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Executive Summary of MARSOC Indirect Wargame

1. **Problem Statement:** In this renewed era of great power competition, MARSOC must examine its abilities to shape the operating environment and deter adversaries throughout the Contact Layer while setting conditions to dominate in the event of a conventional conflict in the South China Sea (SCS).
 - a. **Objective:** The wargame will model actions MARSOC can take in the Contact Layer (scoped to the Philippines and adjoining seas) by, with, and through indigenous Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) partners to secure advantages and deter Chinese influence, and to best posture Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and other conventional forces in the event of conventional combat operations in the Blunt Layer.
 - b. **Key issues:**
 1. In 2019, what indirect opportunities exist to better succeed in the Contact Layer?
 2. What actions can and should MARSOC take to capitalize on identified opportunities?
 3. What actions can and should MAGTF take to capitalize on identified opportunities?
 4. What indirect approaches in the Contact Layer could provide opportunities and advantages in the Blunt Layer and deter major conventional war?
 5. What AFP partners are most effective and efficient for mission accomplishment?
 6. What is the Contact Layer's risk assessment of indirect approaches/actions by MARSOC?
2. **Scenario.** China and the U.S. compete for influence and access in the Philippines across the four elements of national power: Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME).
 - a. **Geographic region:** The Philippines Islands, separated into five regions: Luzon, National Capital Region (NCR), Visayas, Mindanao, and Palawan.
 - b. **Time:** 2019
 - c. **Road to war:** Tensions between the U.S. and China have been rising over the last several years due to disagreements over the South China Sea, Taiwan, and trade. China has pledged over \$20 billion dollars to the Philippines through the Belt and Road initiative which could rival the historically strong U.S. and Philippine relationship. The U.S. must prepare the environment of the Philippines using the DIME spectrum, prepare adaptive basing options for Philippine and U.S. conventional forces, and prepare the joint military forces for conflict through the development of the seven joint operational functions.
3. **Player Role List:**
 - a. **Blue Command Group (SOCPAC and Department of State (DOS) Representative)**
 1. **Objectives:** Obtain access and influence in NCR and two additional regions of the Philippines. Regional access is defined as a specific number of DIME

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- influence pieces and access to two adaptive bases (air base, sea port, land base) per region. A secondary objective was to develop all seven of the joint operational functions in preparation of a potential conventional conflict.
2. **Resources:** Blue command group was provided with the ability to conduct one major event (either a Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise or Joint Combined Exchange Training) or two smaller level engagements (Ex. Mobile Training Team, Subject Matter Expert Exchange) in one turn. A turn represents one fiscal quarter (three months). Each exercise had a specified amount of DIME influence that it would achieve according to an openly specific menu of Operations, Actions, and Activities (OAAs).
 3. **Relationships:** DOS and SOCPAC players work together to achieve their strategy. DOS could choose to provide either an economic or diplomatic influence piece in connection with the SOCPAC exercise.
- b. **Red Team (Representing China’s “whole of government” investments in the Philippines)**
1. **Objectives:** Obtain placement, access, and influence in the NCR and two additional regions in the Philippines defined by a specific amount of influence. Disrupt the Blue Team’s ability to meet its objectives.
 2. **Resources:** Red Team only have D, I, or E game, or influence pieces. Red Team can provide the Green Team with three influence pieces if requested, as well as five influence pieces on their own move in a single turn.
 3. **Relationships:** Red Team did not have a standing relationship with other players but benefitted from supporting the Philippines by gaining extra placement, access, and influence.
- c. **Green Team (Philippine Federal Government)**
1. **Objectives:** Secure support from either the U.S. or China to fulfill 12 objective cards. Objective cards represent a geopolitical or destabilizing incident within the Philippines.
 2. **Resources:** The Green Team has no resources in this wargame but can fulfill its objective card(s) by requesting OAAs from the Blue Team or requesting support from the Red Team.
 3. **Relationships:** Because the Red Team does not have any “M” influence pieces, the Green Team cannot ask for military support from the Red Team due to a standing military relationship with the Blue Team. The Green Team is ultimately trying to fulfill its objective card from either team while maintaining their sovereignty.
4. **Wargame Description:**
- a. **Wargame Design:** This wargame was a hybrid wargame in an open format that utilized board gameplay and seminars. The system portion of the wargame consisted of Red and Blue Teams competing over DIME influence in five regions within the Philippines while the Green Team attempted to secure international support. The core of the game is based on the DIME forms of national power concept. Red and Blue each choose actions which yield specific DIME effects in the game. The effects generated from Red and Blue actions are represented by D, I, M, and E game pieces that are placed on the game board. Red’s D, I, and E game pieces and Blue’s D, I, M,

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and E game pieces indicated the amount of influence, access, and placement for the respective Philippine region. Blue OAAs yielded specific amounts of DIME pieces and provided the ability to improve on the seven joint operational functions. In addition to DIME influence and the joint operational function, the wargame also introduced sea, air, and land bases in each region as an objective for the Blue Team. The Blue Team could gain access and placement at a base by supporting the Philippines to fulfill an objective card or by conducting a major OAA. Influence and access to bases within the Philippines could atrophy over time if the rival player obtains a majority DIME influence without a counter.

- b. **Wargame Execution:** This wargame was executed over three days where five full iterations were completed. One turn in the wargame consisted of one move by Green, then Blue, then Red Teams. On Green's move, the player was expected to review their national objective (Objective Card) with influence requirements and request support from either the Red Team or Blue Team. The Green player was expected to choose the team that could fulfill the objective card as quickly as possible. After the Green move was complete, Blue was expected to conduct an OAA to obtain their objectives of DIME influence in each region, adaptive basing, and training on the seven operational functions. The Red Team played last in the turn and had the ability to place five DIME influence pieces in any region.

5. Methods, Models, and Tools (MMTs).

- a. **Adjudication:** Clearly identified DIME conditions were used to adjudicate. Each influence piece was given equal weight in the game. The number of influence pieces given to the Blue Team for a particular type of exercise was based on the impacts of events conducted in the past. The number of influence pieces given to the Red Team was based off pledged economic investment in the Philippines through the Belt and Road Initiative.
- b. **Player Feedback/updates:** The feedback mechanisms were inherent in the open format of the game. All players were able to see the progress and effects of other players throughout the game. After each iteration, the Blue Team was asked to come up with new and unique OAAs that it could conduct or ways to modify existing OAAs in order to have a different impact across the DIME spectrum. This was used to obtain insight into what new actions SOCPAC should take within the Philippines.

6. Key Constraints, Limitations, and Assumptions:

- a. **Constraints:** Time and budget limited the scope of analysis.
- b. **Limitations:** The Wargaming Team did not include a Marine and had limited access to players during play testing. This limited the wargaming team's ability to gain a MARSOC perspective prior to actual execution of the wargame week.
- c. **Assumptions.** Focused solely on the Philippines and adjacent bodies of water. The team utilized the current composition and capabilities of the MARSOC Unit assigned to the Philippines. The current common operational picture (COP) and the regional political environment were used to inform the wargame. Great power competition implied competition with China.

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7. Findings:

- a. Key Issue #1: In 2019, what indirect opportunities exist to better succeed in the Contact Layer?

Item: OPE and RSO&I in preparation for the Blunt Layer

Discussion: The Marine Special Operation Company (MSOC), through and with their current AFP partners, and ICW SOCPAC and DoS is well postured to conduct Operational Preparation of the Environment (OPE) and to provide SOCPAC, DoS, and the MAGTF with Reception, Staging, and onward integration (RSO&I) assessments of infrastructure/adaptive basing IAW the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) to better set conditions for success in the Blunt Layer.

Recommendation: During the interdeployment training cycle (IDTC), MSOCs should become well-versed in TSOC strategic and operational plans and DoS Integrated Country Strategy for the Philippines, and EDCA.

Item: SOCPAC Annual Operations Planning Conference

Discussion: As per MARSOF 2030, MARSOC should continue to strive for enhanced connectivity across the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Military (JIIM) spectrum and with AFP component commands' initiatives. This approach enables a larger return on strategic, operational, and tactical investments. MARSOF should maximize their participation in the SOCPAC Annual Planning Conference and pre-deployment site surveys/planning to ensure proper assignment of OAAs (JCS, JCETs, CARATs, etc.).

Recommendation: MSOC Leadership should attempt to attend the SOCPAC Annual Planning Conference during their IDTC and/or pre-deployment planning/meetings with SOCPAC, 31st MEU, SEVENTH Fleet, and Planning and Advisory Training Team (PATT). This would better align efforts between SOCPAC entities, 31st MEU, SEVENTH FLT, MARFORPAC, and USINDOPACOM. Additionally, this ties tactical efforts with larger/long-term interagency and whole-of-USG strategy and nests efforts with AFP plans and initiatives.

- b. Key Issue #2: What actions can and should MARSOC take to capitalize on identified opportunities?

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Item: Conventional Force and SOF Integration, Interoperability, and Interdependence necessary for the Current Operating Environment

Discussion: SOCPAC entities, 31st MEU, and SEVENTHFLT are not properly synchronizing Operations, Actions, and Activities (OAAs) during inter-deployment training cycle (IDTC) or on deployment.

Recommendation: Increased collaboration and future preemptive planning with the PATT, 31st MEU SOFLE, and SEVENTH FLT staff during the IDTC will better align OAAs, CONOPs, and theater-security cooperation events for execution on deployment by the rotational MSOC. MARSOC can have greater strategic relevance and operational and tactical impact by encouraging and participating in an increased amount of joint (CF & SOF) combined exercises within the Philippines and USINDOPACOM AOR.

- c. Key Issue #3: What actions can and should MAGTF take to capitalize on identified opportunities?

Item: Need for increased C3I with MARSOC during IDTC and on Deployment

Discussion: SOCPAC entities, 31st MEU, and SEVENTHFLT are not adequately synchronizing Operations, Actions, and Activities (OAAs) during the inter-deployment training cycle (IDTC) or on deployment.

Recommendation:

1. Attempt to have 31st MEU personnel participate in MARSOC IDTC (I.e. RAVEN).
 2. Validate the 31st MEU SOFLE requirement.
 3. Leverage Joint Chief of Staff exercises, and conventional exercises (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training and Multilateral fleet interoperability and integration exercises at sea).
 4. Deploying MSOC should participate in the 31st MEU deployment readiness exercise prior to deployment.
- d. Key Issue #4: What indirect approaches in the Contact Layer could provide opportunities and advantages in the Blunt Layer and deter major conventional war?

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Item: MARSOC Too Focused on CT and 31st MEU Too Focused on Contingencies and Blunt Layer (I.e. Underutilized capability/capacity afloat).

Discussion: SOCPAC entities (to include MARSOF) are maxed out on capacity and capability in confronting CT issues in the Philippines. However, increased non-CT OAAs are necessary to adequately counter-revisionist states. Regions within the Philippines that are not prone to CT events are neglected/under-resourced and lack OPE, RSO&I, and AFP partnerships. A shortage of SOCPAC OAAs outside of the National Capital Region and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) allows revisionist states to easily exploit any U.S. or Philippine gaps in P&A and influence throughout the Philippines (Luzon, Visaya, Palawan, etc.).

Recommendation: Improve dialogue between GCC, C7F, 31st MEU, and SOCPAC for increasing 31st MEU's contribution of capability and capacity in support of SOCPAC OAAs and the DoS Integrated Country Strategy for the Philippines.

- e. Key Issue #5: What AFP partners are most effective and efficient for mission accomplishment?

Item: Deficit of Relationships with AFP Conventional Sub-Component Commanders

Discussion: Leveraging MARSOC as a synchronizer, increased MAGTF capability and capacity (TACON to SOCPAC with caveats) will improve P&A and influence to Conventional AFP Joint Task Force Commanders and sub-component commanders. In the AFP force structure and culture, the AFP JTF CDRs and sub-component commanders hold the execution authority for most missions. However, AFP joint Conventional Force relationships should be built with U.S. Joint Conventional Forces, not strictly SOCPAC entities. For example, the USSOF & WESTMINCOM relationship within the ARMM is strong and should be replicated across all regions and AFP sub-component commands.

Recommendation: MSOC is not ideal for partnership with AFP sub-component commands. The 31st MEU should take on more partnerships with the AFP sub-component commands in the country, as SOCPAC entities do not have the capacity nor capability to take on these vital relationships for success in Phase 2+/Blunt Layer.

- f. Key Issue #6: What is the Contact Layer (Phase 0-1) risk assessment of indirect approaches/actions by MARSOC?

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Item: Increased vulnerability to collection by adversaries.

Discussion: Although large joint combined exercises are a measure of deterrence and greatly increase warfighting readiness compared to small exercises, they increase the vulnerability of collection by adversaries due to its large operating footprint

Recommendation: Vary the location and timing of joint combined exercises. The advantages of conducting multiple combined joint exercises each fiscal year outweigh the CI and OPSEC threats.

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