

My Sources for "[The US is strengthening military defense by... playing games?](#)"

1:00

Center for Naval Analyses

The organization hosting us for the wargames.

<https://www.cna.org/>

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9:05

Better Maps Better War Games

"But even as Venturini advanced the square-grid-based wargame to its highest pre-twentieth century form, new developments were on the horizon, portending a revolution in wargaming of immense proportions. The key ingredient, and one we today easily take for granted, was the introduction of accurate maps."

Excerpt From

Peter Perla's The Art of Wargaming: A Guide for Professionals and Hobbyists

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9:35

Prussian Wargaming

"During the wars of German unification, Prussian wargaming appears to have provided a significant advantage. How else can Prussia's lopsided victories be explained? Prussian forces were more often than not outnumbered, weapon advantages were mixed, and training methods were similar, though some think Prussia had an advantage in the education of staff officers. At this time, though, the Prussian military had a monopoly on second-generation wargaming and had integrated it into its staff education and its staff planning methods, especially at the higher levels."

Caffrey, Matthew B. (2019). "On Wargaming: How Wargames Have Shaped History and How They May Shape the Future"

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9:55

US Wargaming during WWII

Battle of Midway is the key example to show here

Overview article of Adm. Nimitz wargaming it -

<https://www.armchairdragons.com/articles/analysis/what-was-nimitz-thinking-another-battle-of-midway-wargame-analysis/>

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<https://sjms.nu/articles/10.31374/sjms.124#B10>

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18:00

Wargaming Vietnam

Between 1962-1967, one to two wargames were run per year, called the Sigma War Games. These included top military officers inside of the Pentagon.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma_war_games

Primary document about SIGMA II-64:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a5/Sigma_I-64_final_report.pdf

Wikipedia summary, largely pulled from the book Dereliction of Duty, p 157: "Most importantly, Sigma II-64's results undercut the basic assumption that a gradually escalating aerial campaign could lead to U.S. victory.[14] The actual conclusion was that bombing would stiffen the North Vietnamese will to resist.[8]"

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18:15

Results of SIGMA Wargaming Were Mostly Ignored

In a recent article comparing the SIGMA games to recent games about Taiwan, Schneider & Ganz write:

"However, despite this influence, perhaps the most enduring puzzle of these games is how little impact they seemed to have made on the Johnson administration. So far, we have been unable to find evidence that the results of the games ever made it past Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's desk to Johnson. And even though evidence from the game was used in the highest level of deliberations between State Department and National Security Council, there seems to have been a more vocal group of players that questioned the games' design and findings."

<https://warontherocks.com/2024/09/the-wargames-that-prophesized-americas-defeat-in-vietnam/>

For a deep dive lecture into the Sigma Games, by the Hoover Institution:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BipfLfrdm6Y>

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19:10

Iraq War Games

Scenario 3 / Move 1, Issue 1 - Paragraph 2 creates the scenario: "According to a recent defector, Saddam was assassinated by his son Uday on June 21st"

This is from the actual game results/scenario doc:

https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB207/Desert%20Crossing%20After%20Action%20Report_1999-06-28.pdf

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From same doc, Move 2, Issue 2:

"In defiance, Ali Hassan Al-Majid, military commander in southern Iraq, warned that he would consolidate his hold on that region and may declare it a separate state. [...]"

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Move 3, Issue 6 from same doc:

"Rebellious military units and continued Shia and Kurdish uprisings complicated the situation [...] Many recommended installing transition governments as soon as possible. Expatriated opposition groups had also taken a similar line. Some leaders of these groups had returned to Iraq and were attempting to rally their supporters. While there were some alliances between the Iraqi factions, significant differences remain"

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The Game Predicted Some of the Quagmires of the Iraq War

"The report forewarned that regime change may cause regional instability by opening the doors to "rival forces bidding for power" which, in turn, could cause societal "fragmentation along religious and/or ethnic lines" and antagonize "aggressive neighbors." Further, the report illuminated worries that secure borders and a restoration of civil order may not be enough to stabilize Iraq if the replacement government were perceived as weak, subservient to outside powers, or out of touch with other regional governments. An exit strategy, the report said, would also be complicated by differing visions for a post-Saddam Iraq among those involved in the conflict."

via <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB207/#1>

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19:30

Millenium Challenge

"In many ways, Millennium Challenge 2002 was a rehearsal for the 2003 Iraq War. After the game was conducted, then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld sent a note to Kernan asking him to write a report explaining 'what you think you learned from Millennium Challenge that we ought to apply to Iraq.'

["How the U.S. military lost a \\$250 million war game in minutes" WAPQ](#)

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19:57

Lessons Could Have Been Learned About Insurgent Tactics From the Millennium Challenge

Some Personal Reporting notes from

MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE: THE REAL STORY OF A CORRUPTED MILITARY EXERCISE
AND ITS LEGACY
MICAH ZENKO

vulnerabilities exposed during Millennium Challenge 2002 (MC '02) that later proved to be real weaknesses in the Iraq War and other conflicts. Here are the specific vulnerabilities and their relevance to Iraq:

Iraq Relevance: Insurgents in Iraq relied on low-tech tactics, such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and decentralized communication methods, to exploit the U.S. military's technological blind spots.

MC '02 Vulnerability: After the Red Team's decisive initial victory, the exercise was effectively "scripted" to ensure U.S. success, allowing critical vulnerabilities to go unaddressed.

Iraq Relevance: The Iraq invasion was planned with assumptions of a swift victory and minimal resistance, but post-invasion realities, including the insurgency and sectarian violence, exposed the flaws in these optimistic scenarios.

"The exercise was later scripted to ensure a Blue Team victory, undermining its authenticity as a free-play exercise."The White Cell (exercise controllers) intervened to constrain the Red Team, re-floating sunk ships and imposing limitations that favored the Blue Team."

Van Riper accused the exercise of being a sham, crafted to validate pre-determined concepts rather than testing realistic scenarios.

Van Riper criticized this as dangerous, arguing that the exercise misrepresented the challenges posed by motivated and adaptive adversaries like those the U.S. would face in Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other senior Pentagon officials were heavily invested in the "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA), a vision for high-tech, precision warfare that would later shape the Iraq invasion. MC '02's rigging suggests a desire to prove the effectiveness of these strategies, irrespective of their actual feasibility.

The exercise fed into a broader narrative of U.S. military superiority and the feasibility of a swift, decisive victory—key assumptions underpinning the 2003 Iraq invasion.

MC '02's outcomes aligned with the administration's need to demonstrate prepa-

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