

**WAR! (*gaming*): What is it good for?**

- 1) What is Wargaming?
- 2) Types of Wargame
- 3) Wargaming and the British Army (and the Army Medical Services)
- 4) How to Get Involved

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- **Fight Club** member since 2021
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  - **University researcher** working on gamified approaches to teaching IT security risk assessment skills
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# **1. What is Wargaming?**

## What DON'T I Mean by 'Wargaming'?



GREETINGS PROFESSOR FALKEN

HELLO

A STRANGE GAME.  
THE ONLY WINNING MOVE IS  
NOT TO PLAY.

HOW ABOUT A NICE GAME OF CHESS?

- 'A **warfare model or simulation** whose operation does not involve the activities of actual military forces, and whose sequence of events affects and is, in turn, **affected by the decisions** made by players representing the **opposing sides**' [1]
- 'Wargames are representations of **conflict or competition** in a **synthetic environment**, in which people make **decisions** and respond to the consequences of those decisions' [2]

(Our) Bible says: 'A scenario-based warfare model in which the **outcome and sequence of events** affect, and are affected by, the **decisions** made by the players.' [3]

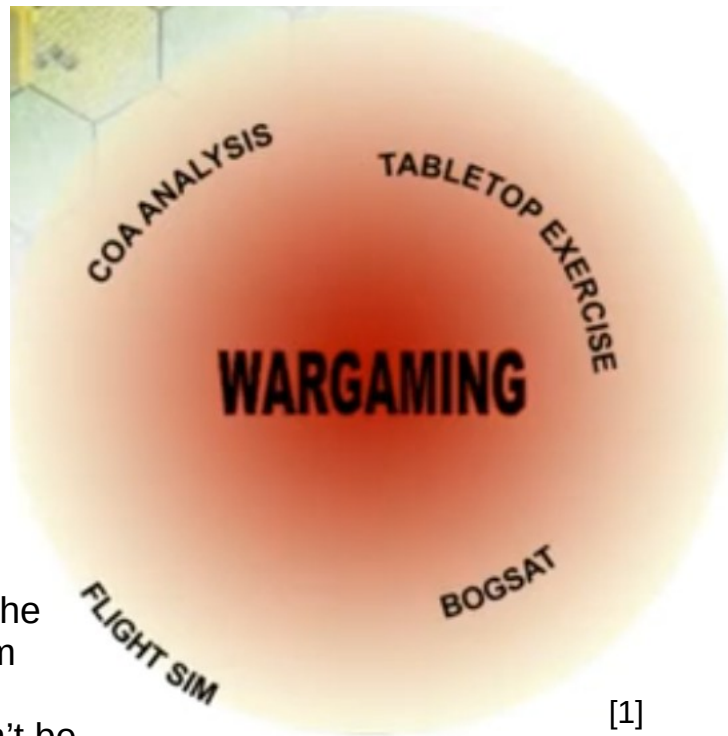
Other/related terms include: decision games, serious games, applied games, Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT), table top exercise (TTX), etc., etc.

[1] Perla, P., *The Art of Wargaming: A Guide for Professionals and Hobbyists*. Self-published (2022). [p 157]

[2] US DoD, *JP 5-0 Joint Planning* (2013).

[3] MOD, *Wargaming Handbook* (2017). [p 6]

# What DO I Mean by 'Wargaming'?



Gets hazy around the margins: a flight sim teaching aircraft instruments wouldn't be wargaming, but a flight sim teaching dogfighting would be

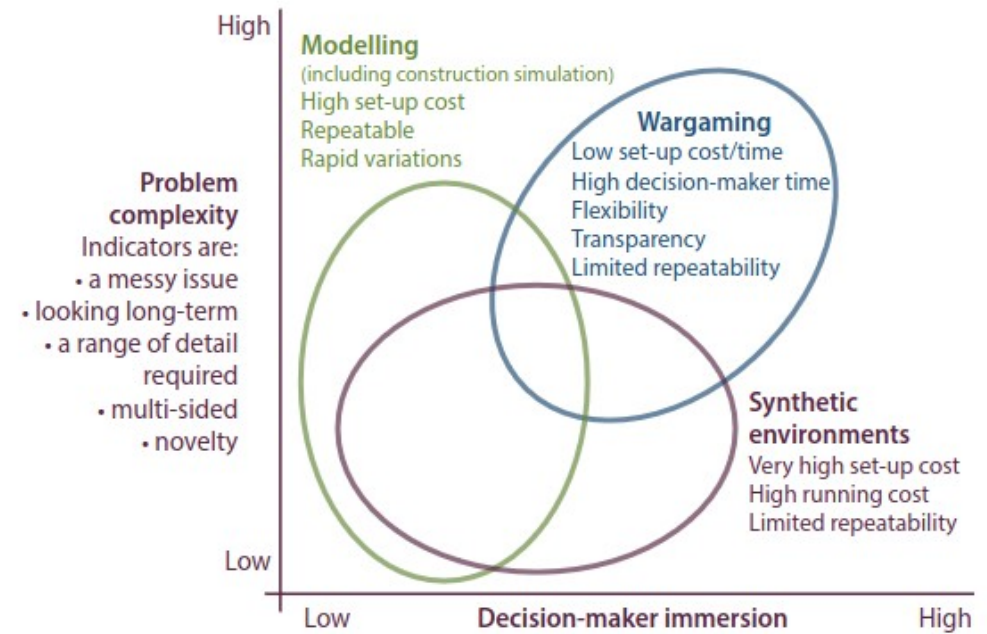
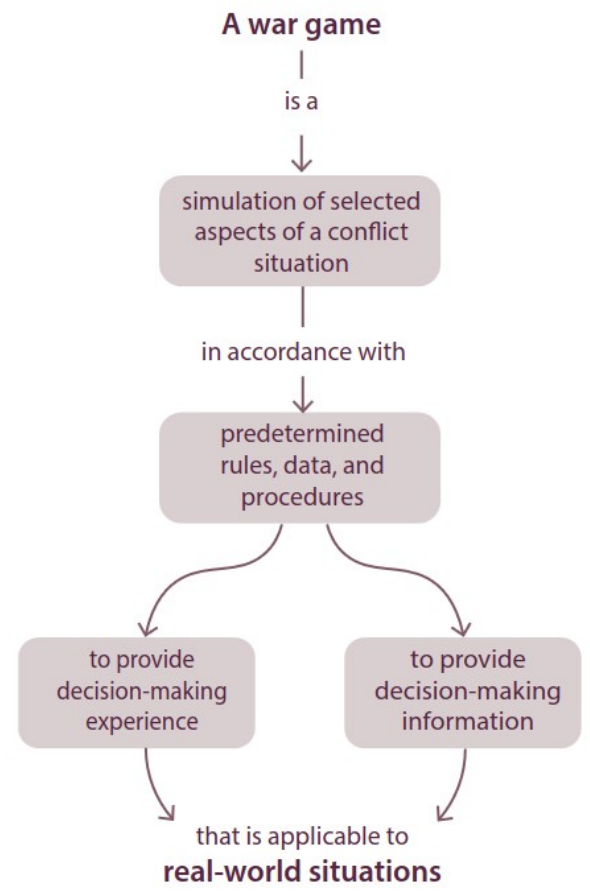


Figure 1.1 – Strengths, weaknesses and overlaps between wargaming, modelling and synthetic environments

[2]

[1] Guillory, B., "Introduction to Professional Wargaming". Presented at Connections Online (2022). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-TxFJ8839s>>

[2] MOD, *Wargaming Handbook* (2017). [p 6]



- a) Aims and objectives
- b) Setting and scenario
- c) Players (and their decisions)
- d) Simulation
- e) Rules, procedures and adjudication
- f) Data and sources
- g) Supporting personnel and subject matter experts
- h) Analysis

Figure 1.2 – The general purposes of wargames<sup>9</sup>

[1] MOD, *Wargaming Handbook* (2017). [pp 7–10]

## **2. Types of Wargame**

- 1) Education and training wargames ← ‘Reps & sets’ – what I’m interested in tonight (see also [2])
- 2) Analytical wargames:
  - a) Planning wargames
  - b) Executive decision-making wargames

‘The **distinction** between education and training wargames and analytical wargames is **not rigid**. A wargame designed for one purpose is also likely to have benefits in the other.’ [1]

[1] MOD, *Wargaming Handbook* (2017). [pp 8–9]

[2] Gardiner, I., Mouat, T. & Sabin, P., “Wargaming in Training & Education”. Fight Club Webinar Series (2021). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2La5aEgrAI>>

**‘Education and training wargames focus on training personnel, using **safe-to-fail environments** to allow participants to **practise, experiment and innovate**.**

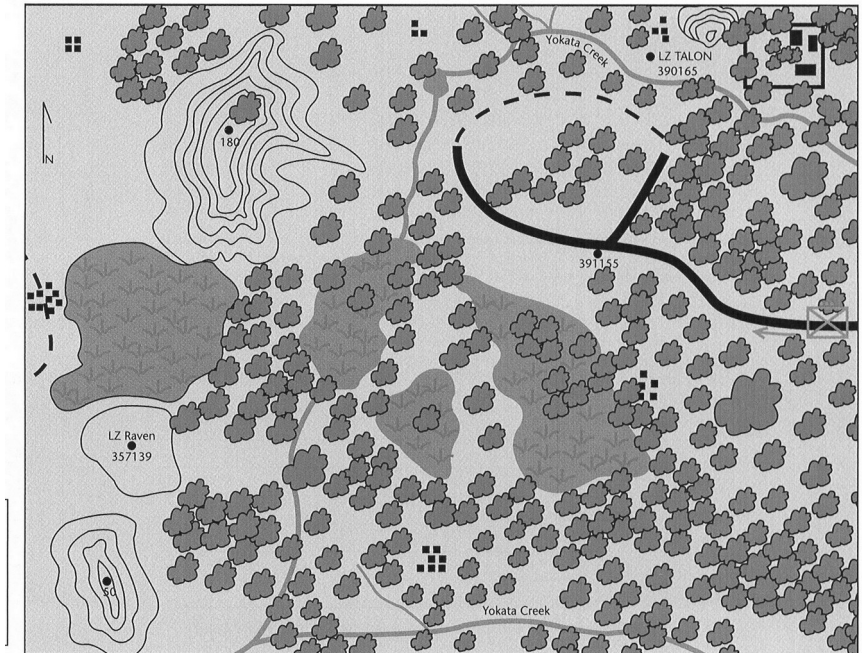
Wargames are well suited to this because they create **experiential learning opportunities**, helping to develop a shared narrative about situations and tasks that personnel might face in the real world.’ [1]

[1] MOD, *Wargaming Handbook* (2017). [p 8]

- Tactical Decision Game (TDG)
  - See also: PLANEX
- Decision-Forcing Case (DFC)
  - See also: case studies
- Seminar games
  - See [2]; see also: BOGSAT (Bunch of Guys Sat Around a Table)
- Matrix games
  - See [3]



**TDG #04-8**



[1]

You are the platoon commander of 3d Platoon, Company, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). Your platoon is tasked with conducting a battle damage assessment (BDA) of an AV-8B Harrier strike that was carried out on a terrorist training camp.

You have been inserted into the LZ without problems, and the CH-46s have left to refuel aboard the ships; they will not be able to extract the platoon for 45 minutes. As you prepare to conduct the BDA, the Cobra flight leader suddenly reports to you that there is an enemy platoon (reinforced)-sized convoy moving toward the objective. They are estimated to arrive in 20 to 30 minutes.

Task your squad and attachments to accomplish this mission. This is a daylight operation for photographic purposes, and all personnel in the area are declared hostile.

[1] Adapted from “Battle Damage Assessment”. Marine Corps Association (2019). <<https://www.mca-marines.org/tdg/battle-damage-assessment/>>

[2] Dunn, M. “Wargaming & the Military Decision Making Process”. (2021). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgzoiTq0ez8>>

[3] Curry, J., Perla, P. & Engle, C. *The Matrix Games Handbook: Professional Applications from Education to Analysis and Wargaming*. Self-published (2018).

## AFTERSHOCK: A Humanitarian Crisis Game

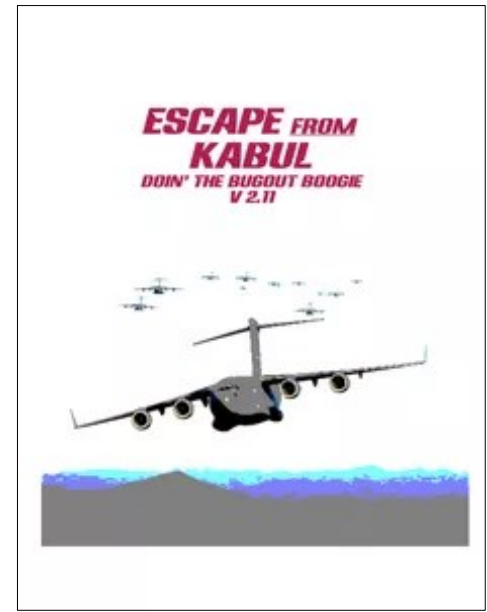
- Released in 2015, developed by Prof. Rex Brynen
- Loosely based off of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and 2010 Haitian earthquake
- Players take on one of four roles with differing objectives, abilities, rules:
  - Local government
  - Foreign military humanitarian support
  - UN
  - NGOs



[1] Brynen, R., "AFTERSHOCK". PAXsims (2015). <<https://paxsims.wordpress.com/aftershock/>>

# AFTERSHOCK Expansions

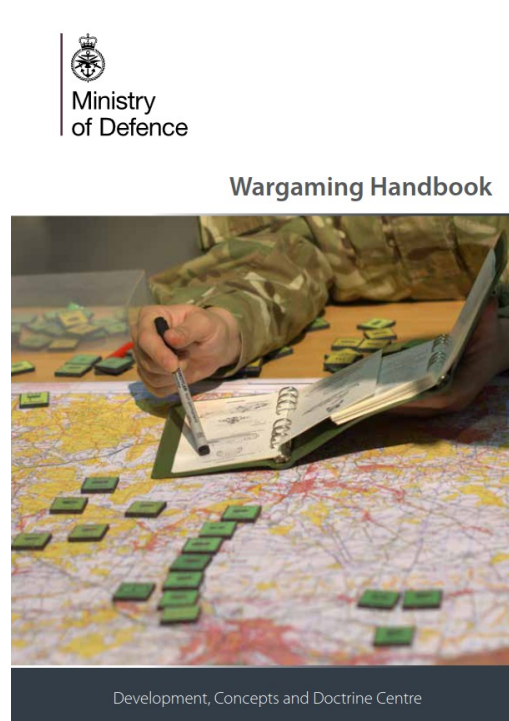
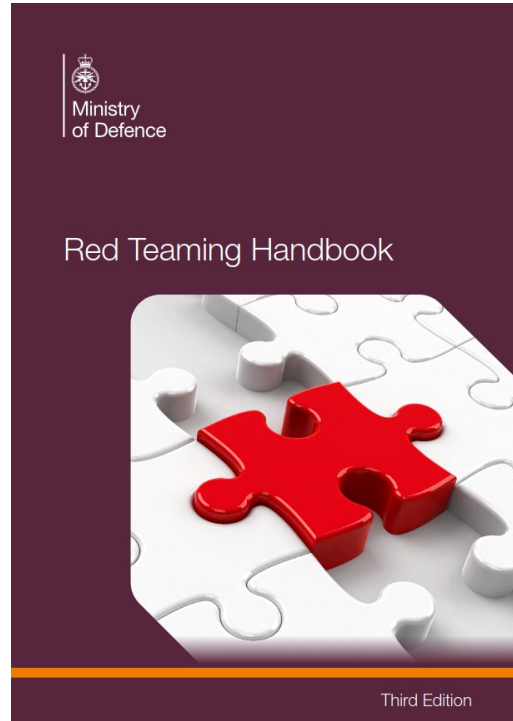
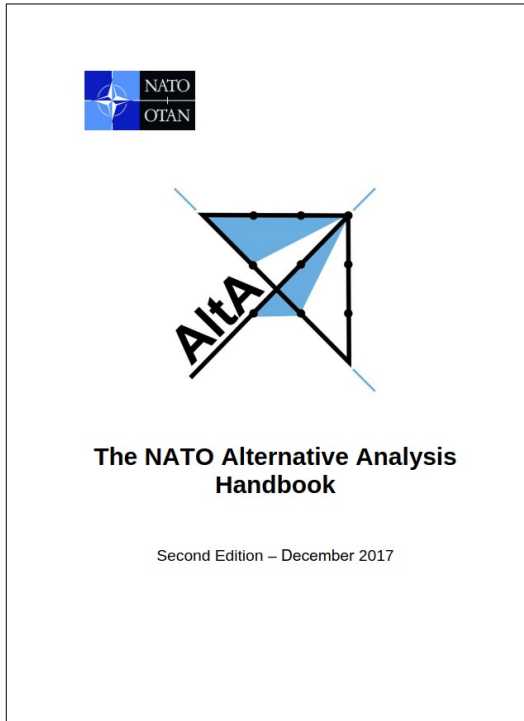
- 2016 expansion set: “Gender Dimensions of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief” [1]
- Mechanics adapted in 2022 into *Escape from Kabul*, around the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan [2]
- 2023 humanitarian access variant, inspired by Turkey–Syria earthquake, Yemen, etc. [3]



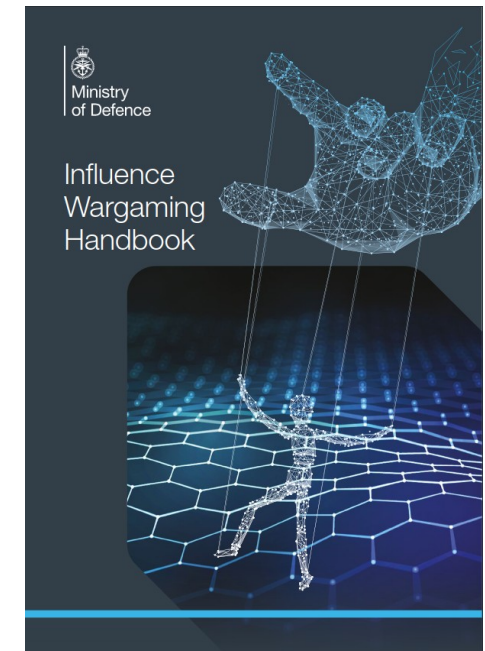
[1] “AFTERSHOCK Expansion Set #1 – Gender Dimensions”. The Game Crafter (2016). <<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/aftershock-expansion-set-1-gender-dimensions>>  
[2] Turner, E. & Johnson, T., “Escape from Kabul: Doin’ the Bugout Boogie”. (2022). <[https://grognard.com/scans/EfK\\_Rules\\_v2\\_11.pdf](https://grognard.com/scans/EfK_Rules_v2_11.pdf)>  
[3] Brynen, R., “AFTERSHOCK humanitarian access variant”. PAXsims (2023). <<https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2023/02/22/aftershock-humanitarian-access-variant/>>

# **3. Wargaming and the British Army**

## General Doctrine



## Specific Implementations



- Released in 2017, developed by then-Col David Vassallo RAMC
- Simulates running a field hospital (based on Bastion) and responding to trauma and major incidents
- Began with AMSTC, now used across NATO forces



[1] Vassallo, D., "Welcome to HOSPEX — The Tabetop". Friends of Millbank (2021).  
<[https://friendsofmillbank.org/download/pdf/Hospex\\_Tabletop\\_Exercise.pdf](https://friendsofmillbank.org/download/pdf/Hospex_Tabletop_Exercise.pdf)>

# Setup

**Role 3 (UK) Hospital, Camp Bastion**

**Room Capacities:**  
 CASF = 12 beds  
 ITU = 12 beds  
 Wd 2 = 19 beds  
 Wd 3 = 8 beds  
 Wd 4 = 20 beds  
 Wd 5 = 5 beds  
 Wd 5 = 6 beds  
 Wd 4 = 20 beds  
 Wd 3 = 8 beds  
 Wd 2 = 19 beds  
 ITU = 12 beds  
 CASF = 12 beds

**Room (T1) Windows:** Three identical windows showing a grid layout for room management.

**Blood Bank Window:** Contains sections for Blood, F.F.P, and Platelets etc.

**Crewmate Timeline Window:** A grid showing crewmate status over time.

**Treatment (T2) Window:** A vertical grid for patient treatment tracking.

**Emergency Theatre List Window:** A table for listing emergency theatre cases.

**Daily Theatre List: Example Window:** A table with columns for Date, Theatre, Patient Name, Operation, Surgeon, Anaesthetist, and Bed.

**Major Medical Incident Board Window:** A table for tracking major medical incidents.

**Other Elements:** Floor plan includes departments like Med GP HQ / Ops Rm, Theatre, Path Lab, ITU, Wards 2-5, X-RAY, Staff Room, Clinical Cell, Microbiology Lab, and Welfare.

- Developed in 2018 by then-Maj Caitlin Ebbets, US Army
- Inspired (in part) by *AFTERSHOCK, HOSPEX Tabletop*
- ‘This wargame is designed to expose players to aspects of operating a Field Hospital, or to **serve as a framework for medical units to improve operations, or train without committing extensive resources.**’
- Players spend a year preparing their hospital pre-deployment, then deploy, operate, redeploy, etc.
- Models staff fatigue, demonstrates importance of early planning

[1] Ebbets, C. *Death Can Wait*. US Army Command & General Staff College (2018). <<https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1084204.pdf>>

[2] Keubler, W., Lohr, S. & Sterrett, J. “Fighting for Our Future: How—and Why—we Brought Wargames to an ROTC Program”. Modern War Institute (2025). <<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/fighting-for-our-future-how-and-why-we-brought-wargames-to-an-rotc-program/#:~:text=Death%20Can%20Wait:%20Managing%20a%20Field%20Service%20Hospital>>

- Developed by Ivor Gardiner with Land Warfare Centre (LWC)
- ‘It enables participants to engage in realistic scenarios involving the planning, command and execution of military operations from company to battlegroup level.’
- **500 copies** ordered by MOD to distribute to units across the Army **later this year**



[1] Gardiner, I. “Wargame Design for Professional Military Education”. Fight Club Seminar Series (2025). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nn9Jgl82JM>>

- Currently in development by Dr Ian Robinson with AMSTC

**ROLE 2 HOSPITAL**

TIME/TURN	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16

	Head	Thorax	Abdomen	Limb
T1	SURGERY 12	SURGERY 8	SURGERY 8	SURGERY 4
T2	SURGERY 6	SURGERY 4	SURGERY 4	SURGERY 2
T3	SURGERY 3	SURGERY 2	SURGERY 2	SURGERY 2

Emergency Department Bay 1    Emergency Department Bay 2    Intensive Treatment Bay    Operating Theatre Bay

**GROUND MEDEVAC 3**

3 turns to move from UAP to R2

CARRYING CAPACITY (8pts)

T1 – IMMEDIATE (8pts) x 1    T2 – URGENT (3pts) x 2    T3 – DELAY (2pts) x 4

Transit 1    Transit 2    Role 2

PASSENGERS

SEND CASUALTIES TO ROLE 2 HOSPITAL



**T3 - DELAY**

RANK: Lt    NAME: Turner, C  
AGE: 24    SEX: Female  
ETHNICITY: White    ROLE: Eng Tp Ldr

DEGRADATION

SURGERY 3

**T3 - DELAY**

RANK: Sgt    NAME: Campbell, S  
AGE: 34    SEX: Male  
ETHNICITY: White    ROLE: Eng Sect Comd

DEGRADATION

SURGERY 2

ABDOMEN

**T2 - URGENT**

RANK: Pte    NAME: Lewis, C  
AGE: 22    SEX: Male  
ETHNICITY: White    ROLE: MG Gunner

DEGRADATION

SURGERY 4

ABDOMEN

# 4. How to Get Involved

‘Fight Club International is a **global wargaming network** dedicated to the **development and popularisation** of wargaming as a professional discipline. Our members come from a **diverse range of professional backgrounds** including serving military, the defense industry and the games industry.’ [1]

‘The UK Fight Club...**works to make gaming far more accessible to every level of the Armed Forces**. More than that, it seeks to **change culture**, making gaming a more common approach to improve thinking and fighting across all dimensions of conflict and competition.

This is a bottom-up initiative to use **Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) computer games and other systems** to drive change in military thinking and mimic realistic scenarios for its members ... **Ideas have no rank** and they are judged on their own merit.’ [2]



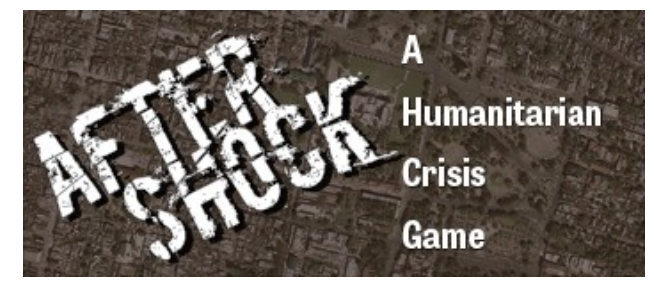
[1] “Homepage”. Fight Club International. <<https://www.fightclubinternational.org/>>

[2] Elliott, O. “UK Fight Club: Iron Sharpens Iron”. *Wavell Room* (2020). <<https://wavellroom.com/2020/08/27/uk-fight-club-iron-sharpens-iron/>>

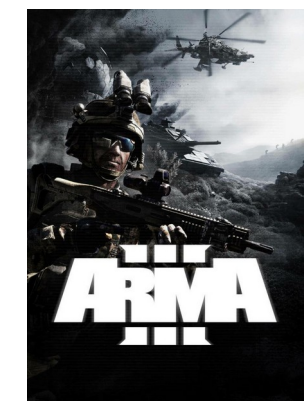
# Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) games

- Analogue games:
  - *Take That Hill!* and *Take That Street!*
  - *AFTERSHOCK: A Humanitarian Crisis Game*
  - Decades of games produced by military and civilian wargame hobbyists
  - See [1]

**Beware:  
complexity ≠ accuracy!  
(look up “pasta rule”)**



- Computer games:
  - *ARMA 3* (incl. ACE3 medical system)
  - *Combat Mission*
  - *Door Kickers*
  - *WARNO* (see [2])
  - *Tabletop Simulator* and *VASSAL*
- **A gap in the market?** Education & training wargames for healthcare. COTS games for healthcare.



[1] “Analogue Games”. Fight Club International. <<https://www.fightclubinternational.org/analogue-games>>

[2] Farren, E. “Using a COTS PC Game to Run a CPX”. The Cove (2018) <<https://cove.army.gov.au/article/using-cots-pc-game-run-cpx>>

## Upcoming Events

- **20–21 June 2025:** PlaySecure: <https://www.playsecure.online/>
- **8–10 July 2025:** Defence Simulation Education & Training (DSET) @ Bristol: <https://dset.co.uk/> (get hands-on with *MEDEVAC*)
- **13 July–17 August 2025:** Women's Wargaming Network course:  
<https://www.womenswargamingnetwork.org/events/wwn-x-dr-yuna-wong-wargaming-training-series>
- **28 July–1 August 2025:** Connections US @ John Hopkins University, Maryland: <https://connections-wargaming.com/>
- **9–11 September 2025:** Connections 2025 @ Brunel University London: <https://professionalwargaming.co.uk/2025.html>
- **February 2026:** Connections North @ Canada
- **20–25 April 2026:** Connections Online: <https://armchairdragoons.com/connections/>

- **PAXsims:** <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/>
- **Connections UK:** <https://professionalwargaming.co.uk/>
- **Fight Club:** <https://www.fightclubinternational.org/>
  - Channels: #medical-and-paramedical-analogue-games, #medevac-development, #gen-z (also mentoring scheme)
- **MORS:** <https://www.mors.org>
- **Women's Wargaming Network:** <https://www.womenswargamingnetwork.org/>
- **Defence Wargaming Centre @ Dstl:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/defence-wargaming-centre>
- **Army Tabletop Wargaming Association:** <https://jive.defencegateway.mod.uk/groups/army-tabletop-wargaming-association>

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- **Derby House Principles** <<https://paxsims.wordpress.com/derby-house-principles/>>
  - Bartels, E., "Wargames as an Educational Tool". RAND (2021).  
<<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2021/02/wargames-as-an-educational-tool.html>>
  - Toffler Associates, "The Art and Science of Wargaming". (2023).  
<<https://tofflerassociates.com/vanishing-point/the-art-and-science-of-wargaming/>>
  - Smith, Q., "The Games Behind Your Government's Next War". People Make Games (2024).  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYaDXZ2MI-k>>
  - Weidman, G., "Kriegsspiel! How Napoleon Accidentally Invented Strategy Games". Super Bunnyhop (2025).  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6Am1Gjr74A>>

*Fin.*

Note: unless otherwise mentioned, all reference URLs were last accessed 26 May 2025.