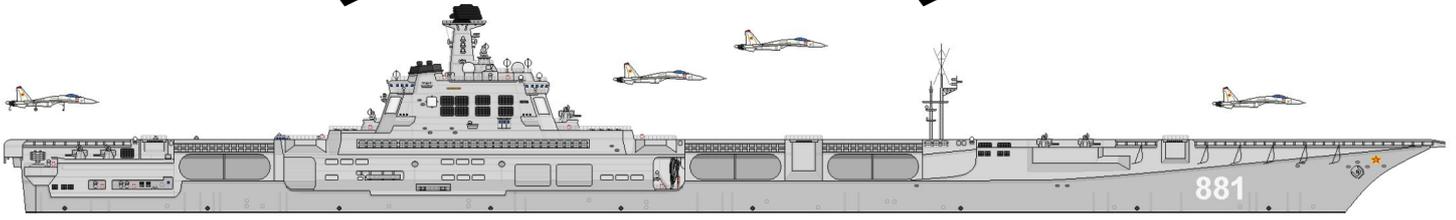


# DIRE STRAITS



The Megagame of Crisis in East Asia

# PLAYER'S GUIDE

How To Play  
The Megagame

Rex Brynen & Jim Wallman 2017

## INTRODUCTION

This is a megagame about multiple regional crises in East Asia and the range of responses and reactions available to key players, specifically global and regional governments.

The game will examine a 'perfect storm' of international crisis events over a two month period in early 2020.

Whilst there are game rules - mainly about how to fight the war part of the game - the main driving force is the face to face interaction between players representing the various sides in the crisis.

The game structure is a mix of a wargame, boardgame and role play, in that the movement and location / strengths of forces are displayed openly on a number of large master map boards, while the personal interactions are managed by role-playing and talking to each other.

A large part of the game is about the responses of the international community to a series of emerging crises. There is section of the game which is set in New York and about the United Nations Security Council.

This is not a military simulation. Combat capabilities and mission options have been simplified to allow meaningful player higher-level decision making within the time pressured environment of the megagame.

The effects and capabilities have been aggregated in order to ensure decision making at the appropriate level and to discourage (or at least not provide an option for) micro management or deep dives into the detail around military options.

The important output of the megagame is, therefore, not the specific results of military interactions but the emerging gameplay driven by player decisions.

It is this process of intercommunication, political and diplomatic signalling in a period of escalating tensions and international crisis that is the primary area of interest and focus.

That said, "No game survives first contact with the players", and the open-ended nature of Dire Straits means that the game flow is likely to create unexpected events as a result of this emerging gameplay.

### Reality Trumps Rules

The game rules are intended as a framework of guidelines to help the game move along smoothly.

However, the game rules (such as they are) can be modified in play at any time by the CONTROL TEAM if this is needed to keep things moving or to better reflect the situation.

Players can also suggest additional actions or options to CONTROL who will adjudicate the results of players' bright ideas and 'wizard wheezes'.

## GAME TURNS

The game is run in 30 minute turns during which all map actions are simultaneous. This goes on at the same time as negotiation, discussion and plotting.

For the bulk of the game each turn represents one week. However, please note that Control may alter the turn length to represent a shorter period (for example when the crisis 'hots up') or increase the period (to, say, one month or three month turns) to represent longer term effects of policies and postures adopted by players.

Megagames work to a strict time-scale – so regardless of the time period represented by a turn, the game will move on every 30 minutes regardless. See the game timetable below.

## TEAMS

**Regional Teams** : China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, India, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia.

**UN / Rest of World:** USA, Russia, France, UK, Canada, ASEAN, United Nations, World Media

**Game Analysis:** There are three teams of analysts who will be circulating throughout the game and gathering insights from the game with a view to reporting back later in the conference.

### Team Briefing

Each team in the game will have a team-specific briefing, outlining the major concerns for that team. The team will be invited to decide on **three** brief KEY OBJECTIVES at the start of the game, and then update them on a turn by turn basis. These should be in bullet point format and should be clear and concise. It will be useful to consider why you have chosen these, based on the briefing and the situation.

### Major Team Decisions

When the team takes a decision that you regard as significant or potentially game changing for you, fill out the MAJOR DECISION FORM. This will be used in the subsequent analysis phase.

## PLAYER ROLES

### President / Prime Minister / Supreme Leader

This is the team leader and the most senior representative of government. Proper protocol dictates that the team leader will normally only speak to Foreign Ministers and other Head of Government.

### Foreign Minister

This role is the most senior member of the government responsible for all diplomatic relations and negotiation. The foreign minister will normally communicate with other Foreign Ministers or Heads of Government.

### Ambassador

Subordinate to the Foreign minister, and Ambassador takes their lead from the FM and represents their nation by visiting other teams and conducting negotiations.

The Ambassador to the UN (where the team has one) has particular responsibilities to attend UN Security Council Meetings and represent the Nation's position in those meetings.

### Military

The role represents the senior military leadership of the nation. Their role is to supervise deployment of the nation's military resources on the game map. They may be called upon to make instant operational decisions in the event of sudden hostilities.

Where the military intend to change posture or deployments, the Military player must complete a **MILITARY OPERATIONS FORM** at the start of each turn.

### Intelligence

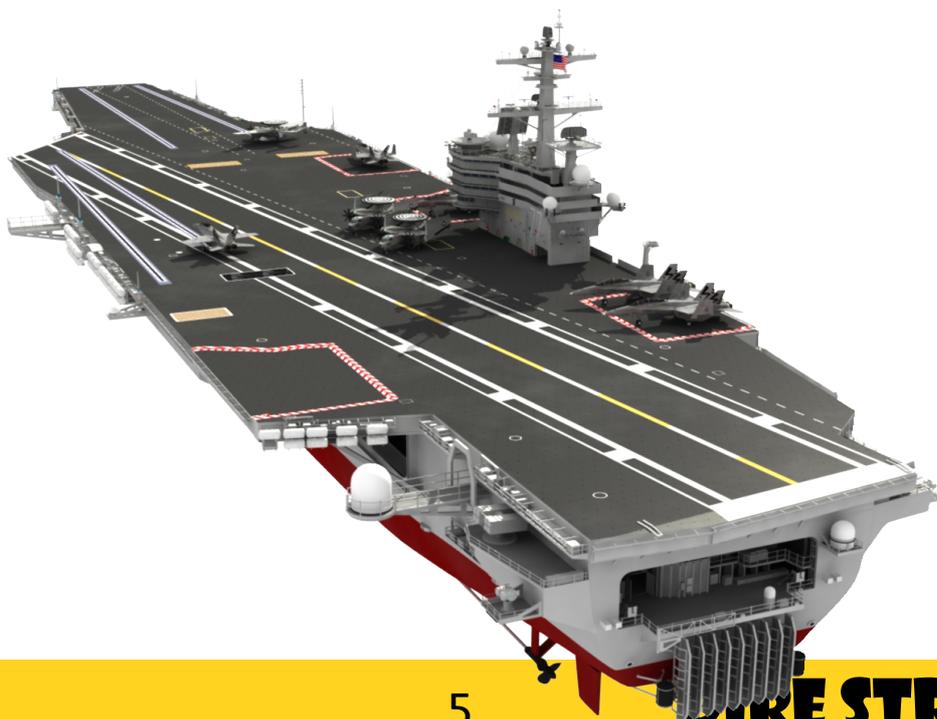
The role represents the intelligence community of the nation. Their role is to find out about, and report on the postures of other nations, both military and political. They are not involved in discussions and diplomacy, but they will be doing a lot of listening to both public and private conversations.

The intelligence player will be expected to complete an **INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT FORM** at the start of each turn.



## GAME TIMETABLE

1045 - 1115	Game briefing and explanation	
1115 - 1130	Players meet other team members and digest their briefings and have their initial team discussions planning. <b>No inter-team negotiation happens at this time.</b>	
<b>1130</b>	<b>GAME PLAY STARTS</b>	
1130 - 1200	Turn 1 / Week 1	ASEAN MEETING
1200 - 1230	Turn 2 / Week 2	UNSC Meeting
1230 - 1300	Turn 3 / Week 3	UNSC Meeting
1330 - 1430	LUNCH / Continued negotiation and game discussions.	
1430 - 1500	Turn 4 / Week 4	UNSC Meeting
1530 - 1600	Turn 5 / Week 5	UNSC Meeting
1600 - 1630	Turn 6 / Week 6	UNSC Meeting
1630 - 1700	Turn 7 / Week 7	UNSC Meeting
1700 - 1730	Afterword on the game design and comments from design team / control.	



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## TURN SEQUENCE

Each game turn is broken down as follows. Control will be encouraging you to stick to this rigidly. This sequence will hold whether the turn represents one week or some other time period.

PHASE	TIME	Military Players	Political Players	UN / ASEAN players	CONTROL TEAM
<b>1</b>	0 - 5 mins	National Leader completes <b>STRATEGIC SITUATION REPORT</b> for this turn. Military player completes a <b>MILITARY OPERATIONS FORM</b> for this turn. Intelligence Player completes the <b>INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT</b> for this turn.			Collect Forms
<b>2</b>	5 - 15 mins	Go to the master maps and deploy / redeploy any military resources	Diplomacy and discussion between teams	Attend meetings. These international meetings continue throughout the turn.	Supervise map actions
<b>3</b>	15-20 mins	Military Players report back to their teams on outcomes of military actions (if any)	Political players receive reports. Can go to master map to be briefed at this stage		Update <b>APPROVAL TRACKS</b> and note any changes of <b>POSTURE</b>
<b>4</b>	20 - 30 mins	Enforced Team Time - teams must come together for this time to discuss their situation and arrive at agreed actions for the next turn. This time is important. Players can communicate via note or phone, but personal visits are actively discouraged.			Prepare for next turn.



## POLITICAL APPROVAL TRACK

As a simple measure of the impact of player actions on their domestic political support, each country has an APPROVAL TRACK.

### PHILIPPINES



If the Track reaches ZERO then this can be deemed to represent a major crisis of confidence within the inner stakeholders of the government. In democracies this might mean a vote of no confidence in parliament, in dictatorships this might mean a potential coup.

This is on a 20 - point scale (to keep it manageable and easy to follow).

Things that influence the tracks are:

- Very adverse or very complimentary media reports
- Clear failures to follow the national agenda and objectives
- Visible national defeat (either diplomatic or military)
- Control's opinion where the situation indicates a change would occur.

## POSTURE

Each country has a range of national POSTURES. It is possible to go to any POSTURE from any other posture - so it would be possible to stand down from DEFCON 1 to READY in the same turn.

However, changing posture too frequently or 'flip-flopping' will have adverse political approval effects.

**READY** The default is 'Ready' meaning that the nation's military forces are generally capable of being moved around but they are not fully on a war footing and can only conduct minor or short term military operations. Defensive capabilities are able to respond to minor incursions, but not to a major attack.

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**ALERT.** This is a posture adopted by individual units or groups of units on the map. This puts the specific unit(s) in a combat-ready state. Defensive capabilities are able to respond to a major attack.

**ALERT**

**HIGH ALERT** This puts ALL the nation's active forces in a combat-ready state. It also places reserve units on notice to mobilise. It takes a week to bring the nation properly to High Alert.

**HIGH  
ALERT**

It does not activate reserve units, which require mobilisation to become active. Defensive capabilities are able to respond to a major attack.

**MOBILISE.** The nation is bringing all its reserve forces up to full readiness for combat operations. This takes 2 weeks, and all the reserve units become available for operations. Partial mobilisation is permitted - so you could announce '*we are mobilising our air reserves*' without necessarily mobilising your army reserves. **This is always a significant public act** and a statement for the media *will be required*.

**DEFCON 1.** This is an option available for nuclear states only. This puts the warheads into a condition and position to be used, and launch capabilities are deployed in readiness for use. This can happen within the same turn.

## COMMITMENT

The timescale of operations in the megagame necessitates a simple model of combat options and a generalised combat resolution system. Key to the conduct of operations over a 7-day period is the intent of the higher level commanders and the degree of permissiveness they have built into the operational posture (above). We will represent this by using the concept of COMMITMENT LEVEL. Sending a military element into the same map area as a rival or adversary will risk military engagement depending on the competing Policy Positions of the nations represented, their posture, and their Commitment Level. This commitment level is part of a set of written instructions at the start of the turn.

**LEVEL 1 : UNCOMMITTED.** At the first sign of trouble, withdraw. No risks to be taken. Can be adopted regardless of POSTURE.

**LEVEL 2 : POSTURING.** This would include provocative overflights, close passes by vessels at sea, testing frontiers and borders. Must be at ALERT to adopt this level.

**LEVEL 3 : LIMITED ENGAGEMENT.** This might include some very limited kinetic engagement, but limited to very small acceptable casualty levels. Must be at ALERT to adopt this level.

**LEVEL 4 : SERIOUS ENGAGEMENT.** A degree of war-fighting, but geographically limited and with limited objectives. At this level, the military units represented in the game may suffer capability degradation. Must be at HIGH ALERT to adopt this level.

**LEVEL 5 : FULL SCALE OPERATIONS.** All out war-fighting. Considerable casualties can be contemplated. No holding back on either targeting or scope of operations. Must be at HIGH ALERT to adopt this level.

## UNITS AND CAPABILITIES

Major units on the map have white 'Sustainability Loss Boxes' marked on them. These represent the ability of the formation to sustain prolonged operations. Where they are involved in major operations (Usually Level 4 Commitment or higher), then one or more of these may be crossed off as a result of their activities.. Should all of the boxes be crossed off the unit is no longer capable of effective engagement on operations.

Units/Capabilities represented are:

- Carrier Battle Groups - each carrier group has a 2 to 4 capability options (depending on carrier size and modernity). These take 2 turns to change, and the players have the opportunity to task organise the group's capabilities. The options include
  - Strike (Cruise missile or fixed wing)
  - ASW
  - Amphibious ops support
  - Anti Access-Area Denial (A2AD)
  - BMD

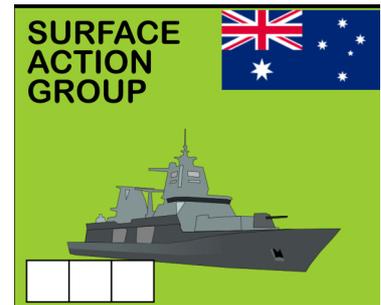


Naval units can redeploy to any sea area on the maps in a single game turn, unless their route from their current position to their new position is blocked in some way.

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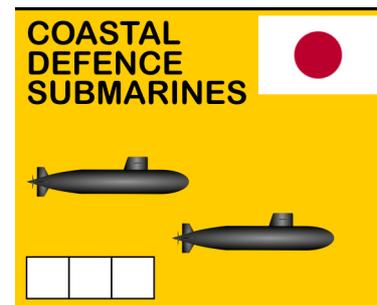
- Surface Action Groups - frigates, destroyers and gunboats or missile platforms of various types. Each group has 1 or 2 capability options. These take 2 turns to change, and the players have the opportunity to task organise the group's capabilities. The options are

- Strike (Cruise missile)
- ASW
- Amphibious ops support
- Anti Access-Area Denial (A2AD)
- BMD

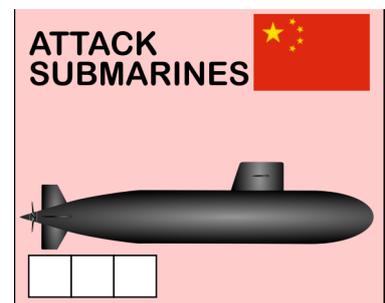


Naval units can redeploy to any sea area on the maps in a single game turn, unless their route from their current position to their new position is blocked in some way.

- Coastal Defence Submarines. Diesel submarines with short ranges. Deployed in numbers primarily for coastal defence. Naval units can redeploy to any sea area on the maps in a single game turn, unless their route from their current position to their new position is blocked in some way. Normally these subs only operate within 4 sea areas of their homeland.



- Attack Submarines - nuclear powered subs with global reach and very hard to detect. They have two operational options, Strike (Cruise missile) or Hunter-Killer (Anti-ship). Naval units can redeploy to any sea area on the maps in a single game turn, unless their route from their current position to their new position is blocked in some way.

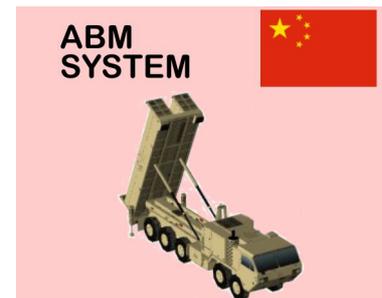


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- Air Defence zones - these are point defence and static, Some can be redeployed given time. They provide a strong air defence for the map area they occupy.



- Ballistic Missile Defence/ABM. These provide defence for the map area they are in and any adjacent map area.



- Army 'Divisions' - These represent a generalised land combat resource. They can move 1 area (on land!) per turn. The ability to move overseas or conduct amphibious operations at scale will be a separate capability.



- Air Wings. Air wings have an operational range of 6 map areas. They represent the capability to conduct an air campaign of various types including operations against adversary capabilities or A2AD.



Air wings are based in a specific land map area, and take a complete turn to be relocated to a new, friendly map area.

- Bomber Wings (Including Stealth Bombers). These have global reach and have the same range of mission options as Air Wings, but are more effective. Stealth has a good chance of penetrating an A2AD environment.



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## Capability Cards

Where a unit has the ability to support multiple capabilities, these are represented by capability cards. Military players select the cards to use from a limited selection, representing the scope of national capabilities. Capability Cards are allocated to specific units (All units have an identity number / letter to help this).

Some capabilities are Single Use and the card is discarded when used - this is marked on the cards affected.



## OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS

Where the military intend to change posture or deployments, the Military player must complete a **MILITARY OPERATIONS FORM** at the start of each turn. Note that this is for a series of activities over the period of a week, so avoid writing detailed hour-by-hour instructions and instead concentrate of overall mission aims and intents, matched to capabilities.

This outlines intended moves or deployments and any combat missions, including their **POSTURE** and **COMMITMENT LEVEL**.

This is brought to the appropriate map, and the military players, supervised by **MAP CONTROL** resolve any interactions at the map. This is done immediately and based on the instructions on the form - Military Players **may not** return to their team for clarification or further instructions. It is important to be clear on mission and intent **before** arriving at the map table.

