

Cityfight 2024 – Onside

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At VCOW 2024 I ran a game of Cityfight 2024 online. This is a significantly streamlined version of SPI's classic Cityfight game. The Onside for that includes all the details of how I derived Cityfight 2024 from the original SPI game, but for reference the main changes were:

- Moving from hexes to squares;
- Removing the need to pre-plan actions; and
- Massively simplifying the combat system.

To me the key part of Cityfight is the “Battleships” game double-blind experience, but with Battleships that move every turn. By simplifying the game I could hopefully make it a lot easier for players to get that core experience, without having to deal with loads of complex rules which added little, if anything to it.

For COW2023 I printed out two copies of the map, and had players sit back-to-back, as per the SPI instructions. I facilitated the game, rather than umpiring it. I just called out whose go it was, they then made their turn and called out any rolls to spot or hit, and it was up to their opponents to report back on the result. Spotting works on the basis on megasquares – a set of 9 smaller squares, each one of which may be occupied by one or more units. A player who wants to spot chooses a megasquare to which they have line of sight (and maximum 2 mega squares away), rolls 2D6 against the target number for that megasquare (the more buildings/clutter in the megasquare the higher the number), adds/subtracts a few DMs (mainly for range) and call the result out. Their opponent (who may have their own DMs) then works out if a spot has been successful, and if so declares which squares they have units in, but not what type of units. One of the vagaries of the Cityfight spotting system is that it is perfectly possible to have units from both sides in the same square with neither side knowing about it – so an umpire/facilitator can be useful.

The COW scenario was the same as for VCOW – a Blue VIP was holed up somewhere in a deserted housing state and both teams had to try and find the VIP and get them to safety. Each side had a platoon under command, represented at the fireteam level.

Matthew and Mike E played Red, John C and Ken played Blue. To keep the tempo up I was only giving each player 10 seconds or so to make their move. It takes a couple of turns before units are in spotting range, and the different degree to which each side (and even each player) used spotting was interesting. Cityfight is, I think, a game which

rewards using real tactics, having one squad on overwatch, trying to spot and then fire, whilst the other moves a tactical bound. Once spotting occurs you need to fire on the target immediately as they may well move on the next activation, and even if they don't the rules penalise you on the basis that most targets are likely to be fleeting. We had some suitably bloody exchanges of fire, and all at close range – as tends to happen with Cityfight (and with urban?). Red found the VIP first and was about to pull them out when a confusion over the spotting resulted in a Blue unit being mistakenly revealed so I awarded it a free move. That ended up being crucial as it took one move (unknowingly) towards the VIP, and then the next turn was into the same building, beat Red in an assault, and then made it off with the VIP. Game over after 8 turns.

The core mechanics worked pretty well I thought, and there was a good discussion afterwards which I again recorded for analysis for my PhD. The table below also shows the relative use of spotting (and firing) at the VCOW and COW games.

Matthew played in both the VCOW and COW games and thought the online version actually felt better (even though rules and scenario were the same). As the facilitator I'd agree with him – I could have the two maps side by side on my monitor, both in the same orientation, whilst physically the maps were rotated 180° so it was hard to work out the relative positions (also commented on by one of our spectators).

I think I'll probably run the on-line version a few more times as I think it's a fun experience, and certainly brings home some core issues about the problems of situational awareness, and the short engagement ranges, in urban.

My thanks as ever to all the players for the comments, which were very useful and I'll feed into my research and my refinements to Cityfight 2024.

Play	Player	Turn of First Search	Total Searches	Searches as % of Actions	Total Fires
VCOW	Red1	6	4	4%	1
	Blue1	2	11	17%	2
	Red2	5	3	3%	1
	Blue2	4	4	6%	0
COW	Red1	1	8	17%	1
	Blue1	2	13	20%	2
	Red2	4	6	8%	3

	Blue2	3	12	15%	3
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