

# OGD enhances learning experience

*Spc. Jennifer Rick, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

## Operations and Gaming Division enhances learning experience



**Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Marshall, Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hall and Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Lane of the Operations and Gaming Division work to prepare for the 2009 Strategic Decision Making Exercise. SDME, coordinated largely by the OGD, is the capstone exercise for the Army War College resident class. Courtesy photo.**

January 26, 2009 -- When you think of how Army War College students learn, you might think of people sitting around a table discussing issues or reading history and case studies. Well, you'd only be partially correct. That's only part of the learning experience. The students apply new knowledge and understanding in scenario-based exercises.

The war college resident class's capstone exercise, the Strategic Decision Making Exercise, is a two-week exercise that gives students the opportunity to implement the knowledge, skills and abilities they have gained through experience and from their exposure and participation in the war college curriculum, said Prof. James Kievit, professor of National Security Leadership.

"SDME is a joint and multinational exercise that includes political and military play at the high operational and strategic levels, all set in the year 2021," explained Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hall, OGD intelligence NCO. "It is intended to place students in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous virtual environment.

"Aided by appropriate information technology tools and models, they apply service and joint doctrine within the framework of the interagency, military contingency planning and execution, military resourcing, and multinational coordination processes," said Hall.

"Students will develop strategic policy recommendations for employing the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of power, while considering multiple scenarios," he said. "Those scenarios include major

combat operations, lesser contingencies, stability operations, global terrorism, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, and model crises in every Geographic Combatant Command."

The event is largely facilitated by the Operations and Gaming Division, commonly called the OGD, which operates out of the Center for Strategic Leadership located in Collins Hall.

The OGD hosts the SDME exercise, coordinates the internal and external personnel involved, provides intelligence and mapping support, produces other needed materials, as well as develop, review and edit the scenarios to ensure realism, quality and value for the students. Countless hours of planning are put into creating a real-life atmosphere for the exercise.

SDME and all other OGD operations are executed by 35 senior military officers, non-commissioned officers and civilians. Their jobs range from the development and execution of research, war games and experiential exercises, Strategy Research Project advisors, production of sensitive publications for each exercise and more.

***Members of the Operations and Gaming Division Support Staff discuss the upcoming Strategic Decision Making Exercise, which will be held in Collins Hall March 4-11. Courtesy photo.***



It takes a wide range of professional skills and expertise to create and execute the SDME.

"We are extremely fortunate to have senior non-commissioned officers serve alongside the other members of the division," said Col. Phil Evans, OGD director. "In the current environment, all of them are deployment returnees. They are very competent and each of them is eager to contribute to the organization and the Army.

"They provide us with the benefit of their excellent experience and do a great job at their assigned tasks inside the division. Additionally, since OGD works with external organizations as part of its mission, our NCOs get opportunities to directly represent the Army. For example, during Senior Leader Staff Rides conducted for strategic leaders in the private and public sectors, our NCOs come in close contact with corporate heads who, in many cases, have little to no understanding of the Army and how it operates," said Evans.

"The active participation of our NCOs sends a strong signal, guaranteeing that these civilian leaders come away with a positive appreciation of our devotion to leadership and competency across the force," he added.

"From my perspective, the greatest benefit students gain from the OGD's experiential learning opportunities, especially from the SDME, is greater self-awareness as leaders," Kievit said.

"The opportunity to work with as many audiences as we do is interesting and professionally rewarding," Evans

said. "We often learn in addition to merely educating, and this parlays itself into better qualities of support by the members of the organization on behalf of CSL, the USAWC and the U.S. Army," said Evans.

The OGD provides experiential learning opportunities for the War College and for strategic-level audiences around the country; supports the operational and institutional force; researches and publishes on strategic-level subjects; and performs strategic communication tasks on behalf of the War College and Army senior leadership, explained Evans.

The OGD works with outside organizations such as the Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, as well as non-military or government organizations. They conduct leadership seminars, also called strategic leader staff rides, and conduct crisis negation simulations for graduate students of universities, including Georgetown, Texas A&M and Princeton noted Evans.

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