

# Was 'Millennium Challenge' War Game Fixed for U.S.?

by Carl Osgood

The *Army Times* dropped something of a bombshell, on Aug. 16, when it reported charges that Millennium Challenge 2002—the huge joint war-fighting experiment run by U.S. Joint Forces Command in late July and early August—had been rigged to produce a victory by the “American” forces. Retired Marine Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper, who acted as the opposing force commander in the war game, charged that the exercise, rather than validating the concepts it was supposed to be testing, “was almost entirely scripted to ensure a win” by the Blue (American) Forces.

These large-scale exercises were supposed to be testing new military concepts of U.S. forces fighting “in the 21st Century, in the post-Westphalian era”—that is, where nation-states are no longer assumed, but terrorist and other “threats” within states, pre-emptive actions against them, etc. (see *EIR*, Aug. 23 for report and interview). This is the kind of war-fighting which Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and many others in and out of government have, since Sept. 11, 2001, called “continual war,” with Cheney even speaking on one occasion of “100 years of war.”

Van Riper’s charges went against all the assertions of senior military leaders before the exercise. On July 18, Gen. William Kernan, commander of Joint Forces Command, had told reporters at the Pentagon, “This is free play. The OPFOR

[opposing force] has the ability to win here.” Van Riper vehemently denied that that had been the case. He told the *Army Times* “Instead of free-play, two-sided games as the Joint Forces commander advertised it was going to be, it simply became a scripted exercise. They had a predetermined end, and they scripted the exercise to that end.”

## Recipe for ‘Cakewalk’

Senior leaders at the Pentagon and at Joint Forces Command had made much of the fact that Millennium Challenge was an “experiment” rather than an exercise. An exercise, as General Kernan explained it, simply validates the readiness of forces using current doctrine, systems and procedures. “If you’re truly experimenting,” he said, “you’re looking at what’s within the realm of the possible, and you don’t know until you get into it. If you already know what the after-action report’s going to look like on an experiment, you’ve probably not got an experiment. You’ve just validated a known concept.” Col. Phil Mixon, the Director of Concept Development and Experimentation at the Joint Experimentation Center in Suffolk, Virginia, told *EIR* on Aug. 1, “there’s some things we think we’re going to learn . . . but, no, we’re not writing the final chapter before this is over with.” Mixon added, however, that the concepts had been put through a process of workshops, seminars, smaller-scale experiments, and so forth, and that by the time of the big experiment, “we’ve already put them through significant rigor, that they show merit,” and all that remains, is to put them through the large-scale war game, “to put stress on it, to make sure that it holds up under stresses.”

General Van Riper, who retired in 1997 as head of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, gave a completely different picture to the *Army Times*. He said “We were directed . . . to move air defenses so that the Army and Marine units could successfully land. We were simply directed to turn [the air defense systems] off or simply move them. . . . So, it was scripted to be whatever the control group wanted it to be.”

Ambassador Robert Oakley, who served as the civilian leader of the opposing force in the exercise, backed up Van Riper’s account. He described to the *Army Times*, how Van Riper used low-tech methods of transmitting orders, delivering weapons, and so forth, in order to outflank the technological advantages enjoyed by the Blue (U.S.) Forces.

## Opposing Force Was ‘Constrained’

After Van Riper’s charges began circulating, slightly different descriptions of the experiment began to emerge. Vice Adm. Marty Mayer, Kernan’s deputy at Joint Forces Command, told the *Army Times* reporter that having the Blue Force and the opposing force “was merely to facilitate the experiment and enable us to look at the different pieces. It was not to see who would win . . . but rather to be able to stress these different things so we can look at our abilities to react and

make decisions.” Mayer admitted that there were times when the opposing force was “constrained,” “in order for us to examine certain things.” He vehemently denied that “the books were cooked, or whatnot.”

Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace amplified Mayer’s remarks, speaking at the Pentagon on Aug. 20. He noted that there were as many different experiments going on at the same time as there were exercises also taking place. So, “if what the opposition force commander wanted to do, at a particular time in the experiment, was going to change the experiment to the point where the data being collected was no longer going to be valid as an experiment, then he was asked not to do that.”

Like Mayer, Pace insisted that the exercise was not rigged but “if some people in a particular part of the experiment felt like their life was being controlled more than they would like it to be, that wouldn’t surprise me.”

### **Problem Comes From Civilian Leadership**

Van Riper’s objections were very specific, however, in terms of how new concepts should be tested in an exercise. He is known as an expert in running opposing forces in exercises. He apparently went into Millennium Challenge believing he would have the freedom to “stress” the concepts of the supposed 21st-Century military transformation to its limits. In an Aug. 14 e-mail quoted by the *Army Times*, Van Riper wrote, “Unfortunately, in my opinion, neither the construct nor the conduct of the exercise allowed for the concepts of rapid decisive operations, effects-based operations, or operational net assessment [all described in *EIR*’s Aug. 23 report] to be properly assessed. . . . It was, in actuality, an exercise that was almost entirely scripted to ensure a Blue ‘win.’ ”

Van Riper told the *Army Times*, “My main concern was we’d see future forces trying to use these things when they’ve never been properly grounded in any sort of experiment.” He blamed the culture of Joint Forces Command, itself, for this situation. “There’s very little intellectual activity,” he said. “What happens is a number of people are put into a room, given some sort of slogan and told to write to the slogan. That’s not the way to generate new ideas.”

If there’s a cultural problem within Joint Forces Command, it comes from above. As *EIR* has reported, the troika of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith, and Defense Policy Board chairman Richard Perle is committed to a Clash of Civilizations outlook and “perpetual wars” of religion. Linked to this is desire to ignore the sovereignty of other nations, and the immediate insistence, by them and their fellow neo-conservative ideologues, on a war against Iraq—which they claim will be “a cakewalk,” in the words of former arms control official Kenneth Adelman.

Would they willingly permit any events or developments within the military establishment that would tend to invalidate the operational concepts that they are demanding?