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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION
DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT

SUBJECT: Wargaming and Innovation

I am concerned that the Department's ability to test concepts, capabilities, and plans using simulation and other techniques—otherwise known as wargaming—has atrophied. To most effectively pursue an innovative third offset strategy, avoid operational and technological surprise, and make the best use of our limited resources, we need to reinvigorate, institutionalize, and systematize wargaming across the Department. Reinvigorated wargaming across the defense enterprise fits within the Defense Innovation Initiative, which aims to bolster the credibility of U.S. security guarantees at home and abroad through innovative and agile thinking and actions.

Military-relevant systems and technologies are changing quickly and new tactical and operational challenges are intensifying and proliferating, all during a period of fiscal pressure. During similar periods of technological and geostrategic flux, wargaming proved to be a useful tool both for improving our understanding of complex, uncertain environments and the changing character of warfare. When done right, wargames spur innovation and provide a mechanism for addressing emerging challenges, exploiting new technologies, and shaping the future security environment. They can potentially make the difference between wise and unwise investment trajectories and make our forces more successful in future conflicts.

Our new wargaming program will focus on three time horizons: near-term (0-5 years); mid-term (5-15 years); and long-term (beyond 15 years). Near-term wargaming will focus on the execution and improvement of current operational plans and the reinvigoration of Joint combined-arms expertise. While an important purpose of these wargames will be to enhance current concepts of operation, they will also help expose problems and solutions applicable in both the near- and mid-term, including the development of innovative operational and logistical approaches. Led by the Combatant Commands (COCOM) and Services with Joint Staff and Policy oversight and support, this effort should consider the use of workshops, red-teaming, table-top exercises (TTXs), and modeling and simulation to provide direct input to plans, programs, power-projection experiments and demonstrations, and rapid prototype development.



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Mid-term wargaming will focus on the development of new capabilities as well as operational and organizational concepts (for example, joint power projection in anti-access/area-denial environments), with an eye toward incorporating innovative approaches or technologies into the future force and identifying potential portfolio offsets. A reinvigorated Support for Strategic Analysis (SSA) process will continue to incorporate wargaming and will also seek innovative approaches to support the broader Departmental effort. SSA scenarios and Concept of Operations (CONOPS) will provide a basis for a wide range of wargaming to inform concept development and force planning. The output of these wargames will be a feedback mechanism for refining existing SSA products. Led by the Joint Staff with significant participation from Policy, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), COCOMs, and the Military Departments, this effort will rely primarily upon workshops, seminar-style wargames, and portfolio-rebalancing exercises, while using modeling and simulation where feasible. These wargames will leverage SSA-approved scenarios, future projected U.S./adversary orders of battle, and analytic tools as starting points for operational innovation.

Long-term wargaming, like that of the mid-term, will assess the operational impacts of technology trends, future challenges, and military competitions. Led by Net Assessment, it will use this information to identify how the Department might exploit new opportunities, hedge against potential discontinuities, and craft long-term competitive strategies.

These broad guidelines will allow for Department-wide, cross-game analysis in each of the notional time frames, which will be compiled and analyzed by designated leads for regular reports to senior leadership concerning the health and balance of the enterprise. I am particularly interested in wargaming the kinds of challenges that cross COCOM responsibilities in order to better address threats that would benefit from a more global strategic perspective. Discipline and structure in the wargaming enterprise will ensure accountability, flexibility and balance. Incentives must exist within each tier to stimulate the exploration of innovative approaches and longer-term looks. All wargaming should adhere to a broad set of guidelines concerning strategic and operational scenarios, blue and red force structure, and the wargame's experimental design. Institutions and time frame leads should also work to advance the wargaming state-of-the-art by using pathfinder wargames that incorporate innovative approaches, and throughout we need to make red-teaming endemic to our approach and work to advance the quality and impact of red teams as part of a broader Departmental approach to innovation.

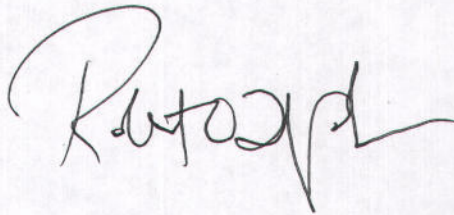
Wargaming across different time horizons will also serve a crucial educational function by bringing together teams of defense professionals to think critically about potential future challenges. Therefore, I encourage the Military Departments to reinvigorate wargaming in Professional Military Education to restore their historical role as a source of doctrinal innovation. Promoting operational excellence and strategic thinking among students in this way will generate ideas and insight that can directly inform policymakers. In that same way, effort must be made to incorporate commercial and defense industry expertise into the larger wargaming effort. Integrating disparate institutions and approaches into a broader, more purposeful Departmental wargaming enterprise will ensure its vitality and flexibility.

Wargaming, in concert with operational analysis, and experimentation, cannot stand apart from the budget process; rather, it should feed into other dimensions of strategy development as

well as our Planning Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) process. Insights will inform portfolio-rebalancing exercises, competitive strategy path games, and senior leader decision-making. Portfolio-rebalancing exercises will examine how trades might be made across research and development, force structure, procurement, and readiness accounts over the next two decades to better align the joint force to the challenges posed by the future security environment. In particular, a hybrid approach that combines seminar-style wargaming with portfolio-rebalancing exercises would be a highly effective means to identify deficiencies in the current program and potential budget offsets. Initial findings will be integrated into the PB17 Program and Budget Review to ensure we have a strategy-driven budget.

Our wargaming program will need your attention and involvement to be successful. Within forty-five days I will convene a wargaming summit co-chaired by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We will collectively discuss the key elements of this initiative and establish the broad guidelines that will be applied across the planning horizons.

Innovation can be highly disruptive and creates relative winners and losers. It thrives in a culture that embraces experimentation and tolerates dissent and risk-taking. We must generate an environment that encourages exactly this type of thinking, and building a reinvigorated wargaming enterprise will be a major step forward. I look forward to working with each of you on this important initiative.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Gates". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.