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Battle in the Baltics

Executive Summary

1. **Purpose/Problem Statement.** To provide feedback to NSHQ on how NATO SOF can conduct operations in an occupied or denied environment against a peer or near-peer adversary. This wargame will assess the limitations and capabilities of NATO SOF during an Article V conflict with the Russian Federation
2. **Scenario and Background.** Battle in the Baltics takes place in the year 2030 in a post-Article V NATO scenario where Russian troops have invaded the eastern portions of the countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The wargame begins immediately following the declaration of Article V. Russian forces control large sections of the eastern part of the Baltic States, including the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. This game reflects the role of Special Operations (both NATO and Russian) in competing for influence with the population of the Baltic States during a conventional war between Russia and NATO.
3. **Study methodology & MMTs:**
 - a. **Wargame Design.** This wargame is designed as a semi-closed system war game. The game was designed to measure the way NATO and Russian SOF would compete for the support of the population during a conventional conflict in the Baltic states. Russia's influence in the region is used as the metric to evaluate an effective SOF strategy. The game is planned and played out in shifts, with each shift consists of three turns. During each turn, a player has the opportunity to "play" a set amount of action cards, composed of doctrinal SOF tasks. How the action cards are played on the board determines the level of Russian influence in each region of the game board. At the start of each shift, the players must place all of their three turn's actions cards on the board. All three turns are then played in order without any additional input from the players. This aspect of the game is meant to simulate both the operational planning cycle and limited communication with elements in the field.
 - b. **Key Player Roles.** The wargame is played with two opposing sides. NATO SOF and the Russian Federation. The game can be performed with a minimum of two players or with multiple players forming a committee that makes up two teams. Teams of greater than one player per side facilitate valuable discussion on the game's tactics and strategy.
 - c. **Methods, Models, and Tools (MMTs).** The wargame used several different methods and tools to adjudicate each player's actions. The game board and the point values of each territory were based on the percentage of ethnic Russians and any critical infrastructure located in the territory. The action cards which players use to gain or lose control of territories are based on the NATO doctrinal SOF task of Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, and Military Assistance. Three types of inject cards were used to represent the effects of the conventional war between NATO and Russia, the weather and any unforeseen global events that could influence the populations' support. A spin wheel was used to add a degree of uncertainty to the outcome of engagements, requiring players to over-invest resources to guarantee success. Two data collection tools were used. The first tool was an excel spreadsheet to track all player moves, actions cards played, spin wheel results and inject cards drawn. The second tool was a brief questionnaire each player filled out at the conclusion each shift which provided insight on player's strategy for that shift, the anticipated strategy of their opponent, and reactions from the previous shift.
4. **Constraints, Limitations, and Assumptions.** This section begins with the very top-level CLAs that senior leaders need to know that affect your findings. See TRAC CLA COBP for details.

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- a. **Constraints:** The wargame was required to be designed, developed, playtested and analyzed in one NPS academic quarter.
 - b. **Limitations:** The team could not access NATO plans or unit details due to classification and connectivity issues.
 - c. **Assumptions.** Russia will use its SOF capability to influence the populations' support during a conflict with NATO.
5. **Study findings/recommendations.** The most significant in this study is that "Battle in the Baltics" is a useful exercise that can be easily adapted to fit current NATO plans and units. The game was intentionally constructed with generic doctrinal terms to allow for more in-depth strategy at the classified level. In addition, through game testing showed the results varied each time the players employed a different strategy. This leads us to believe that the game may lend itself to mathematical modeling if played repetitively with a "controlled" strategy on one side. The focus on an abstract concept like "influence" was problematic for the real-world applicability of the game, however, it may be improved with relevant inputs from intelligence experts.
6. **Team members & Sponsor POC:** Team members: Major Robert Davidson, Lieutenant Commander Shane Beavers, Major Jonas van Hooren, Major Patrick Kerins. Sponsor: NATO Special Operations Headquarters. POC: Major Chad Buckel chad.buckel@nshq.nato.int

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