

Dynamic Commitment:

Wargaming Projected Forces Against the QDR Defense Strategy

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Conclusions

- The **Dynamic Commitment** Wargame Series, in support of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), provided an innovative and effective means of evaluating the suitability of projected U.S. forces to respond to the range of challenges in the defense environment anticipated by the Joint Strategy Review.
- The **Dynamic Commitment** Wargame Series informed participants regarding the expected future demand on forces, such that Services were better able to articulate the effect of the examined force options.
- Key findings included:

The projected U.S. Force (POM Force) is suitable, though stressed, to execute the strategy. [The POM Force is the Program Objective Memorandum five-year proposal of each Service that translates requirements and resources into forces, manpower and material.]

Forward presence remains a cornerstone of strategy execution.

The current force structure is fragile. Preserving the effectiveness of uniquely configured platforms or units in the face of force reductions, must receive careful consideration.

Despite recognized limitations, the potential for the **Dynamic Commitment** gaming methodology is significant, including its ability to allow examination of near-term alternative force structures.

Background

Section 923 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1997 mandated that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, complete "a review of the Defense Program of the United States, intended to satisfy the requirements of a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)." This review was to "include a comprehensive examination of the defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program and policies with a view toward determining and expressing the defense strategy of the United States, and establishing a revised defense program through the year 2005." The legislation further specified the report of the QDR was to include

the "effect on the force structure of preparations for and participation in peace operations and military operations other than war."

In support of this requirement, the Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Division (SAGD) of the Joint Staff (J-8), working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, and national and defense agencies, developed a "Transitions" Wargame Series, that eventually came to be known as **Dynamic Commitment**. During previous defense studies, the primary driving factor in force sizing had been the force estimated to be necessary to meet the strategy of fighting and winning two major regional conflicts, with the elements of the force capable of responding to other contingencies viewed as a lesser included set. With these "other contingencies" drawing increasingly on both the time and resource commitments of all Services, it was essential that the QDR include an evaluation of the current and projected U.S. Forces against anticipated worldwide commitments. To more accurately assess the impact of these types of operations, it was deemed important to evaluate not only the force required to execute this wide spectrum of operations, but also the impact of "transitioning" rapidly between events across the spectrum of conflict. This **dynamic commitment** of U.S. Forces provided the wargame series its name.

Game Series Objectives

Dynamic Commitment was developed in the fall of 1996 as a strategic-level, force allocation wargame series with four principal objectives:

- Identification of the suitability of the POM Force to meet future challenges in light of key policies, strategies, and operational approaches;
- Identification of key diplomatic, strategic, and operational risks associated with the future employment of the force;
- Integration of various elements of the QDR process; and,
- Building a group of informed experts among game series participants.

With the completion of the fourth, final and principal gaming event in the series, each of the original objectives had been met. Additionally, the **Dynamic Commitment** methodology had been demonstrated as a viable means of assessing force structure alternatives.

Game Series Construct

Because of the inherently contentious nature of any self-review process with a real or implied reduction goal looming in the minds of its participants, game designers recognized the need for an open process from start to finish. To this end, the first event in the **Dynamic Commitment** game series was organized as a **Game Design Conference (Dynamic Commitment 1)**, held on 5 and 6 December 1996, at the senior field grade officer (O-5/O-6) level with approximately 85 participants. Each organization expected to participate in subsequent gameplay was encouraged to participate in shaping the game design from its outset. This forum allowed those with vested interests to develop trust and confidence in the envisioned gaming methodology (and each other), to understand the game's potential capabilities and limitations, and to help refine game design to maximize its potential.

Capitalizing on the inputs of the design conference participants, members of the SAGD game development team modified the gaming methodology and prepared an extensive base of materials used to support gameplay, vetting these with the combatant commands and Services in time to support a **Scoping Game (Dynamic Commitment 2)** from 14 to 17 January 1997. The almost-200 Scoping Game participants, primarily at the O-6 level, included representatives of OSD, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, and various national and defense agencies. The participants sought to identify issues and insights requiring further study within the Services and the integrated QDR panels, as well as to identify candidate policy issues (and associated risks) requiring flag/general officer discussion and feedback during the follow-on game in the series.

Following a month of detailed analysis of the **Dynamic Commitment 2** game results, over 100 senior representatives of participating organizations, to include deputy commanders of the combatant commands, Service Operations deputies, and senior leaders from OSD and the Joint Staff attended the **Senior Decision-maker Game (Dynamic Commitment 3)**, held on 19 and 20 February 1997. This seminar-style game, in addition to providing the senior decision makers with an in-depth understanding of the game series to date, provided a forum for participants to address key issues concerning approaches to future execution of the strategy in the areas of force projection and force availability. Ultimately, their insights regarding these issues were used to shape both the future of the wargame series as well as the QDR. Illustrative of their contributions were refinement of the level of access constraints expected in future operations, enhancement of the mobility analysis aspect of the game, modification of event duration to more accurately represent likely force withdrawal patterns, and increased Service gameplay rigor and realism in the areas of Operations and Personnel Tempo (OPSTEMPO/PERSTEMPO) tracking and evaluation, identification of limited quantity assets, and post-engagement readiness limitations.

With the recommended improvements from **Dynamic Commitment 3** incorporated into the Game Series, the **Assessment Game (Dynamic Commitment 4)** was held from 20 to 22 March 1997 in much the same format and with predominantly the same participants as **Dynamic Commitment 2**. More than 200 participants sought to examine the suitability of the POM Force to execute the proposed strategy over a possible (baseline) future (including a detailed assessment in selected areas) and the implications of a learning enemy presenting asymmetric challenges. Additionally, participants were asked to evaluate the suitability of the **Dynamic Commitment** Gaming Process as a tool for examining force alternatives.

Team Format

Dynamic Commitment was executed employing a "team of teams" concept, whereby the principal playing teams (*Blue Teams*) were supported by both common (*White, Silver, Purple*) and dedicated (*Green, Gold*) teams, each assigned principal functions. The teams, responsibilities, and composition are summarized in *Table 1*.

By using a dual team structure, the series was able to be designed such that two independent futures could be run simultaneously. The flexibility this parallel play afforded was further exploited in **Dynamic Commitment 4** to allow simultaneous examination of two force alternatives over a common future.

Gameplay Concept

Dynamic Commitment was intended from its beginning to explore potential impacts on future U.S. Forces of a wide range of contingency operations similar to events in which the United States has been engaged in recent history (and is expected to be involved in the future). The anticipated demand on U.S. Forces was predicated on the emerging results of the Joint Strategy Review (JSR), which indicated that the challenges the United States expects to face in the near term will be similar in nature to those of the recent past (i.e., post-**Operation Desert Storm**). To achieve this, the SAGD game designers sought to build a game that centered around a postulated future which represented the types of operations, at the frequency, of the duration, and in the rough magnitude that has occurred in recent history. This became the design basis for the Scoping Game (**Dynamic Commitment 2**), which was slightly refined to more accurately reflect the emerging QDR Defense Strategy prior to the Assessment Game (**Dynamic Commitment 4**).

The basic "building blocks" of this future were a bank of some 50 vignettes (situational events or crises requiring the commitment of U.S. Forces), that were developed expressly for the **Dynamic Commitment** wargame series. These vignettes were derived from historical operations, Defense Planning Guidance and/or operational plans (OPLANS), and included a Commander's Concept of Operations, an illustrative force list, and anticipated allied/coalition support, where applicable. Each vignette represented a plausible event from the spectrum of U.S. military commitments over recent history, as well as capabilities addressed in the strategy, short of major theater war (MTW). Locations selected were hypothetical and balanced across combatant command areas of responsibility. The vignettes were vetted through the combatant command and Service planners in advance of gameplay.

The vignette bank incorporated current, real-world operations into the initial periods of the future, where appropriate. The sequencing and timing of events were randomly generated, followed by a common-sense backup check. The range and types of events incorporated in gameplay are illustrated in *Table 2*. Although the 2MTW "fight" was thoroughly considered in detail in other QDR-related studies, for **Dynamic Commitment** gameplay it was positioned at various locations along the future event laydown for the purpose of assessing the impact of forces "swinging" from other events to respond to the 2MTW.

Given an alternative future, the Blue Team addressed each vignette sequentially, considering a world indications and warning picture, hedging forces accordingly to respond to potential emerging crises. For each new vignette in a quarter as sequentially presented, players reviewed an executive summary of the vignette; the combatant command representative reiterated the force requirements, based on the concept of operations; the Services resourced those force requests; and disparities were resolved. Upon completion of this process, the cycle was repeated for each subsequent vignette. Dozens of times over the game's duration, the players resourced sequential and parallel events, ranging from peace operations in Europe to noncombatant evacuation operations in Africa, to shows of force in the Pacific, to disaster relief operations at home and abroad.

Game Series Results and Outcomes

Dynamic Commitment provided its participants an extensive forecast of likely future demands on U.S. Forces. Some of the more significant gameplay insights were as follows:

- The projected POM Force is suitable, though stressed, to execute the strategy. Risks noted include forward presence challenges, OPSTEMPO/PERSTEMPO stresses, and limited quantity asset shortfalls.
- Forward presence remains a cornerstone of strategy execution.
- The current force structure is fragile. Preserving the effectiveness of uniquely configured platforms or units in the face of force reductions, must receive careful consideration. (Note: As a result of gameplay, the Services were better able to specifically identify where they *cannot* take cuts.)
- The Global Military Force Posture, Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, and forward presence requirements should be revisited in conjunction with any proposals for substantial force cuts.
- Sequential deployments to smaller-scale contingencies may have cumulative, negative impacts on the all-volunteer force.

Additionally, Service and QDR panel-specific insights were used to shape their own respective inputs to the QDR report.

Beyond direct gameplay insights, **Dynamic Commitment** spurred a number of other QDR-related study and analysis efforts. These included initiatives undertaken by OSD, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, and agencies, as well as by the various functional QDR panels. Some of these initiatives continued beyond the completion of the formal QDR process.

Summary

Dynamic Commitment provided an alternative approach to strategic-level gaming in that it looked beyond "warfighting," in its purest sense, and the capabilities required to be successful. Rather, the four-game series looked in detail at the *availability* of those capabilities and illuminated the wide-ranging effects of the spectrum of contingency operations addressed in the QDR Defense Strategy on the future demand for U.S. Forces.

The designers and executors of the **Dynamic Commitment** wargame series recognize, however, that the potential of this complex, yet revealing process may not have been fully realized due to time limitations—simply put, it could not be "all things to all people." Nevertheless, the contribution of the **Dynamic Commitment** wargame series to the successful completion of the QDR was substantial, as is the potential for exploiting the attributes of this gaming methodology in future study and analysis efforts.

Colonel Stanley Gorenc, USAF, Colonel Philip D. Coker, USA, and Commander Clarence E. Carter, USN, were members of the Joint Staff's Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Division (J-8), which was charged with the execution of the **Dynamic Commitment** Wargame Series.

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