

14 December 2015

SUBJECT: Distributed Lethality Wargame Executive Summary (EXSUM)

1. Purpose: Conduct a wargame to provide an assessment of Distributed Lethality's capabilities and limitations during phase 0 (shaping operations) and phase 1 (deterrence operations). The sponsor specifically requested a Red team assessment of Distributed Lethality's effectiveness in phase 0 and 1 operations.

2. Background:

a. Distributed Lethality is an operational employment concept that combines increased surface warfare striking power with increased targeting capabilities in a geographically dispersed force. Using technologically advanced offensive and defensive weaponry and increased networking capabilities Distributed Lethality harnesses the complete joint sea, air, and land force to provide increased combat power and force projection globally.

b. Two separate scenarios based in the South China Sea explored the effectiveness of Distributed Lethality compared to a Carrier Strike Group. Each scenario added complexity by increasing the area of responsibility, incorporating non-combatants, lengthening the time of operations, and modifying objectives to add realistic complex problems to the wargame.

c. The results of the wargame are scenario and player specific. Insights provided from this wargame are not globally applicable since each area of the world comes with its own set of challenges and sensitivities. It is our recommendation that multiple wargames and simulations are needed to provide a set of generalized recommendations for the employment of Distributed Lethality.

3. Study Methods:

a. The Data Collection and Management Plan (DCMP) focused data collection on four phases of the wargame:

1) Planning phase. Upon initial receipt of the scenario brief, players were allotted one hour to complete an operational plan. Required products at the completion of the planning phase included a scorecard and a graphical overlay of the team's course of action. The scorecard provided initial objectives, individual unit movements, a perceived threat index, as well as, the top enemy actions that would increase the perceived threat.

2) White Cell Adjudication. The second phase of the data collection occurred during the adjudication portion of the wargame. During this phase, subject matter experts discussed both plans via the graphical overlays and determined which objectives were not met.

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3) Seminar wargame. The most important phase of the data collection was completed during the seminar wargame. Each individual team member had the opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of their plan and how Distributed Lethality helped or hindered their planning process.

4) Final Survey. Upon completion of the seminar, the analysis team used a survey to answer any remaining questions not answered during the seminar. The survey was the final portion of the data collection and completed the wargame data collection requirements.

4. Key Findings:

a. Distributed Lethality expanded strategic response and messaging options for the United States that differed from the messaging option of a Carrier Strike Group. Red saw the employment of a Carrier Strike Group as an escalatory measure, conversely, the employment of an Adaptive Force Package, in most cases, allowed presence of offensive weapons without escalation

b. The perceptions of United States rules of engagement and a lack of non-lethal and escalatory weaponry constrained Distributed Lethality's capability to influence and deter in phase 0 and phase 1. The United States Navy must place a greater emphasis on the strategic messaging campaign for Distributed Lethality. Since this is a new operational employment technique many nations are uninformed on the complete capabilities and increased offensive power that Distributed Lethality provides the surface fleet.

c. Logistical changes are needed to adequately support Distributed Lethality. The logistical requirements under Distributed Lethality are the same or greater than those required to support a Carrier Strike Group.

d. Modifications to the Command and Control structure are needed to keep the flexibility created under Distributed Lethality. Command ship determination(s) should not be based on seniority, but based on asset location and capabilities of individual ships.

e. There is a need to clarify the tactical procedures under Distributed Lethality. Although a dispersed force allows for greater geographic coverage it also limits maneuver for each individual ship due to ISR coverage responsibilities.

f. United States Political and Naval leaders must propose a national level policy for retaliatory actions from a loss of a small craft used in the Distributed Lethality Adaptive Force Packages. It was uncertain what the correct level of political or military response should be for enemy offensive actions against a small craft.

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g. Allied partners believe a Carrier Strike Group provides a higher level of deterrence compared to a Distributed Lethality Adaptive Force Package. The international players believe a Carrier Strike Group shows the United States is willing to fully support their efforts, conversely, the employment of an Adaptive Force Package is seen as a consolatory action.

5. Areas for Further Analysis:

a. ISR tactics, techniques, and procedures. We believe a wargame is not the correct instrument to properly test the use of Distributed Lethality ISR capabilities.

b. Correct use of self-defense in a dispersed environment. The dispersion of assets places greater responsibility on commanders to make strategic decisions in isolation.

c. Logistical constraints and the use of nonconventional logistical resupply. A simulation model (vice a wargame) could provide more insights on the logistical challenges needed to support Distributed Lethality.

d. Composition of a Task Force Command and Control group for each Distributed Lethality Adaptive Force Package, as well as, determining how to transition Command and Control to subordinate ships when necessary.

6. Conclusion: First and foremost, the Navy should focus on an in depth strategic messaging campaign to tout the increased offensive and defensive capabilities, as well as, the flexibility Distributed Lethality provides the fleet. A misunderstanding on the full capabilities Distributed Lethality offers caused deficiencies in the proper employment of Distributed Lethality and lessened the perceived threat to enemy forces. In addition, the fleet must continue to review command and control, communications, logistics, ISR, and self-defense tactics and techniques to reap the full benefits of Distributed Lethality. We believe this wargame provided some great insights for the Navy to use in future wargames and simulations. It was an honor to be asked to conduct this wargame and hope our efforts help Naval leaders bring Distributed Lethality to fruition.

LTC Frederick Orndorff, USA
Maj James Capra, USAF
LCDR Reza Achwandi, Indonesian Navy
LT Andromeda Ciptadi, Indonesian Navy

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