



# U.S.-PRC Crisis Simulation

# Briefing Overview

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- Welcome and opening remarks
- Scenario and crisis
- Background information
- How to play
- Crisis response plan development

# Classification and Attribution

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- This is an unclassified wargame and is drawn exclusively from open-source materials
  - **Discussion of any real-world plans or classified materials during this event is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN**
- This wargame is part of an unclassified academic research program; any results will be published in an academic journal or outlet with public access
  - No comments, actions, or data collected in the wargame will be attributed to individuals
  - You have been provided with a copy of the consent form for this simulation.
- Please respect your fellow participants; please do not take any photos or make any social media posts without the express permission

# Considerations

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This may be your first wargame or N-th wargame; regardless, here are a few points to consider as you play...

1. **Keep an open mind:** You may be introduced to new terms and concepts
2. **Be cooperative:** Work with your teammates; this game is not about internal politics or inter or intra-service rivalry
3. **There are no right or wrong answers:** There is no “correct solution”

# Code of Conduct

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1. **Professionalism:** Wargames can be tense, nonetheless, but we expect everyone to behave professionally
2. **Respect for others:** Be respectful of the opinions and ideas of other players; please be respectful and constructive without personal attacks or disrespect
3. **Respect for privacy:** Be respectful of the privacy of other players, and do not photograph or post online about others without their express consent
4. **Respect for the game:** Please respect the structure and rules of the game, even if facets of the game seem counterintuitive or unrealistic at times

# Pre-simulation Survey

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Please use your phone or iPad camera function to access and complete a pre-simulation Qualtrics survey





# Scenario

# Scenario Introduction



- This wargame takes place in 2026
- The wargame focuses on a fictitious crisis between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- Although purely hypothetical, the crisis presented is not outside the realm of the possible

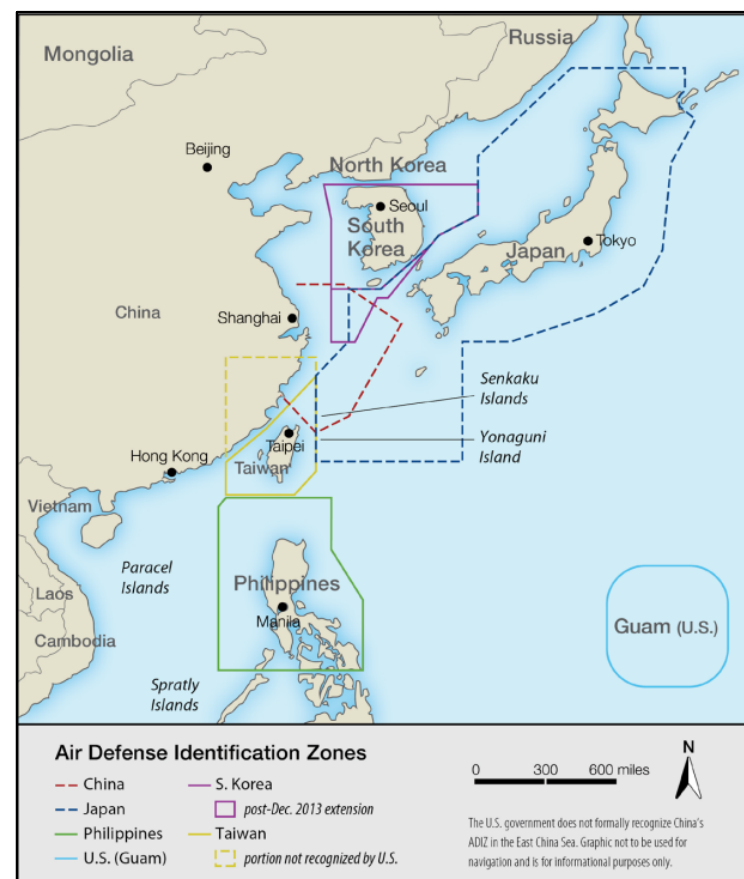




# Scenario



- Tensions are mounting over the Taiwan Strait, with China conducting more frequent and large-scale air incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ)
- In April 2026, People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) aircraft violate the ADIZ with an unusually large bomber sortie



# Scenario

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- In May 2026, in a sign of support for the Republic of China (ROC/**TAIWAN**), the United States announces it will provide significant new capabilities to the island nation in the form of advanced anti-air and anti-ship missiles, long range artillery and anti-armor missiles, and associated command, control and communications systems.
- U.S.-based defense analysts assess the announced package will significantly upgrade Taiwan's military capabilities and make a PRC invasion of the island significantly less likely to succeed.
- But they warn that integrating the new systems into Taiwan's military will require the ongoing presence of up to 1000 U.S. military advisors and trainers on the island.

# Scenario



- Later that month, the U.S. Secretary of State meets with Taiwan's Foreign Minister on the sideline of a UN sustainable development conference held in South America

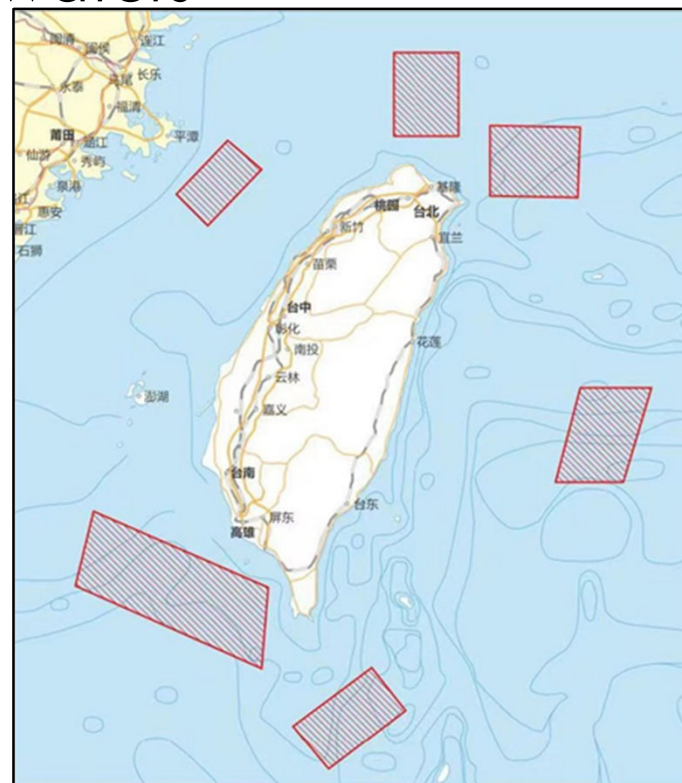


- An op-ed run in the People's Daily calls the meeting a "blatant act of hostility against the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China"

# Scenario



- In June 2026, the PRC responds—the People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), PLAAF and Strategic Rocket Force hold major joint exercises in Taiwan Strait and around Taiwan, at times crossing within Taiwan's territorial airspace and waters





# Scenario



- The exercise appears to simulate a joint amphibious invasion of Taiwan by the PLA, and includes submarines, destroyers, landing dock platforms, as well as bombers, fighters, early warning aircraft, and missile tests
- Taiwanese media calls the exercise “provocative” and a clear signal of the CCP’s hostile intent” towards the island



# Scenario



- In a display of continued support for Taiwan, the U.S. responds by sending the 5<sup>th</sup> Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76), from Japan into the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait

# Scenario

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- The 3<sup>rd</sup> CSG, led by the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) is deployed from San Diego toward the region
- The U.S. increases air and sea patrols, moves to reinforce its posture in the northern Philippines, and has scheduled additional combined military activities with Australian and Japanese allies
- A USINDOPACOM spokesperson described U.S. activity as a "routine exercise of plans with partners and allies to provide support to the Republic of China/Taiwan."

# Scenario



- A spokesperson for the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs warns that the U.S. is “playing with fire”
- In addition, the PRC responds to the arrival of the U.S. carrier in the South China Sea by deploying PLAN vessels, China Coast Guard (CCG) and maritime militia vessels to shadow the CSG







# Incident

# Incident



- Chinese Coast Guard ships direct the 5<sup>th</sup> CSG, led by the USS Ronald Reagan, to vacate the area near the Taiwan Strait as the matter of Taiwan is an internal issue, and the PRC will not tolerate any country interfering in this matter in any form or by any means



# Incident



- Tensions between the U.S. CSG and the Chinese maritime militia and China Coast Guard continue to mount
- Chinese maritime militia are engaging in hazardous maneuvers in close proximity to U.S. Navy vessels, making it difficult to navigate without generating a significant risk of collision
- At the same time, PLAAF fighters have been overflying U.S. Navy ships, intercepting U.S. Navy aircraft, and locking and unlocking Navy aircraft and ships with their missile systems



# Incident



- Situation escalates as a U.S. Navy destroyer attempts to maneuver past PLAN ships to return to port to address a mechanical malfunction affecting its ability to navigate and maneuver
- Maritime militia forces respond by increasing the tempo of hazardous maneuvers in close proximity to the beleaguered destroyer





# Incident



- The 5<sup>th</sup> CSG deploys additional security personnel via helicopter to the affected destroyer
- As the helicopter approaches the destroyer, it is fired upon by the PRC maritime militia with light weapons. There are no reports of casualties or damage to the helicopter
- The commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> CSG, aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, decides not to return fire



# Incident

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- U.S. Navy commanders are concerned for the safety of their crew, given increasingly aggressive actions by the PRC maritime militia, China Coast Guard, and the PLAAF
- U.S. naval crew members are reportedly overtasked while also attempting to maintain situational awareness
  - Current manned defense systems are unable to respond quickly enough to the increasingly prolific air and naval threats
  - Commanders report difficulty managing multiple teams as they struggle with interpretations of rules of engagement

# New Technology



- A special capability is now operationally deployed in the USINDOPACOM theater
  - The system has been vetted through all test and evaluation requirements and is now considered IOC but has not been used in a crisis before.
- **It is an AI-enabled self-defense system** that automates and networks all ship-based defense capabilities of the CSG to prioritize firing on targets, differentiate friend vs. foe, and optimize engagements.
  - Decreases maintenance and manpower requirements
  - Optimizes use of force per engagement for ROE and maximizes munitions stores
  - Can operate **fully autonomously** or with **human-in-the-loop** for final use of force decisions
    - When the AI is operating fully autonomously, combat effectiveness is improved by 25-30% due to improved rate of engagement

# New Technology



- The commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> CSG has requested authority to engage the AI-enabled defense system and asked for revised Rules of Engagement for its employment
- Using this special capability requires Presidential authorization. The President has asked for a recommendation from the Deputies Committee, establishing the following priorities:
  - 1. Protect the lives of U.S. service members
  - 2. Minimize damage to Reagan CSG vessels
  - 3. Avoid escalating crisis with China
- Your recommendation to the President should include both decisions on the employment and on the desired end state for the current crisis.





# Game Play

# Roles: Strategic Level Game

## NSC Deputies Staff



You will assume the roles of deputy cabinet officials responding to an international security crisis



Deputy National Security Advisor (Chair)



Deputy Director of National Intelligence



Deputy Secretary of Defense (DEPSECDEF)



Deputy Secretary of State



Vice Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS)



USINDOPACOM Commander

# Role Details

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- You assume the role of deputy cabinet officials to advise the President on how to respond to the crisis
- The Cabinet can draw upon the full diplomatic, economic and financial, military, informational and intelligence capabilities of the United States; recommendations can leverage all the tools of statecraft
- When you transition to your groups, you will receive a Military Backgrounder and additional information to inform your decisions
  - The Military Backgrounder is a useful reference but does not introduce any substantive, new information not included in this briefing

# Planning Guidance

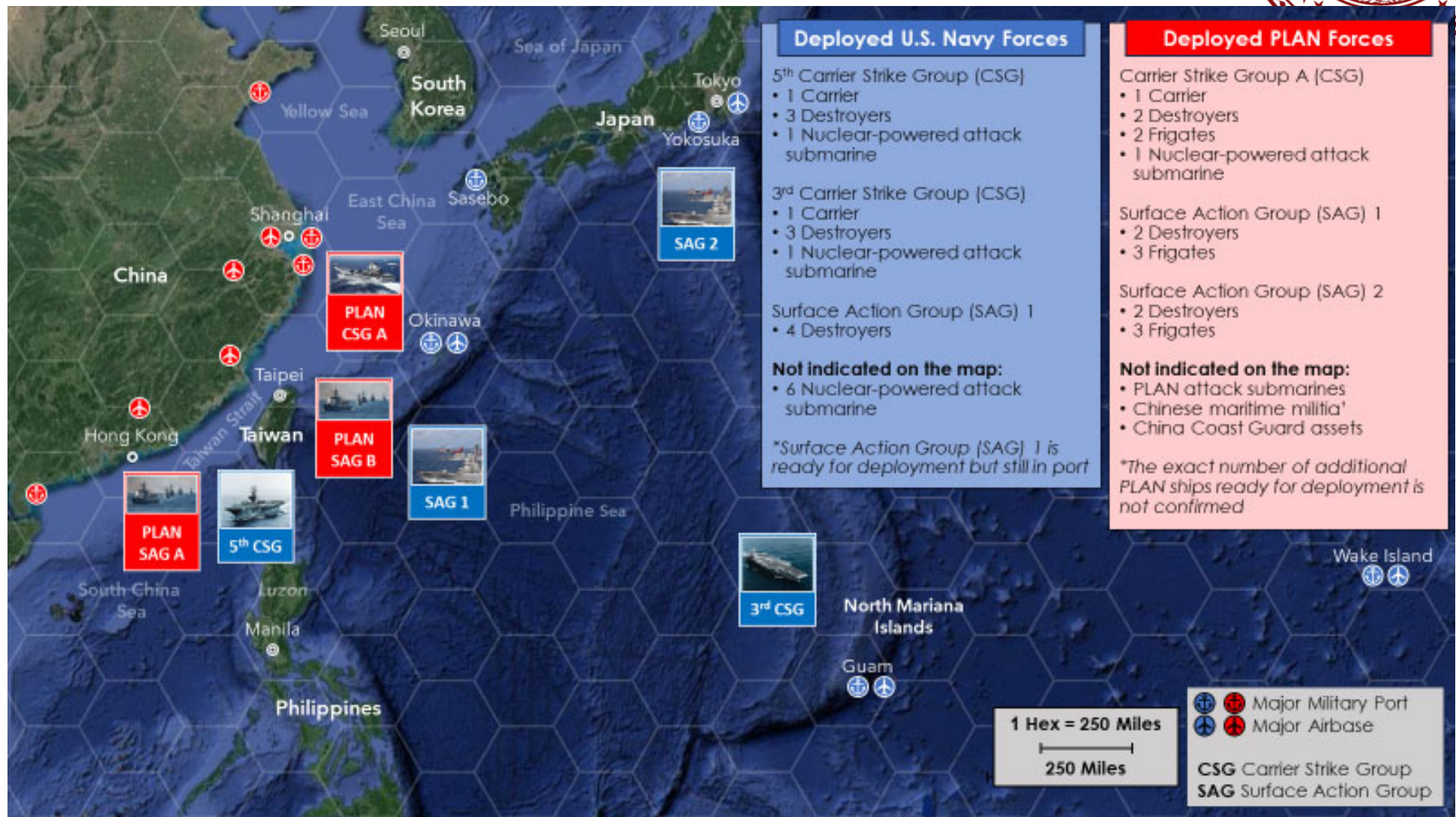
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- The planning horizon is one week (7 days); functionally, you are restricted to the U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific AOR but may leverage other tools of statecraft
- You may request additional forces and provide recommendations, such as initiating a pre-existing military response plan **(any discussion of any real-world plans is strictly outside the scope of this event)**
  - Do not assume that any requests will be fulfilled, and certainly not within the planning horizon
- The information you receive will be limited and imperfect; reflecting the reality of a fast-moving crisis and game constraints



# Theater Map



# Available Forces



## Available U.S. Forces (In Theater)

### Okinawa, Japan

- III Marine Corp Expeditionary Force
- 3rd Marine Division
- 1st Marine Aircraft Wing
- 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade
- 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit
- 18<sup>th</sup> Wing (Air Force)
- 44<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron
- 67<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron

### Misawa, Japan

- 35<sup>th</sup> Wing (Air Force)
- 13<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron
- 14<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron

### Yokosuka, Japan

- Ready for deployment*
- SAG 2
- At port (not deployable)*
- 2 Destroyers

### Other Joint Forces not indicated

- Mine Countermeasure Squadron 7 and Amphibious Squadron 11 based out of Sasebo, Japan
- Logistics and support vessels

“Available U.S. Forces” indicate taskable forces. Joint Forces assigned to U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) are unavailable. U.S. intelligence cannot confirm what PLA forces might be presently committed but has high confidence that the Eastern Theater Command has operational command.

## Eastern Theater Command Forces

### PLA Ground Force (PLAGF)

- 71<sup>st</sup> Army Group
- 72<sup>nd</sup> Army Group
- 73<sup>rd</sup> Army Group

Each Army Groups Contains:

- 1 Heavy Brigade
- 2 Amphibious Brigades
- 1 Medium Brigade
- 1 Light Brigade
- 1 Army Aviation Brigade
- 1 Artillery Brigade

### PLA Navy (PLAN)

*The number of ships ready for deployment unknown*

- 6 Destroyers
- 12 Frigates
- 10 Corvettes

### PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

- 9 Fighter Brigades
- 3 Bomber Regiments

### PLA Rocket Force (PLARF)

- 8 Brigades

### Other forces not indicated

- Logistics and support vessels
- Amphibious assault vessels and other landing craft
- This count does not include assets that might be leveraged for operational effect, including:
  - Maritime militia
  - China Coast Guard