

## War College students use an innovative, experiential tool to test a strategic concept for emerging challenges in a specific region

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*Army War College students play the Asia-Pacific regional wargame, testing a strategic concept for emerging challenges expected in the vast Asia-Pacific region in the next 10 years.*

This year, the warfighting course of the Army War College will use a new “wargame” to exercise students’ critical thinking and decision-making about the Asia-Pacific region’s players and interests, and the military power available to deter emerging challenges or confront if deterrence fails. The Asia-Pacific regional wargame tests a strategic concept for emerging challenges expected in the vast Asia-Pacific region in the next 10 years.

A tool for experiential education, the Asia-Pacific wargame was developed and tested as a joint venture strategic researchers, wargame developers, school faculty and a set of warfighting students. The multifunctional team earned the Excellence in Innovation Award for integrating complex sets of information about the region, military power, multinational campaign planning, and game development. T

The Asia-Pacific game is available and ready for all USAWC students in the Military Strategy & Campaigning core course this year because the JWASP students and faculty in AY2021 tested and refined the game. The Joint Warfighting Advanced Studies Program used this proof-of-concept

effort to ask: Does it challenge all the players? Does it represent the instruments of power available at the strategic level? Is it realistic, challenging? Does it require students to apply their new knowledge in a way that forecasts how they'll apply it in the future, as leaders and planners?

The outcome for the College is a potent educational tool for learning through experience, tailored to the actual requirements awaiting these students upon graduation.

"We learned from this pilot application of the Asia-Pacific wargame and, over the last six months, we modified the game," said Col. Doug Winton, chair of the Military Strategy and Campaigning Dept. of the Army War College. "For example, when we piloted the game for JWASP, there was a 3:1 student:faculty ratio. Since it's not possible to maintain that ration when scaling for the entire class of 380 students, we've refocused the game play and reorganized so that one seminar of students will play against another seminar," he said about each 16-student group working through core courses as coherent seminar. That change enables the seminar instructor can focus on student learning and student judgment, while the gaming experts adjudicates the game.

Wargaming allows students to think about limitations in space and time, expand on concepts introduced in the core curriculum, and see the consequences of their plan, explained Prof. Al Lord, retired Navy captain and JWASP co-director.

A typical planning exercise with briefing doesn't confront students with the effects of their decisions – on friendly forces and on other actors, said Col. Chris Hossfeld, JWASP co-director. "That's the real nugget of wargaming," he said.

"The game itself requires students to use military power against a peer competitor in armed conflict," said Winton. The students -- senior officers from all Armed Services and partner nations -- made decisions about the right time, the right place that military power can achieve political objectives.

"The game design rewards students for combining resources and effects from multiple warfighting domains," he said.

The outcome for JWASP students was a challenging, satisfying, and valuable experience, said Hossfeld, a 2017 student of the Joint Warfighting course. JWASP is a Special educational program available for USAWC

students who choose to delve deeply into the art of strategic warfighting/military campaigning. In the two-part course, over many weeks, they developed a strategic campaign for the emerging environment of Asia-Pacific region. In the second part, they tested the game while testing their own understanding and planning skills.

JWASP student players prepared by assessing adversaries' capabilities and intent and developing a strategy. In the second part of the course, they tested the strategy in a series of game turns. Players represented the US and regional partners and regional adversaries. They made decisions, in rotating turn, about how to address other actors' "moves" in the changing environment through tools of military, diplomatic, economic, and informational power.

JWASP student-players gained a clear understanding of the consequences of their decisions.

Hossfeld applied his wargaming insights immediately after graduation, he said, as chief of staff for an Army division supporting National Guard and Reserve mobilizations. "The foundation I got about how to think critically and creatively about what was needed in a theatre of war helped me understand all the steps and requirements that would be needed in the continental U.S. to be able to provide those forces," said the Army Infantry officer. Before joining the faculty team here three years ago, Hossfeld served as chief of staff for the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Division-East.

Lord has been shaping Army War College education since 2012. In previous assignments, he served on the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization, developing strategy, and supporting plans for the National Security Staff, DoD, and NATO.

The USAWC Strategic Wargaming Division develops and facilitates wargaming not only for educational support but for support to strategic headquarters and planning offices of the DoD, the Services, and Combatant Commands. Faculty developers for the Asia-Pacific wargame represented the joint operating environment: retired Navy Capt. Al Lord, Navy Capt. Michael Hritz, Army Col. Chris Hossfeld, USMC Col. Keith Burkepille, and Col Joe Allena. Wargame designers Lt. Col. Derek Martin and Maj. Chris Miller provided game design expertise; they are part of the Strategic Wargaming Group in the college's Center for Strategic Leadership.

