sponsors:** NORAD & USNORTHCOM J4 and The Joint Staff J4
 - **Classification:** SECRET//REL TO USA, FVEY



Credit: JHU-APL



Credit: N&NC/J726



Credit: JHU-APL



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VGWG26 Purpose

- Evaluate the resilience of North American force movement and logistics networks in a rapidly evolving security environment.
- Examine strategic trade-offs between domestic security and overseas force projection.
- Examine adversarial exploitation of critical infrastructure and TCO/FTO threats.
- Inform policy recommendations to enhance the capacity to project decisive power from the homeland.
- Ultimately, strengthen the ability of the U.S. and its allies to deter, and if necessary, respond to threats.



Credit: JHU-APL



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment VGWG26 Objectives

- **Adaptability & Responsiveness:** Evaluate the military logistics system's ability to absorb, adapt to, and recover from disruptions.
- **Balancing Operational Requirements:** Examine the trade-offs of reallocating resources between domestic security and overseas commitments.
- **Countering Adversaries:** Explore intelligence-informed potential adversarial actions, including the manipulation of TCOs/FTOs and cyber/non-kinetic attacks.
- **Whole-of-Nation Collaboration:** Test and enhance mechanisms for joint, interagency, and multinational collaboration to ensure synchronized responses to complex security threats.



Credit: JHU-APL



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment VGWG26 Wargame Design & Key Concepts

- VGWG26 is a strategic-level, collaborative, educational wargame.
- Key Metrics:
 - Operational Resilience (OR): Represents the ability to deploy military forces, fluctuating based on player actions. Starts at 60/100.
 - Public Confidence (PC): Reflects citizen trust in national leadership; influenced by game events and player responses. Starts at 60/100.
- Game Currency ("Shellys"): An abstraction of Money, Materiel, Time, and Manpower used to pay for actions.
- Player Cells:
 - Whole-of-Nations (WON): National-level decision-makers (POTUS, PM, DOW, DHS, etc.).
 - Map Cell: Strategic planners developing Courses of Action (COAs).
 - Bullpen: Subject Matter Expert advisors.



Credit: JHU-APL



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment VGWG26 Play Sequence

- **Step 1: Roll-for-Impact** – Red Cell triggers events; dice determine number of injects presented.
- **Step 2: WON Deliberations** – Strategic leadership sets national priorities and guidance.
- **Step 3: COA Development** – Map Cell devises COAs to mitigate presented injects, recommend resiliency measures, conduct force flow, and combat adversary/TCO/FTO impacts.
- **Step 4: COA Approval** – Leadership allocates resources ("Shellys") to approve COAs.
- **Step 5: Adjudication & Transition** – White Cell resolves actions, updates scores, and prepares the board for the next calendar year.
- **Iteration** – Sequence repeats for four turns, simulating a four-year game epoch (2027-2030).



Credit: JHU-APL



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VGWG26 Key Insights

- **Pre-negotiate Cross-Border Logistics:** Establish bilateral transit frameworks and standardize customs clearances to eliminate regulatory chokepoints during rapid mobilization.
- **Deepen Multinational Integration:** Transition from siloed national defense to shared command structures prior to crises, reinforcing that continental defense relies on robust allied interoperability.
- **Protect the Mobilization Base:** Discard "safe sanctuary" assumptions; outward force projection must be balanced with robust defense against domestic asymmetric and cyber threats.
- **Operationalize Counter-Network Defense:** Bridge the gap between strategic intent and tactical execution to protect vital logistics from adversaries exploiting criminal networks as proxy forces.
- **Map Jurisdictional Boundaries:** Planners must account for legal constraints and coordinate proactively, as gray-zone and non-kinetic attacks frequently target privately owned critical infrastructure where military authority is limited.
- **Institutionalize Interagency Frameworks:** Replace ad-hoc crisis coordination with permanent, synchronized planning across military, civilian, and international stakeholders.
- **Integrate Commercial Realities:** Acknowledge that most U.S critical logistics infrastructure is privately owned; future planning must incorporate pre-negotiated commercial contracts and a deeper understanding of civil authorities.



Contested NA Logistics & Sustainment Conclusion



- The VGWG game system provides a framework to examine the critical seams between commands, agencies, and industry partners.
- The game design emphasizes the crucial balance between domestic resilience and overseas power projection.
- The shift in focus from VGWG25 to VGWG26 shows the value of wargaming in exploring how different drivers (climate vs. malign actors) can stress the same systems in unique ways.
- The "Whole-of-Nation" approach is paramount in addressing threats that transcend traditional military domains, especially at the intersection of, domestic security and law enforcement, defense, and geopolitics.
- Insights from these wargames directly inform real-world policy, planning, and strategy for North American defense.

