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TRIDENT DELPHI

Executive Summary

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this wargame was to explore and demonstrate NSW supporting effects for theater commanders in potential 2030 maritime conflicts with near-peer adversaries.

Issues to be studied:

- How can NSW set the conditions for the theater to support Joint Force Commander (JFC) actions in the event of hostilities?
- How can NSW provide deterrent options to prevent conflict escalation?
- How might potential adversaries respond to NSW operational concepts under consideration?
- How can NSW create effects in Phase 2 operating without air or maritime superiority?

Sub-issues to be studied:

- How can NSW support increased domain awareness for the JFC?
- How can NSW employ unique mobility capabilities ISO JFC operations? (surface / subsurface)?
- How can NSW employ select advanced capabilities ISO JFC operations?
- How can NSW employ operational deception ISO JFC operations?

2. **Background.**

In effort to move from NSW's counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) operational objectives of the past 17 years, this game looked at near-peer conflict in 2030. The wargame was conducted over two days at Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, CA. The first day focused on EUCOM area of operations (AO) and the second day focused on PACOM AO.

The wargame was conducted at the operational level, in an open format, as a seminar analytic wargame. Players of the wargame included senior and junior members of the U.S. Navy Surface Warfare community, mid-grade/junior/chief petty officers of the Naval Special Warfare community, mid-grade Army Special Forces officers, mid-grade Air Force Special Operations pilots, junior intelligence officers, and regional experts from the National Security Affairs department at NPS. Projected orders of battle were drawn from current force laydowns with expected future capabilities and regional experts' input.

3. **Study methods.**

The wargame was conducted open seminar-style. After introductory briefings on NSW history, capabilities, future technology, and game format, players were separated into four teams – two representing US theater planners, a Red Cell, and a "Wildcard" team tasked with unconventional concept development. The teams were briefed on scenario context and operational vignettes, and tasked to create Naval Special Warfare concepts of operation for consideration generating desired effects.

The concepts were then briefed to the group and evaluated via facilitated discussion for feasibility, effects, and risk. Team interactions and seminar discussions were captured throughout the duration of play by multiple data collectors based off a pre-arranged data collection management plan. Post-game evaluations were distributed to capture final insights and comments from each player. A Quick Look Report was briefed to confirm accuracy of the initial findings. The study team then analyzed the findings of the wargame and produced a final report and sponsor out-brief.

4. **Study findings.** Consistent with the purpose of this wargame, the primary results revealed a number of operational concepts for NSW to generate effects in future conflicts. These concepts revealed the following high-level takeaways:
 - a. Consideration for employment in Phases 1 and 2 of a future conflict can inform better decisions in Phase 0. During game play, players often referred back to capabilities developed in earlier phases to create desired effects in phases 1 and 2.
 - b. NSW requirements and opportunities were similar in the two scenarios studied in EUCOM and PACOM. Many of the primary considerations, including escalation management, information operations, and maritime domain awareness, were similar. These were very distinct from recent operational employment focused on land-based CT and COIN.
 - c. The wargaming method itself proved valuable in preparing the force for these near-peer conflicts, in several ways:
 - i. For planning, by generating employment concepts for effects as intended.
 - ii. For strategy and resourcing, by highlighting differences between past operational approaches and requirements, and future ones.
 - iii. For training and education, by informing members of NSW, the fleet, and other communities on capabilities, limitations, and opportunities for utilizing NSW.

Detailed findings are available upon request at a higher classification. Please contact Dick Hoffmann (NAVSPECWARCOM N51, richard.hoffmann@socom.mil) for access.

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