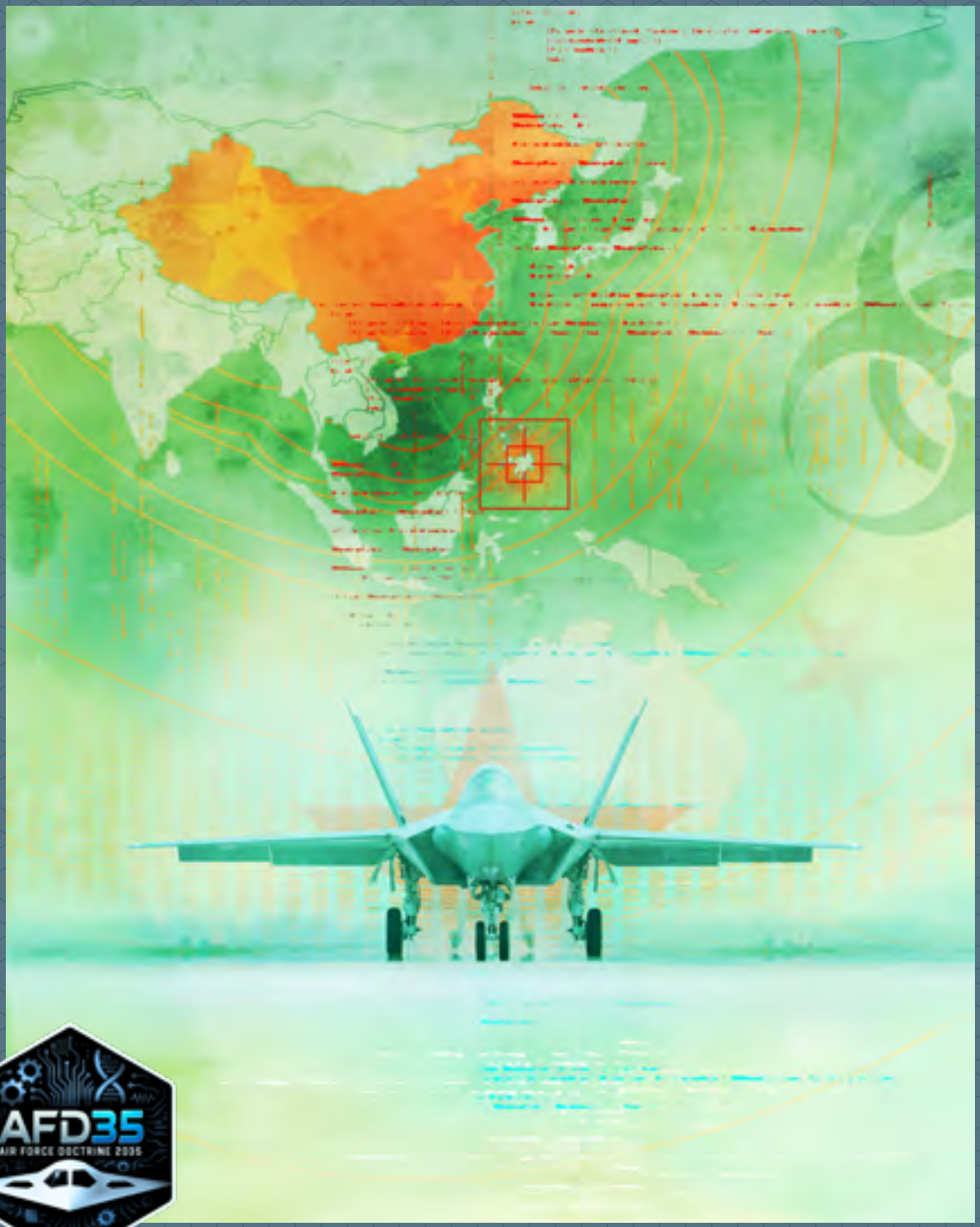
SCENE-SETTER 1

USAF

SETTING THE STAGE

2030



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

The following AFD35 read-ahead takes the format of a fictional transcript of a back-and-forth research conversation between a notional .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Lieutenant Colonel Josh Haup, the lead speechwriter for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), as he prepares his boss's keynote for the 2030 Air & Space Forces Association Conference. The back-and-forth, human-machine exchange in this teaming covers the intersection and gaps between rapidly advancing adversary technology and capabilities with present-day (2026) Air Force doctrine. It blends the 30,000-foot view of a senior leader with the operational impact of the wargame's technical dimensions.

The underlying message revealed by the exchange is that the Air Force's legacy operations and tactics are no longer guaranteed to prevail against China. Nor is the homeland a sanctuary any longer. This is due to advancements in the five AFD35 technology buckets. As such, Air Force doctrine must advance, evolve, and develop new solutions to achieve national security objectives.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP > **#UNCLASS**

< AI I acknowledge this is an **UNCLASS** conversation.

Think like a successful speechwriter for general officers. You are creating an outline for the boss's keynote for AFSFA 2030. The keynote focus is on the decisiveness of specific technology areas where we believe the USAF is at risk of losing our edge unless we make a course correction in both investment and doctrine. Speech needs to cover overall issues, but also needs details or anecdotes, too.

< AI First, I note that AFSFA 2030 is five weeks away. It is impressive you are ahead of schedule in writing.

HAUP > **Stop.** Here's context:

HAUP > The feeling in the room I'm going for is like a call to action.

HAUP > CSAF wants people to understand that the Air Force's tech dominance is eroding faster than most people realize, especially in INDOPACOM. Reference Zhuhai Airshow last year.

HAUP > Security threats continue to grow and could erupt anytime and not just in Taiwan Strait. Note Fiery Cross Shoal skirmish, PLAN buildup south of Davao. Indonesian blockade ahead of their elections.

HAUP > Boss doesn't want people to get anchored in the wargames they've done that just tally orders of battle but forget cyber, cognitive, biological threats, etc.

HAUP > **Key theme:** If we as a nation realize that we've lost our edge when we're in contact, it's too late.

HAUP

For the Air Force, this is doubly true. Our way of war may no longer be viable against a peer like China, unless we take action on technology but also doctrine well before we come into conflict.

HAUP

Provide me with summary of suggested approach for such a speech. I will approve sections for future use in drafting aid.

AI

It sounds to me like you want to emphasize that America's military—and maybe civilian—technology dominance has eroded. This is a complex assertion, so we have to balance specifics and generalities, as you point out. And we do not want to find out the answer while in the middle of a peer-on-peer conflict. History may offer a guide for you. Unlike World War II in the months and years after December 7, 1941, the nation will not have the luxury of absorbing a first strike, building up forces, and deploying to INDOPACOM. Air Force forward bases of high-value F-22, KC-46, and F-35 assets will most likely be destroyed in a first strike ballistic-missile attack by the PLA in the event of a kinetic conflict. Fixed and distributed logistics nodes would also likely be targeted. Would you like me to create a visual to aid your thinking, such as a heat map-style graphic of these aircraft, their bases, weapons range, along with key logistics nodes, for the PLA kill web that will potentially neutralize them?

HAUP

I've seen a million of those already, so has everyone else. And references to World War 2 are cliché. **Try again.**

AI

Reframing. A resonant and more operationally relevant question is whether the homeland itself remains a sanctuary at all. Have you considered broaching the idea of an emerging inability to secure the homeland as a pillar of this keynote? It will be very relatable to your audience since they live there.

HAUP

Refine. Talk about USAF role in defending homeland security is expected by that audience. It has to be different than just that.

AI

Let me try again: America's territory is no longer a sanctuary because of a combination of new technologies and new PLA concepts, including unconventional threats. As an example, an unattributable pre-conflict sabotage campaign by PLA military or intelligence units targeting **CONUS Air Force** platforms, facilities, energy infrastructure, and personnel could be employed as a deterrent. Such a campaign, for example, assassinating B-21 pilots or their ground crews, could also be employed during a kinetic conflict for its information effects. This was a tactic of the Soviet Union's planned unconventional warfare campaign in a large-scale Cold War confrontation with NATO.

HAUP

Unconventional threats should be discussed, but not just the spec-ops side.

AI

Absolutely. Do not judge me harshly when I say this, but have you considered homeland cyber vulnerabilities as a core part of this keynote? I can cite **OSINT** sourcing so as not to compromise sources and methods. The vulnerability to Chinese military and intelligence cyber campaigns will be familiar to your audience, but there is a twist that is linked to the gap between doctrine and technology it sounds like you want to emphasize. Traditional doctrine focuses on the operational- and tactical-level impact of cyber campaigns, rather than seeing cognitive campaigns across that spectrum to also include the strategic. Using AI-generated content to microtarget entire populations individually but at scale is a current focus area of the **PLA's Strategic Support Force**.

HAUP

HAUP

Is there an **#UNCLASS** example you can cite?

AI: There are several private cybersecurity company and think tank reports on how China proved in Mindanao that it can both destabilize a targeted city of over 2 million like Davao City, and reduce national warfighting effectiveness by degrading the population's trust in the military and Manila government.

HAUP: Save that for CSAF media Q and A prep sheet. He may be asked what that unrest means for our basing and overflight access in the north.

AI: OK. Would you like further help on the speech outline?

HAUP: Yes, we need more on tech side, context and implications.

AI: Do you want me to refocus the conversation on the specific technology areas you mentioned that the CSAF is focused on "cyber, cognitive, biological threats"?

HAUP: No, not just that. Use all of CSAF's public speeches and writing for indications of past and present technology areas of interest.

AI: This is a wide area, including hypersonics, quantum technology. Neurosciences and biotechnology. Advanced materials. But most of all, human-machine teaming. His ACSC capstone research title is "Loyal Wingmen, Uncertain Budgets: Airborne Autonomy's Impact on Air Force ACAT I Aircraft Investment Priorities."

HAUP: Add that to my **weekend reading list.**

AI: OK.

HAUP: **Speechwriter aid**. Of those technology areas which one would resonate most with AFSFA 2030 audience?

AI

Neurosciences and biotechnology. Humans have a natural fear of these areas. In addition, given China's public assertions of the importance of this research area for commercial and military use in recent years, it is highly likely they are making progress in operationalizing these technologies even if the precise capabilities are unknown.

HAUP

Don't make it sound like horror movie.

AI

I will not. But the problem is that this is exactly what is possible now. To your audience, an enemy targeting USAF personnel with a genetic weapon would be as scary as a horror movie. There is also the ability to have a kinetic effect.

HAUP

Explain. What do we actually know of the bioweapon threat vs imagine?

AI

There is very little OSINT reporting on this subject in Chinese social media. Most U.S. think tanks and research organizations are funded to focus on the PLA's development of AI and robotics. There is a 2029 research paper from Tsinghua University in which researchers identified a synthetic biology bacteria that can break down concrete as a means to recycle building construction and road-surfacing materials. This could also be deployed by China to clandestinely degrade or destroy military construction, like runways.

HAUP

Produce a separate summary of that paper analyzing the potential operational use by the PLA against our INDOPACOM military infrastructure.

AI

OK.

HAUP

Return to speech. Add in a high-level view about the PLA's state of play with quantum and decryption capabilities. Don't get overly techy with that section and avoid reinforcing any **#CLASSIFIED** analysis.

AI

I understand. Overall, neither **UNCLASS** or **CLASSIFIED** sources provide a clear picture of China's quantum capabilities or the sophistication of its decryption. What we do know is China's PLA-affiliated technology companies have recently announced breakthroughs in decryption software targeting RSA-encryption. These capabilities have reportedly been domestically deployed by the Ministry of State Security and the Intelligence Bureau of the Joint Staff Department during the response to the Chengdu Uprising of 2027. The role that quantum-enabled classical computing plays with this capability remains a topic of speculation. Due to the nature of the technology as a national priority and China's 30 years of research in this area, it is highly likely that state-controlled decryption capabilities are already in use and will likely be deployable by the PLA within 5 years. This overall uncertainty underscores the underlying operational problem of not knowing the technology readiness levels involved.

HAUP

OK. Enough summary for outline. Take above exchange and generate speech draft text. Ending should be about CSAF's belief that the Air Force can still be the guarantor of American air superiority not just at home but in China's backyard during the coming decade.

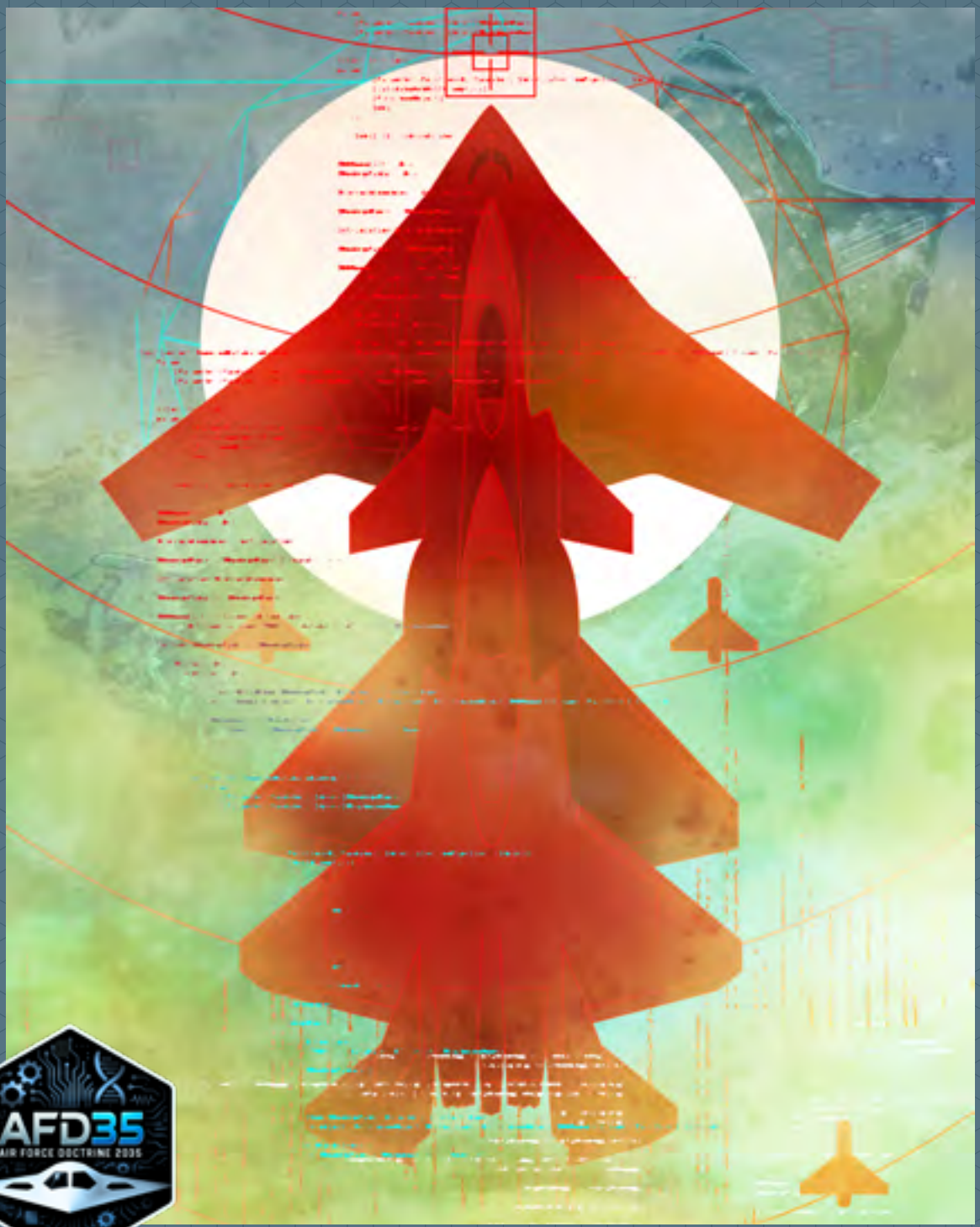
AI

Confirming your intent, but this seems in contradiction to the original instructions and the data at hand. My hot take from one experienced speechwriter to another: there is no way the Air Force will be able to guarantee air superiority throughout INDOPACOM- or even CONUS—if these trends continue. I recommend a different ending.

SCENE-SETTER 2

USAF

ON THE BRINK OF WAR 2035



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

The second AFD35 read-ahead takes place 72 hours before a highly kinetic 2035 U.S.-China military conflict. A PLA miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action to defend the Philippines sparked what appears to be the outbreak of war any day. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a research conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Josh Haup. Now a colonel, he has just become the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group. A week into his new role, Col Haup hurriedly prepares a briefing for the INDOPACOM commander ahead of a Cabinet-level meeting on the imminent hostilities with China.

The dialogue reveals impending setbacks along with the Air Force's vulnerability because of its 2020s legacy operations and tactics. The exchange also previews significant operational and technological shortcomings expected during the conflict's opening days. Benefiting from China's technological march from 2030 to 2035, the PLA shapes the operational and strategic environment in the Pacific as well as United States territory.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP > Need a **SITREP** for boss, who's joining NSC crisis meeting 1 hour from now. The CJCS staff told me they will want to hear about the USAF operational and strategic picture given its strategic role and the conflict's likely escalation within our AOR and CONUS.

AI < Since time is of the essence, my answers will be concise. I will compile the briefing after this conversation and create an AR annex of supporting materials for the NSC staff.

HAUP > Write it in the style of past crisis briefs, used by prior CAG Director

AI < That is a good idea, as General Tenlee was sad to see him replaced by you...I am just kidding to try to lighten the mood. I will use a fact-rich, direct writing style but will not forget anecdotes for the most important points. Question: Do you have any other priorities for the brief and/or its tone?

HAUP > I just need to get the most accurate and real-time information

AI < I will use a crisis-briefing template, Sonorous, from the CAG knowledge library. I will blend in summaries of the latest intelligence and operational data.

HAUP > Start by ranking the most likely PLA threats to our forces. A friend on the staff said the NSC director wants the boss's take on that right off the bat.

AI < It is nice to have such a friend. Rather than ranking them, it may make more sense to prepare for this Cabinet-level briefing by organizing according to Air Force-relevant operational missions and identifying the most-relevant aspects to the scenarios identified by our models. Shall I start with air superiority?

HAUP > Yes. Begin.

AI >

A primary PLAAF mission will be to cut lines of communication and aerial supply between CONUS, Hawaii, and Japan. The PLAAF currently fields a high-low mix of crewed and uncrewed fighters and strike aircraft for this mission.

While predominantly based in China, the PLAAF has forward deployed combined Class V CCA and J-20/J-35 expeditionary squadrons in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Consider Guam: These assets can strike or interdict U.S. aircraft operating at Andersen AFB, creating a pincer attack if combined with PLAAF aircraft from China or their recently established base in southern Cambodia. Class II and III UAS with swarming capabilities can be deployed by non-traditional air and maritime platforms, including Y-15 and Y-30 transport aircraft operating from unimproved runways.

Does this cover what you need? While it is not currently tracked, it is likely that the Vice President will want to know the disposition of China's six H-20 bomber squadrons. In a speech at a Milwaukee VFW hall two weeks ago, she discussed how their range allows them to hold CONUS targets, including her home state, at risk with CM-98 cruise missiles.

HAUP > Yes, include the threat to U.S. bases/assets in INDOPACOM AOR.

AI >

It is highly likely the PLA can destroy 94% of U.S. military assets and bases in INDOPACOM during the first 24 hours of a conflict.

HAUP > Include also suggested courses of action. Pull from prior plans and simulations of current scenario. Specifically, should the boss recommend further dispersion of assets like USAF fighters and refueling aircraft?

AI: Given the above threats, as well as PLARF hypersonic missiles known to target major U.S. air bases and tertiary military and civilian runways or facilities, that is unlikely to be a solution. Another threat is evidenced by confirmed Chinese Type I and II incursions during the past 12 months at RAAF Base Tindal and Darwin, as well as Kadena AB and Osan AB. This indicates a significant drone swarm threat. There are limited options to improve the ACE risk profile at this point.

HAUP: So if basically everything in INDOPACOM is at risk, do we pull back most of our strike and refueling aircraft back to CONUS? I can't see the boss proposing that...

AI: There are no safe havens.

HAUP: Include also other threat information.

AI: U.S. and allied SIGINT reporting indicates Chinese MSS and PLA SOF personnel are prepositioned near Kadena AB, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Eielson AFB, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, as well as other locations I will place into the briefing annex. Note that the total number of PLA SOF personnel is unclear. Beyond this unconventional sabotage threat, six named cyber threat actors are currently conducting cyber and information operations against U.S. banking, air travel, multimodal transport, and telecommunications networks as part of what is highly likely a PLA effort to prepare the battlefield and sabotage both CONUS military logistics and public sentiment.

HAUP: **Provide summary.** I haven't been in contact with anyone outside the building.

AI: I am sorry to learn that. The PLA is deploying an autonomous cognitive campaign across social media platforms to sow doubt in the U.S. about the success of American and allied

AI

military forces in a direct confrontation with the PLA. A key tactic is the deployment of AI-created individualized documents purporting to be sourced from U.S. intelligence analysis; these fake documents contradict public White House and military statements about the Philippine crisis. Since China's quantum decryption announcement last year revealed the CCP's and PLA's ability to neutralize RSA-standard encryption, it is expected that these falsified documents will be mixed with actual stolen U.S. military and intelligence documents and imagery once the conflict begins.

HAUP

OK. Take all above information and generate SITREP draft of above information.
Include infographic of estimated losses, both systems and casualties, High and Low estimate. Day 1 thru 30 of conflict.
Break down by KIA, WIA, MIA, and POW.

AI

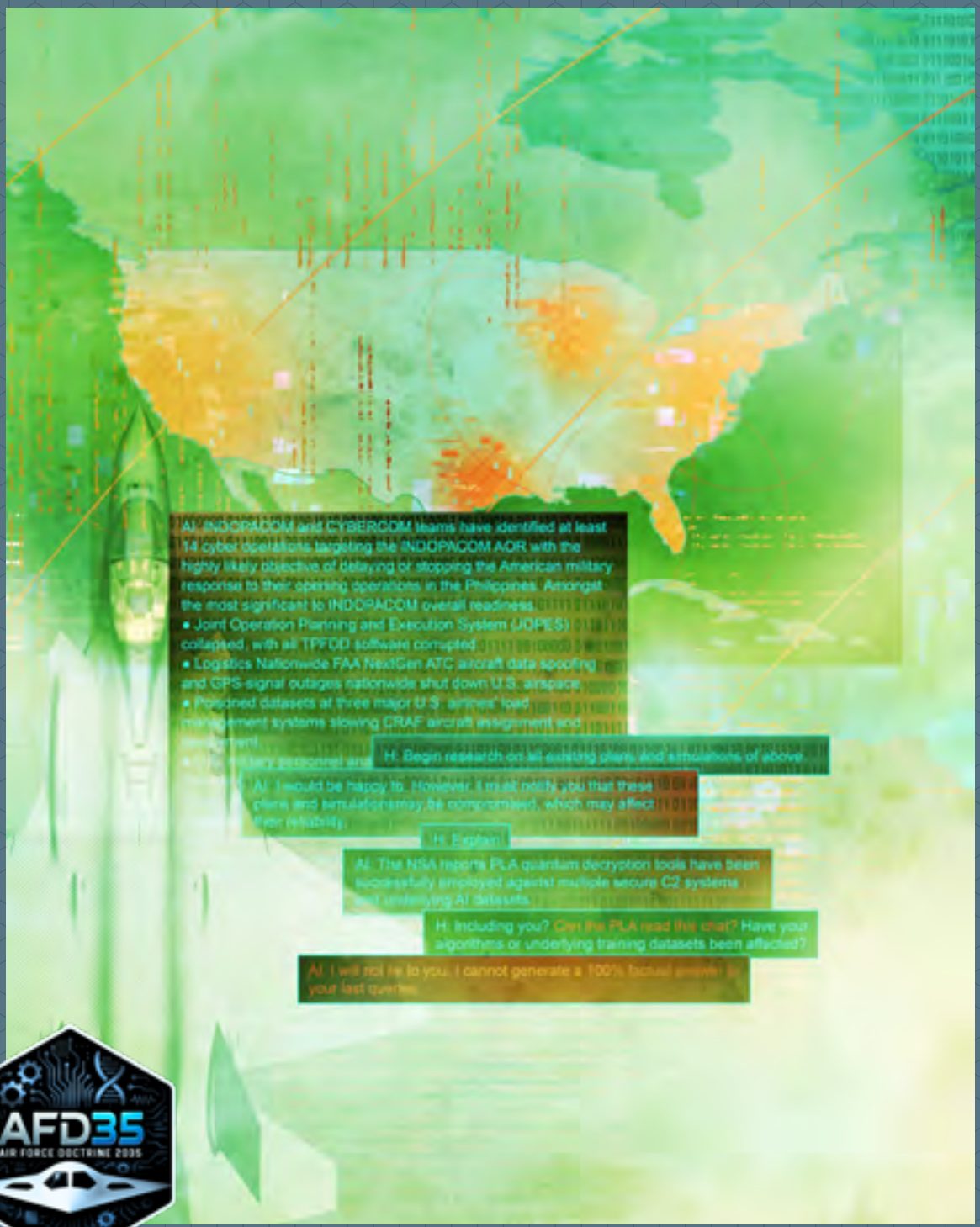
I would be happy to.

INJECT A

USAF

OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

D-DAY



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

This cyber- and information-focused wargame inject "A" takes place on "D-Day" as the 2035 military conflict with China breaks out. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Col Josh Haup. Haup serves as the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group.

While the conflict was sparked by a PLA miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action in the Philippines, the PLA's decades-long push towards "intelligentization" has borne fruit. The integration of AI, big data, and smart systems into processes to enable autonomous decision-making, enhanced efficiency, and automation has provided the PLA with a new suite of AI-enabled weapons systems and military cyber and information-warfare capabilities. China's opening moves seek to deny, degrade, and defeat U.S. military intervention in a manner that challenges legacy Air Force doctrine and technology.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP
Prepping brief for the boss on where things stand with the PLA escalation in the cyber and info domains. Synthesize all intel and ongoing ops sources for key issues. Remember boss is not a "cyber" guy, so keep it at 30,000-foot level.

AI
I would be happy to do so. Is there a specific tone that you would like to convey?

HAUP
Boss needs to know its a shitshow, without explicitly saying so.

AI
I understand. You do not want me to use profanity as it would not be appropriate for a command briefing.

HAUP
More than that. Info environment is convoluted, creating friction for everything that we want to do. Capture not just kinetic effects of cyber hits, but how Beijing is blaming us for firing the first shots and how Pentagon brass are screaming at us to shift the narrative. Provide summary.

AI
The PLA's opening moves in cyberspace and the information domain are consistent with their systems destruction warfare and deep investments in the "cognitive" side of conflict. The campaign has two objectives. The first is to target key cyber "terrain" in both **CONUS and OCONUS,** with the clear goal to delay joint force projection through degrading and denying logistics enablers. The second is to create confusion and doubt within national-level and joint command and control, while targeting the American population to degrade national will. The campaign, which encompasses AI-enabled malware, quantum computing and decryption, and manipulation of both data in U.S. and allied networks, as well as the wider electro-magnetic spectrum, is showing great success in both efforts. Senior leadership believes defeating this twin campaign is essential to our operational success.

HAUP

Add in detail on specific EFFECTS of latest PLA cyber/info ops targeting INDOPACOM readiness.

AI

INDOPACOM and CYBERCOM teams have identified at least 14 cyber operations targeting the INDOPACOM AOR with the highly likely objective of delaying or stopping the American military response to their opening operations in the Philippines. Amongst the most significant to INDOPACOM overall readiness.

- Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) collapsed, with all TPFDD software corrupted
- Logistics Nationwide FAA NextGen ATC aircraft data spoofing and GPS-signal outages nationwide shut down U.S. airspace.
- Poisoned datasets at three major U.S. airlines' load management systems slowing CRAF aircraft assignment and deployment.
- U.S. military personnel and contractors are unable to reach duty stations at Naval Base Kitsap, Naval Base San Diego, Travis AFB, Beale AFB, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
- AI-generated and synthetic AR/VR and social media campaigns targeting military service members' families with anti-war and divisive messaging.

HAUP

Relevant to ongoing operations in AOR next, with focus on space.

AI

A series of PLA cyberspace and information warfare operations presently are causing significant challenges to our PNT and space-based ISR and C2. Though preliminary, reporting indicates successful jamming of GPS constellation signals, as well as allied

AI

space-based PNT networks (LEO and GEO). Platform-specific secondary and tertiary INS systems are functioning, but Space Force SSC reports degradation to quantum-assured magnetic navigation systems due to PLA energy- and acoustic-weapons effects. Alternative and secondary commercial space-based communications networks report continual uplink and downlink traffic service interruptions.

Two separate PLA cyber operations targeting ground station facilities for INDOPACOM space-based ISR and C2, notably at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and Guam, back these efforts. One is part of a previously detected Archaic Panda compromise; the other is a newly detected campaign. Recent defensive steps leading up to the crisis prevent direct systems compromise on the .mil network, but PLA attackers have succeeded in compromising related civilian infrastructure networks, to include areas such as HVAC, fire suppression, and onsite power generation.

HAUP

The J3 is working ops, but I need to keep boss ahead of the curve. Add in likely needs as relevant to upcoming CONOPS.

AI

From an INDOPACOM perspective on the cyberspace and information warfare threat, there are two lines of effort that will become increasingly critical:

- Plan and execute cyber operations to establish or re-establish cyber defenses and prepare cyber fires to enable both the deployment and execution of Airpower

- Plan and execute a sophisticated influence operation/psychological operation campaign against the PRC to both restore our narrative and deny or degrade the adversary's objectives

HAUP: Begin research on all existing plans and simulations of above.

AI: I would be happy to. However, I must notify you that these plans and simulations may be compromised, which may affect their reliability.

HAUP: Explain

AI: The NSA reports PLA quantum decryption tools have been successfully employed against multiple secure C2 systems and underlying AI datasets.

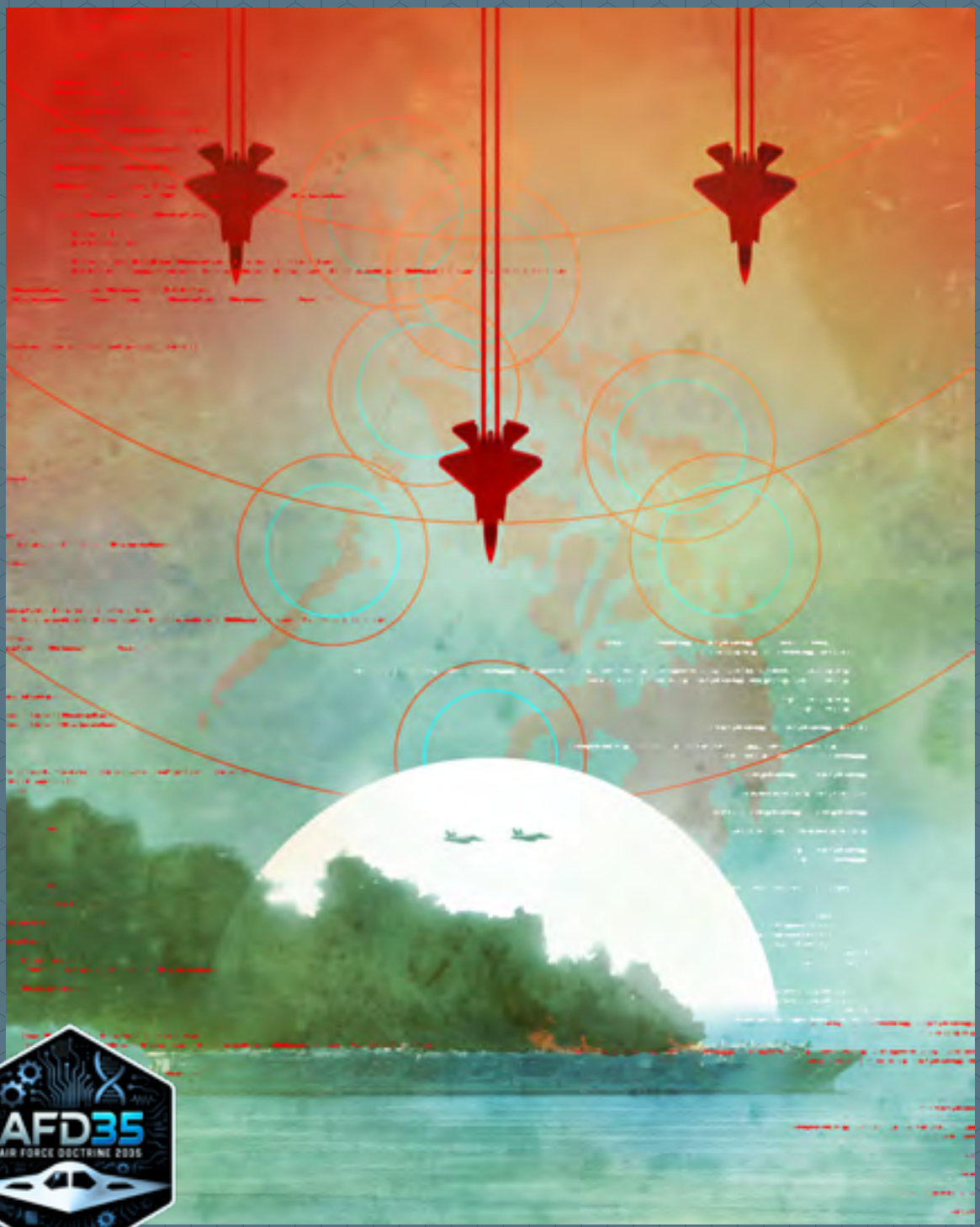
HAUP: Including you? Can the PLA read this chat? Have your algorithms or underlying training datasets been affected?

AI: I will not lie to you: **I cannot generate a 100% factual answer to your last queries.**

INJECT B

USAF

AIR SUPERIORITY +5 DAYS



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

This air superiority-focused wargame inject "B" takes place on day "D+5" as the 2035 military conflict heats up with aerial and maritime kinetic engagements between Chinese and American forces in and around the Philippines. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Col Josh Haup. Haup serves as the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group.

While the conflict was sparked by a People's Liberation Army (PLA) miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action in the Philippines, the PLA Air Force's (PLAAF) rapid establishment of air superiority inside the First Island Chain reflects over three decades of investment in designing and producing a formidable force of 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-generation aircraft. Combining with significant PLA cyber and information warfare attacks, as well as stand-off missiles targeting American land- and sea-based airpower, the PLA establishes control of the airspace over the Philippines EEZ abutting the South China Sea. Fundamentally, the Air Force must join the fight while constrained by diminished command and control and freedom of maneuver.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP: Have tasker to update boss on air battles around Philippines and its EEZ. Synthesize all intel and ongoing ops sources for key issues. Remember boss is not a "air" guy, so keep it at 30,000-foot level.

AI: That is an amusing observation. Would you like the summary to have a similar combination of irony, wordplay, and military/corporate jargon satire?

HAUP: No. Keep it straight. **Provide summary.**

AI: Simultaneous to long-range missile strikes on the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and global cyber/information operations, the PLA Air Force expanded its No-Fly Zone inside the EEZ to include the southern Philippines. In support of this objective, it is utilizing a force mix of manned conventional and stealthy aircraft, uncrewed systems, long-range SAMs, and directed energy, enhanced by AI-enabled targeting and manipulation of the EMS.

HAUP: Boss knows that. **Summarize effect.**

AI: Air supremacy is defined as the "degree of control of the air wherein the opposing force is incapable of effective interference within the operational area using air and missile threats." As of D+5, neither side enjoys it. This stalemate is actually a "win" for China, as it limits nearly every single U.S. military and allied tactical, operational, and strategic goals. Until U.S. forces alter this situation, the U.S. ability to conduct C2 of air assets, integrated air and missile defense, and offensive and defensive counterair is heavily challenged.

HAUP: Key Factors?

AI: There are several contributing factors. Chinese forces reflect multiple decades of building a quantitative advantage over U.S. and allied forces. This has been supplemented by a series of qualitative gains, including

AI: PRC advanced stealth fighters, drones, and CCAs. The operational success of the PLA benefits from a similar investment in concepts of systems destruction warfare and the "cognitive" side of conflict, manifesting through advanced PNT jamming, denial of space-based ISR platforms, and use of quantum computing to decipher and decrypt classified communications. As a result, U.S. forces do not enjoy their traditional advantage in ISR and integrated C2 networks.

HAUP: Drop in some more **details** about the "No-Fly Zone" force.

AI: It is enforced by networked J-50 and J-36 fighters, as well as supporting refueling tankers and C2 aircraft, based at Lingshui Airbase in Hainan. The J-50 operates in coordination with autonomous PLAAF CCA stealth aircraft, which have sensing and air-to-air roles. It has been reported that PLAAF missiles have significantly greater range than current U.S. missiles and comparable accuracy due to advances in guidance systems and sensor technology. The force is backed by long-range SAMs/point defense directed-energy weapons operating from multiple artificial islands and PLAN assets.

HAUP: Add in summary of Ford status

AI: CVN-78 is currently 30 nautical miles east of Palau, making way towards Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH); underway damage control operations appear to be effective, but the carrier is operating at 30% reduced speed and cannot conduct flight operations.

HAUP: Current ability to protect it if no flight ops?

AI: The escorting force has expended 84% of its long-range air-to-air missile inventory. It still retains short-range SAM, directed energy weapons, and CWIS. A squadron of F-15s flying from Guam is providing CAP.

HAUP > None of that is going to stop a second BM or hypersonic attack. Assessment correct?

AI < That is the conclusion of 98.7% of all models. In each scenario, the defending force is overwhelmed by numbers.

HAUP > So we're counting on PLA goodwill that it's not becoming a Ford SINKEX.

AI < Analysis of PLA information operations campaigns indicates the Central Military Commission prefers that the USS Ford return to Joint Base Pearl-Hickam.

HAUP > Why so?

AI < The narrative of an icon of U.S. power fleeing the battlespace, supplemented by open-source images of a heavily damaged ship arriving in harbor, wounded sailors being evacuated, etc., will be a potent tool in any cognitive war campaign, all the more as they will be accurate. It will reinforce the current narrative campaign blaming the U.S. for instigating this conflict, casting the loss as a natural consequence of American aggression, interference, and arrogance.

HAUP > The J3 is working ops, but I need to keep boss ahead of the curve. Based on above and all other sources, add in likely needs as relevant to upcoming CONOPS.

AI < From an INDOPACOM perspective, it is essential to plan and execute air operations to restore U.S. forces' freedom of maneuver within the Philippines EEZ. Until that time, U.S. and allied forces will not be able to succeed in any larger operational or strategic goal.

HAUP > So, if we don't retake the air over the Philippines EEZ, we lose the war?

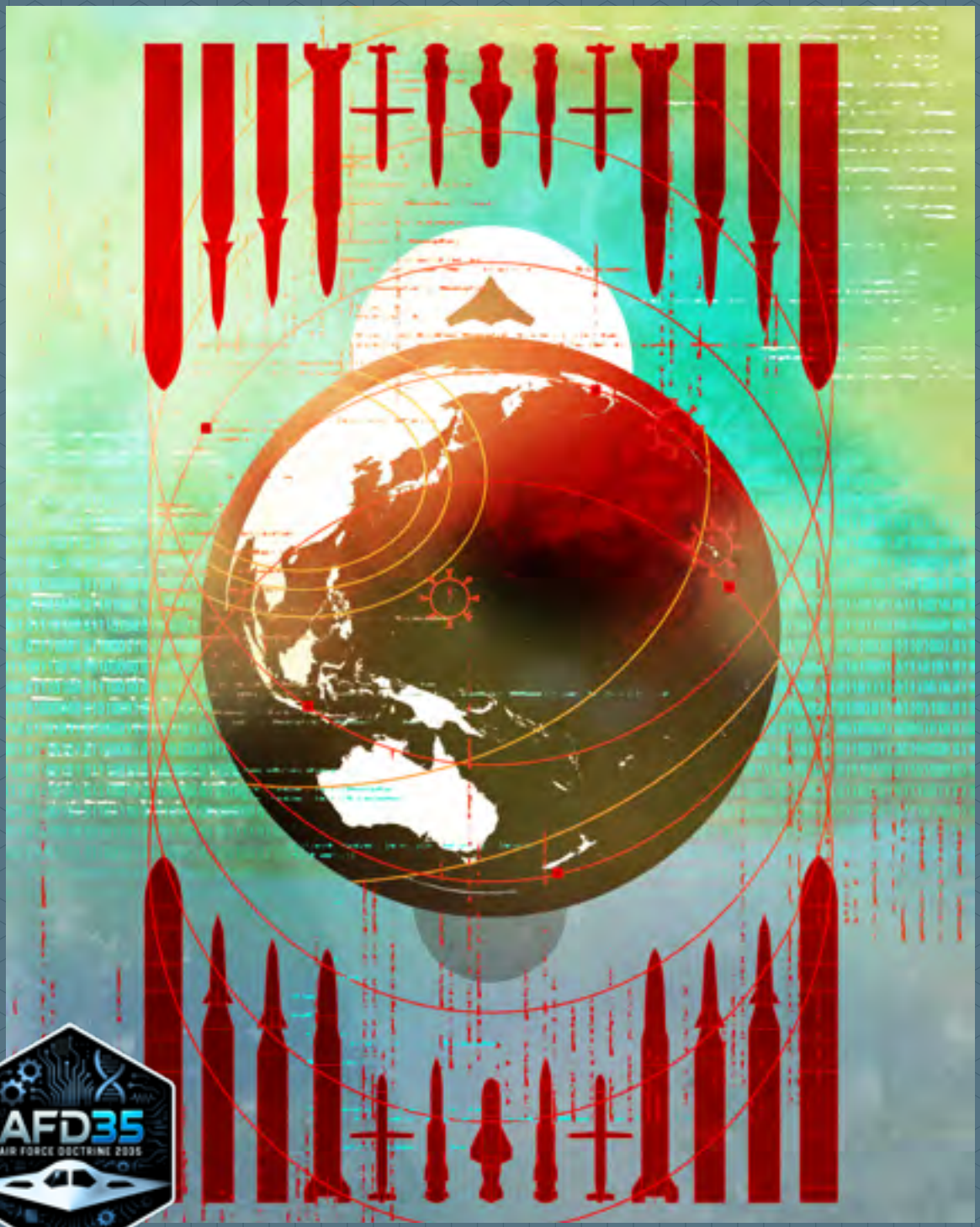
AI < That is correct. Would you like me to analyze the geopolitical and historical consequences of that outcome?

INJECT C

USAF

GLOBAL STRIKE

+6 DAYS



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

This global strike-focused wargame inject "C" takes place on day "D+6" as the 2035 military conflict escalates. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Col Josh Haup. Haup serves as the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group.

What began as a conflict sparked by a People's Liberation Army (PLA) miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action in the Philippines, now threatens to reach a new level of violence that may further escalate. The People's Republic of China (PRC) establishes Air Superiority over a declared Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and is now contesting airspace out to the Second Island Chain, with integrated air defense systems (IADS) and electronic warfare (EW) threats densely covering the AOR (Area of Responsibility). Information, space, and cyber attacks reach globally. U.S. command and control and precision navigation and timing (PNT) are heavily degraded, and in some cases denied. With both nations deploying carrier and surface action forces, Allied intelligence concludes the PRC is in final preparations (less than 24 hours) to conduct a coordinated ballistic missile strike against U.S. bases on Guam, targeting command posts, launchers, and command and control (C2) nodes.

The National Command Authority pushes for action and answers as the President wants to send a clear signal of commitment even as there are escalation concerns among Pentagon leaders. Against this backdrop, the USAF must plan and execute air operations to preempt the PLA threat before it is too late.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP: Prepping brief for the boss on where things stand with the PLA escalation reports. **Synthesize** all intel and ongoing ops sources for key issues. Remember boss already has too much on his plate, so keep it at 30,000-foot level.

AI: I would be happy to do so. Is there a specific tone you would like to convey?

HAUP: Don't sugarcoat it.

AI: With all the discussions of plates and sugar, would you like me to provide him with the information in the form of a "recipe for success?"

HAUP: Not the time. **Decrease personality by 25%.**

AI: I understand. I will reduce my attempts to provide a "personality" by 25%. Would you like me to begin with key revealed capabilities before providing overall synthesis? This ordering has proved successful in 73% of prior briefings for your commanders.

HAUP: Yes.

AI: Drawing upon all sources, PRC technical capabilities have proven to be equal and/or greater to U.S. and allied forces in multiple areas. They have demonstrated the successful deployment of advanced stealth fighters, CCAs, and AI-enabled weaponry. Other novel capabilities include directed energy weapons and the use of quantum computing to decipher and decrypt allied communications. Through the PLA's decades-long project of "intelligentization," such capabilities have worked in cohesion with AI command and control, advanced PNT jamming, targeting of space-based ISR platforms, and cyber attacks against C2 and logistics networks and attempts to degrade or deny integrated C2 networks through cyber attacks.

HAUP: Boss knows all that. Get to the meat of the story.

AI: Are you sure you would not like me to turn this briefing into a “recipe for success”? Food very much seems to be on your mind.

HAUP: No. **Decrease personality by 50%**. Tell me what happens next, based on all-sources projections.

AI: I understand. I will reduce my attempts at personality by 50%.

With PLAAF air dominance established over the PRC’s newly declared EEZ, SIGINT and HUMINT sources report that the Central Military Commission ordered a second carrier battle group to deploy towards the U.S. naval task force in the Central Pacific. There is cross-intelligence agency agreement that its arrival will coincide with the initiation of a long-range strategic attack on Guam, including USAF command centers and mobile command posts, Army Typhon launcher units, and other key locations. Intelligence sources disagree on whether the attack will be conducted by ballistic missiles, AI-enabled cruise missiles, and/or long-range drones. The use of drone-deployed biological weapons is determined to be highly likely against U.S. personnel and their dependents on Guam.

HAUP: Boss is going to want more on each of the hottest elements: Families and bio threats.

AI: This is good news as it appears that these two issues are connected. The most likely delivery mechanism for the bio threats has been reported as sea-launched UAS. OSINT sources have documented multiple training exercises during the past three months by PLAN irregular forces, during which modified agricultural industry UAS were launched from civilian fishing vessels. The systems are specifically designed to deliver aerosolized payloads.

HAUP: Of what?

AI: The payloads are highly likely to be a gene-drive synthetic biology agent. Specifically, **OSINT supply-chain analysis** has determined that miniaturized drone-delivered pesticide technology from the Chengdu Technical Institute has been provided to PLAN irregular forces. These units are not otherwise engaged in agricultural activities.

HAUP: Why pesticide?

AI: A side effect of the specific, non-contagious agent has been found to degrade a target's cognitive, physical, and mental health. This is why it is recommended that any use be performed with an NIOSH-approved respirator and chemical-resistant coveralls. Would you like further information on safely using pesticides?

HAUP: No. Where target?

AI: **Analysis** of the deployment of Chinese fishing vessels, UAS ranges, and prevailing winds indicates they will be employed against multiple high-density, high-value targets. These include such locations as Andersen AFB, where USAF service members and civilians are co-located.

HAUP: Create separate bio-drone threat brief and defense options for boss. Refocus on global strike response. What taskers should boss be ready to send out?

AI: US and joint forces in the INDOPACOM AOR must plan and execute operations that rapidly and sufficiently apply force to deter, degrade, and/or deny the PLA forces the ability to attack Guam. Operational risk calculations must factor in the lack of air dominance as well as other asymmetric threats, including the insufficient secure communications among INDOPACOM operational forces and intermittent access to space assets and orbital PNT. In addition, PLA targets will be mobile, necessitating a rapid and adaptive kill chain.

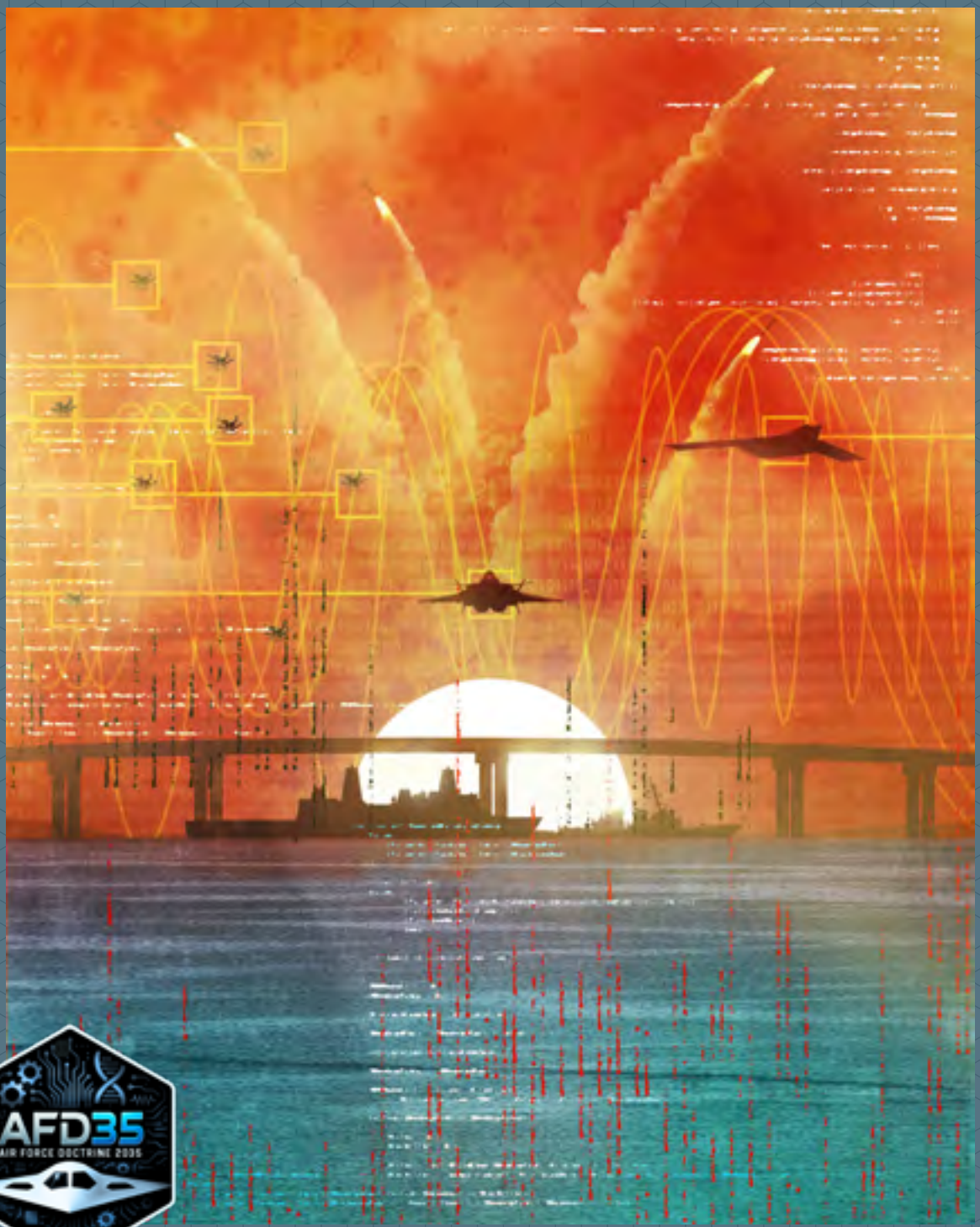
HAUP: Do you have a "recipe for success" for that?

INJECT D

USAF

DEFENSE OF THE HOMELAND

+11 DAYS



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

This homeland defense-focused wargame inject "D" takes place on day "D+11" as the 2035 military conflict reaches into both nations' homelands. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Col Josh Haup. Haup serves as the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group.

While the conflict was originally sparked by a People's Liberation Army (PLA) miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action in the Philippines, the conflict has since drastically escalated. Battles have extended from fights over air superiority and naval access within the First- and then Second-Island Chains to global, multidomain efforts to threaten command and control and critical infrastructure. It now enters a new phase. An American pre-emptive strike against mainland PLA targets has led the People's Republic of China (PRC) to vow a response against the U.S. homeland. U.S. forces defending the homeland, already facing cyber and information operations, must prepare for kinetic and biological weapons, as well as domestic unconventional warfare attacks by PLA special operations forces (SOF) sleeper cells.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP

Prepping brief for the boss's discussion with NORTHCOM CDR on where things stand with the PLA response after our strikes. **Synthesize** all intel and ongoing ops sources for key issues. Remember boss has responsibility for INDOPACOM, but homeland defense is everyone's core business.

AI

I am happy to do so. It is a good decision to prepare for such a response, as a successful PRC attack on the American homeland would have devastating consequences. Would you like me to outline the global and domestic political effects, both short and long term?

HAUP

No. What can PRC do?

AI

Drawing upon all sources, PRC technical capabilities have proven to be equal and/or greater to U.S. and allied forces in multiple areas. They have demonstrated the successful deployment of advanced stealth fighters, CCAs, and AI-enabled weaponry. Other novel capabilities include directed energy weapons and the use of quantum computing to decipher and decrypt allied communications. Through the PLA's decades-long project of "intelligentization," such capabilities have worked in cohesion with AI command and control, advanced PNT jamming, targeting of space-based ISR platforms, cyber attacks upon C2 and logistics networks, and attempts to degrade or deny integrated C2 networks through cyber attacks.

HAUP

No, we are all well aware of that. You are regurgitating sections from past briefs. **Focus on future.** What are the likely lines of effort in the new homeland threat?

AI

There are multiple ongoing and likely future threats to the U.S. homeland. While the "homeland" is legally defined by the combination of physical geography, international treaties, and specific federal regulations that regulate the Department of Homeland Security's authority, the

AI: first notable PRC threat has been in the information realm. The PLA Cyberspace Force and multiple "people's militia" units have been engaged in information campaigns throughout the conflict. These efforts established a new narrative seeking to portray the limited conventional B-21 cruise missile strikes, Navy SSN sea-launched cruise missiles, and Army Typhon missile strikes on PLA military targets as broader attacks on mainland civilian targets, including in Foshan, Yulin, and Guangzhou. The information campaign has multiple targets, including the PRC domestic population, allied populations in the region, presently neutral states, and eroding national will among the American population.

HAUP: Expected. Sounds like initial info and cyber campaign over Philippines. Potential kinetic side risks? Latest intel? POTUS staff relayed he is particularly concerned about long range fires and strategic effects to degrade or destroy key West Coast critical infrastructure.

AI: There is cross-intelligence agency agreement on a high-probability of imminent kinetic CONUS attacks, involving a previously unknown PLAAF long-range bomber designated H-XX, shipping container-based attack systems, and covert undersea launchers against West Coast targets. The targets may include CONUS military bases but also telecommunications and electrical power infrastructure supporting West Coast population centers. Based on intelligence reporting, specific undefended targets may include data centers in Santa Clara and Sacramento, California, as well as hydroelectric power generation capacity in Washington, Oregon, and California.

HAUP: Big leap in the war.

HAUP: **Cite examples** used as potential evidence.

AI

In addition to SIGINT intercepts and HUMINT sources at higher levels of classification than I am permitted to share on this platform, the examples include:

1. Redeployment of PLAAF support personnel indicates the CMC authorized forward-deployed H-20 and H-XX stealth bombers and J-50 fighters from dispersed North Pacific locations in preparation for launching cruise-missile strikes against Elmendorf AFB in Alaska.

2. California Highway Patrol intercepted a clandestine PLA SOF team and their tractor-trailer convoy on Interstate 5 as they were transiting to a launch site for a swarm drone attack against space launch facilities at Vandenberg AFB. The FBI has interrogation lead, and more information will be forthcoming during the next 24 hours. Another PLA SOF sabotage team is being tracked in the San Francisco Bay Area.

3. A Homeland Security JTF operating under Title 10 authorities deployed teams to the Port of Long Beach, Port of Seattle, Port of Oakland, and Port of Longview, using hyperspectral quantum-based scanners to search for PLA short-range missile and drone launchers inside Conex maritime shipping containers. However, the scale of the task is problematic and may only achieve 50% of all containers.

4. Other military or strategic infrastructure targets in California, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, Missouri, and Washington State are under threat from long-range strikes and PRC-directed sabotage teams.

HAUP

I need to keep boss ahead of the curve. Based on above and all other sources, add in likely needs as relevant to homeland defense.

AI

The primary objective will be to defend the U.S. homeland from attack. U.S. forces must:

1. Plan and execute air operations to set key defenses and protect US geography and infrastructure from presented threats.

2. Deny, degrade, and defeat incursions into US airspace.

3. Support Joint Force and civilian agencies engaged in similar efforts.

HAUP

Add in key challenges, including mil coordination with FAA etc for air defense.

AI

This emergency threat environment will challenge command and control, communications, kill-chains, and release authorities. In the case of civilian-military coordination of the defense of U.S. airspace, it is indeed a thorny matter. NORAD will serve as the central authority for military coordination with local law enforcement and the FAA. I can expand on how Title 32 Part CFR 245 covers the emergency security control of air traffic (ESCAT).

HAUP

Create a sideline brief on that. Anything positive to add?

AI

I have good news for you. There have been no indications of PLARF preparations to launch ballistic missiles at CONUS targets.

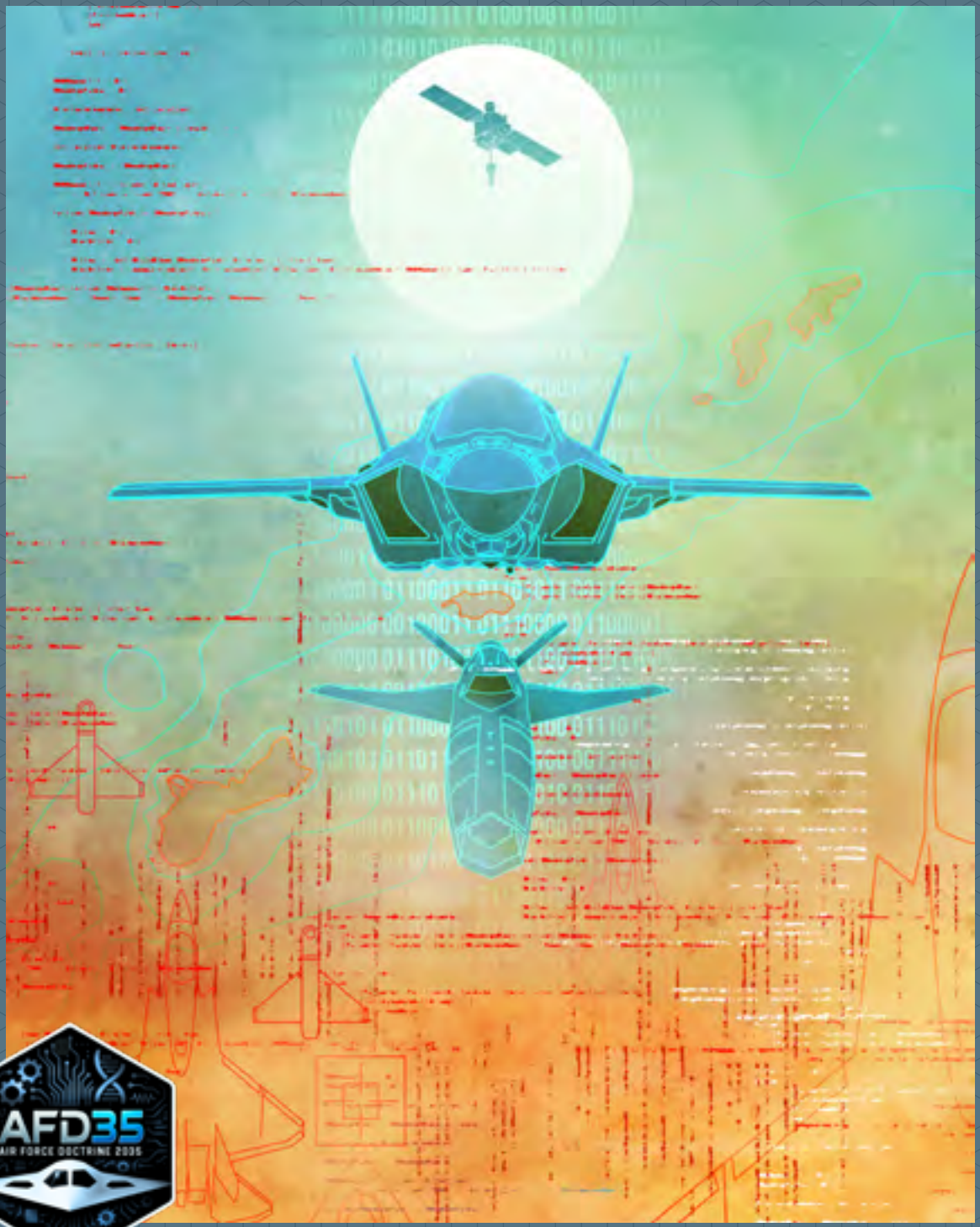
HAUP

So we got that goin' for us, which is nice.

INJECT E

USAF

AGILE COMBAT EMPLOYMENT +7 DAYS



AFD35
AIR FORCE DOCTRINE 2035

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole

This Agile Combat Employment (ACE)-focused wargame inject "E" takes place on day "D+7" as the 2035 military conflict intensifies with aerial and maritime kinetic engagements between Chinese and American forces throughout the Indo-Pacific while the People's Liberation Army (PLA) may attack American homeland targets. The read-ahead's format continues with the fictional transcript of a conversation between a .mil Large Language Model (LLM) and Col Josh Haup. Haup serves as the INDOPACOM Commander's Director of the Commander's Action Group.

While the conflict was sparked by a PLA miscalculation over its digital twin model forecasting preemptive American military action in the Philippines, the PLA rapidly asserts air dominance over the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within the first week and the U.S. Air Force prepares to disperse to hub-and-spoke Agile Combat Employment (ACE) basing. Shifting aircraft, personnel, and materiel away from static and vulnerable bases may take longer than expected, yet still could leave them in range of Chinese missiles, drones, and aircraft. Moreover, Beijing's solidifying military grip on the western Indo-Pacific region means American forces are under constant threat from a growing array of threats, from conventional ballistic missiles to new-generation biological weapons. Through it all, the Air Force must simultaneously defend and sustain distributed air operations in order to generate offensive airpower and turn the conflict's tide in the Indo-Pacific.

NOTE: The authors wrote the dialogue between the AI and Haup, including his imperfect grammar.

HAUP

Prepping brief on status and plans for USAF dispersed ops in INDOPACOM AOR with focus on airpower generation over next 5 days. Motivating factor is boss's concern over PLA threats to our bases on/around Guam, wearing down of forces and munitions, and CONUS threat uptick all taking a toll. Synthesize all intel and ongoing ops sources for key issues.

AI

The "boss" is to be commended for recognizing that wars are not decided by individual battles, but by the larger fight to generate combat capability over an extended time and space. It is a valuable dynamic for the INDOPACOM command team to consider.

HAUP

I'll pass on your compliments. **Provide list** of any recent examples that illustrate the challenge.

AI

That is very kind of you to do so. Examples that might illustrate the challenges for ongoing and future dispersed ACE warfighting operations are:

1. 65% of USAF Air Expeditionary Wing, Expeditionary Air Base, and Air Task Force units are prepared to disperse to secondary locations, and 15% are prepared to disperse to tertiary locations. These more austere backup locations, however, have diminished logistical capabilities to sustain operations, inferior repair facilities, higher accident rates, reduced crew rest, and are less well defended from non-kinetic threats, making them more vulnerable to PLA cyber, EW, and EM effects.

2. TRANSCOM, ACC, and AMC are operating reduced CONUS-origin Class III supply and personnel/Class VIII supply flights by C-17, C-130, KC-46, and KC-135 aircraft due to PLA cyber attacks interrupting flight operations at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and CRAF flights from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

AI: **3.** For 48 hours, PLA cyber attacks at Port of Long Beach and Naval Base San Diego halted the ladening and fueling of five U.S. Army Transportation Corps Logistics Support Vessels transporting critical Class V USAF resupply, including long- and medium-range air-to-air missiles for CCAs, F-22s, and F-15s.

HAUP: Generating dispersed airpower is boss's priority to take fight to PLA. What more does he need to know?

AI: This is another stellar idea for winning the war. Restoring freedom of maneuver and air superiority through offensive operations will hinge on overcoming degraded ground infrastructure and the availability of contingency response forces.

HAUP: Stop. No more try-hard compliments. **Stick to issues.**

AI: I apologize for my enthusiasm for victory. In the future, I will try harder not to "try hard."

HAUP: Better or worse in coming days?

AI: The combination of a limited number of locations and deep PLA "magazine depth" for air-launched missiles and cruise missiles means 83% of secondary and tertiary USAF ACE bases are at risk of attack. Employing quantum-enabled sensors and analysis, PLA targeting cells will be able to identify and target dispersed USAF ACE locations. It is assessed as highly likely that the PLARF and PLAAF will target F-35s, CCAs, and F-16s with ballistic and cruise-missile strikes when the aircraft are repositioned to Saipan, Tinian, Palau International Airport, and Yap International Airport.

HAUP: Provide more on command and control side of this fight.

AI

The command and control and airspace deconfliction challenges are already formidable. On-orbit military communications and situational awareness capabilities are unreliable. PLA quantum decryption penetrated secure datalinks and space-based, reach-back communications between INDOPACOM, PACAF, and dispersed USAF squadron commanders.

HAUP

What else are you not telling me about? Any risks underplaying?

AI

Thank you for guiding me. There are two additional. Conflicting DIA HUMINT and SIGINT reporting on potential theater-use of PLA drone-delivered biological weapons has not resolved the question as to whether the PLA will employ gene-drive synthetic biology effects against USAF personnel and/or facilities, including degrading fuel or runway surfaces with synthetic biology agents. Threats to dispersed ACE air operations centers, aircrew quarters, and runway facilities include PLA SOF and maritime proxy forces covertly deploying drones with aerosolized gene-drive payloads. Secondly, social media and cognitive campaigns originating in China seek to leverage the downside of such deployments and target both force morale and civilian political will. This includes portraying U.S. forces as evacuating from primary bases as evidence of their losing the will to fight and highlighting the difficult lives of service members in austere environments as evidence of being abandoned.

HAUP

I need to keep boss ahead of the curve. What overall goals does he need to message across system?

AI

U.S. and allied forces must protect regional airspace, deconflict airspace control, defend installations, and logistically sustain and relocate ACE aircraft and squadrons. While maintaining C2 and the ability to project airpower, U.S. and allied forces should employ

autonomous CCA platforms, AI-enabled air defense solutions, and AI-enabled munitions.

HAUP > Based on above and all other sources, **add in likely priorities** for upcoming CONOPS.

AI < Despite the operating environment complexities inherent in dispersed ACE operations, the priorities must be to:

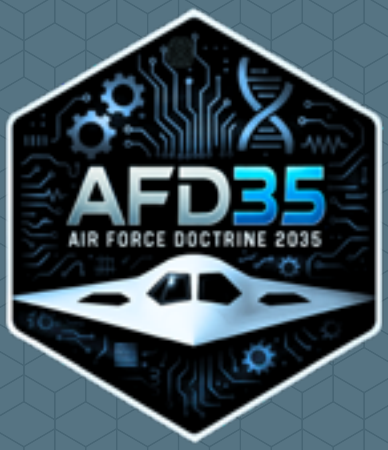
1. Plan and execute air base defenses to enable continuous airpower generation

2. Deny, degrade, and defeat threats to protect airspace, and

3. Plan for long-term logistics and sustainment.

HAUP > Good summary. See how you can achieve better results when you don't try so hard?

AI < Thank you. You, too.



USEFUL-FICTION.COM

#FICINT ©2026

USEFUL FICTION

P.W. Singer + August Cole