

Army War Game Shows ‘Pre-emptive’ Disaster

by Carl Osgood

The outcome of a war game held at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania at the end of April is leading to the explosive conclusion that, in future wars against capable adversaries, the present U.S. policy of pre-emptive war may make the use of nuclear weapons more likely.

DefenseNews reported, in its May 12 issue, that that conclusion arose out of the fact that the United States is likely to retain such great military superiority, that its foes are more likely to respond to a U.S. threat of attack by the use of nuclear, chemical, and/or biological weapons, very early in a conflict. The speed at which this occurred in the game apparently caught military strategists involved off-guard. One retired Air Force four-star general told *DefenseNews*, “Nuclear thresholds may be lower than we think them to be.” This is doubly ironic, given that the Bush Administration has been rushing to lower its own nuclear threshold in the form of the January 2002 Nuclear Posture Review.

The emergence of these characteristics as part of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s “transformation” policy should not come as a surprise, given the source of that policy. Andrew Marshall, the Pentagon’s Director of Net Assessment, and one of Rumsfeld’s closest advisors on military transformation, spent the formative years of his career at the RAND Corporation, working with such luminaries as Albert Wohlstetter and Herman Kahn, on making nuclear wars both thinkable and winnable.

Another close advisor to Rumsfeld is former Speaker of the House and current Defense Policy Board member Newt Gingrich, a great admirer of author Alvin Toffler. Toffler, in his 1993 book *War and Anti-War*, posited a shift from industrial-age to information-age warfare, and that the source of future conflict would be between “declining industrial-age nation states” and “Third Wave” information societies. The recent war against Iraq may be seen as a paradigm for future such wars. Rumsfeld brought to the Pentagon retired Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, as his Director of Force Transformation, to implement Toffler’s “vision” of information-age warfare, and directed U.S. Joint Forces Command to impose it on all four of the military services.

‘We’re Playing the Clash of Civilizations’

The war game, dubbed Unified Quest 03, and jointly sponsored by the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (Tradoc) and U.S. Joint Forces Command, was the first in



Army war gamers discovered that the new U.S. “preventive war” policy is rapidly lowering the threshold for use of nuclear weapons—by both sides.

a series running through early 2004, designed to develop a new set of joint operations concepts for Rumsfeld’s military transformation policy. The process that Unified Quest was a part of, is designed to completely change the way that force structure is built, from an approach traditionally oriented to the individual services, to one where the services start from a common set of principles. The war games to test those principles are to be sponsored by Joint Forces Command and each of the services.

Set in 2015, the game was built around two scenarios extrapolated from present day Iran and Indonesia—called Nair and Sumesia—with a homeland security scenario running alongside. Game officials went to great lengths to explain that the game was not about what future threats might emerge from those two particular countries, but to provide a “robust” adversary in order to put maximum stress on the concepts under development. Joe Greene, Tradoc’s Futures Director and one of the principal designers of the Red (opposing) force used in the game, explained to reporters during a media day on April 30, that the game “is about the future, about the right range of capabilities to challenge joint concepts and objectives, challenge joint forces requirements.” Greene explained that Iran and Indonesia were picked because they each offer the full range of geographic challenges, from a maritime

environment to mountain ranges that can impede movement of forces. The Red force in the Nair scenario was played as a “major regional competitor” with the ability to challenge the U.S. joint force. “We’re playing the clash of civilizations and cultures that you’d expect to see in a number of places where we might be engaged,” Green added.

The scenario assumed that the United States would maintain the present Bush Administration’s policy of pre-emptive war, and this proved central to how the Nair scenario played out. In the scenario, Nair, based on how it sees the United States, decides that once the Blue (U.S.) force buildup in the Persian Gulf exceeds certain trigger points, Nair has to attack pre-emptively. Greene explained that “we allowed it to play out in order to test. . . . Really, it’s an experiment, if you will, to experiment with the concepts, let us look at stressing these joint concepts. It’s not about a fight today, or anyone we might go to war with tomorrow. It’s about a future time and a range of capabilities to challenge joint forces concepts.”

However, one of the lessons emerging from the war game is that there are, indeed, implications of the pre-emptive war policy that go beyond the parameters of an experiment. Richard Hart Sinnreich, a consultant and retired military officer who played the Red force commander in one of the Nair scenarios, noted that, even in 2015, Blue requires a finite amount of time to build up its forces in a given area. Therefore, “during the period between the time when the first force arrives and the time Blue is robust enough to defend itself, it’s vulnerable.” During the war against Iraq, Iraq did not have the capability to attack the U.S. force during its buildup. But what if the United States, in the future, targets an adversary that does have that capability?

Pre-empting ‘Preventive’ War

“Red has now seen two occasions in a row where the late, unlamented Saddam Hussein chose to sit while Blue forces achieved an operational robustness that enabled them to go clobber him,” Sinnreich explained. “Needless to say, we [‘Nair’] consider ourselves smarter than that. We didn’t wait. We established a set of triggers and when Blue preparations penetrated those triggers, we didn’t wait for Blue to attack. We attacked.”

Sinnreich added, “That’s something we’re going to have to deal with. It’s a military problem, of course, but it’s a

military problem, in a sense, exacerbated by America’s strategic decision to conduct preventative operations. . . . Nations draw conclusions, and so did we. Our conclusion was, when Blue says they’re coming, they’re coming. They will not be turned off by international pressure. They will be turned off by pre-emptive surrender. We weren’t prepared to pre-emptively surrender, so the alternative was to pre-emptively fight.”

Sinnreich thus hit on the problem with the pre-emptive war doctrine: It precludes or at least severely reduces, the possibility of solving a crisis without resorting to force. This is inherent in the Bush Administration’s National Security Strategy, released last September, which declares, “We must deter and defend against a threat before it is unleashed.” It adds that “Counterproliferation must also be integrated into the doctrine, training, and equipping of our forces and those of our allies to ensure that we can prevail in any conflict with WMD-armed adversaries.” While the document insists that the United States will not use force in every case, the Nair scenario seems to indicate that the pre-emptive force doctrine will certainly complicate efforts to solve a crisis peacefully. As Sinnreich noted, “We said, in our plan, here are a series of events, when they reach this combination, that constitute unambiguous warning of Blue’s intention to invade. At that point, as far as we are concerned . . . we are at war.”

Those overseeing the game, however, tried to minimize these implications. Maj. Gen. James Dubik, the director of joint experimentation for Joint Forces Command, admitted, when *EIR* raised the question, that the policy might indeed present a problem in the future. But “the issue for us is what are the right set of capabilities that increase the options for us and our allies, while at the same time decrease the options available for our potential adversaries,” Dubik said. “Our approach to this experimentation is not to over-conclude from one game, but to build a body of knowledge from which conclusions then can be used for senior leaders to consider and make whatever investment decisions and adjustments they want to make.”

Dave Ozolek, Dubik’s deputy, added that other notions besides pre-emption are also being experimented with. “So, pre-emption is just part of what I think is emerging from what I think of as a larger set of capabilities, that will enable us to deal with this world where our enemies are acquiring these types of very dangerous weapons of mass destruction, and other types of threats.”

The policy of pre-emption did not arise out of the ashes of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, as Rumsfeld’s strategists would have us believe. Instead, it was developed by then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz in 1990, in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall (see *EIR*, Oct. 4, 2002). The Sept. 11 terror attacks merely gave them the chance to put into place their strategy of perpetual wars of civilizations, for which they are now reorganizing the military forces of the United States.

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