

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Battle for Mosul	★★★ 1/2
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Period	ISIS Insurgency	Publisher	Fight Club International
Conflict/Battle	Mosul (2016/7)	Designer	Ed Farren?
Force Size	Army	Date	2024
Mvr Units	~Divisions	Grid Size	11 areas
DOWNness	2DOWN	Map Size	Whole city plus, ~40km side to side
Players	2	Turn Dur.	1 month
Player Roles	Army commanders	Playing Time	60 – 90 min
BGG Link	Not listed		

Introduction

Subject of the game	Coalition attack on ISIS held Mosul at end on 2016
Scope	The whole of the attack, including the East bank
Components	Print'n'play. A3 map, single sheet A4 rules, single page key/legend, c.54 small counters
Presentation - Good	Nice map
Presentation - Bad	Counters are a bit small, and map fiddly even at A3. Would be better on A2 map with bigger, more legible and handleable counters Rules somewhat crammed onto A4, be better over 2 pages with more new paragraphs, bullets, white space to make things clearer
Designer's focus/objectives	None given
Overall system description	Similar to WACN, and other solo asymmetric games, with hidden random ISIS layout which you then have to clear area by area – but no area dependencies like Ramadi so very straight forward.
Real Battle Notes	The city had first been isolated and then the E bank of the Tigris cleared. There was then a slog to clear the final ~3km up to and into the old city, advancing ~0.5km a day against IEDs, strongpoints, mousehole, very low-level, very brutal with CTS doing the main push into the Old City as the Army's tanks couldn't go there.

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Trade off between time, damage and civ cas. Own cas are fairly unavoidable as mainly from IEDs.
Important abstractions	All enablers abstracted into 4 combat support missions covering Fires, Restoration, ISR and Info Ops. Units only have 1//2/3 combat factor.
Types of decisions required	How to use combat support. Whether to use combat support in support of attack (as creates rubble). Making sure have humanitarian cover.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	Need just enough strength to get majority in order to get 2:1 dice (3:1 with CSp). Stacking limit of 3 means need optimum mix. Need to garrison taken areas to avoid infiltration.
How well do game decisions map to real life decisions	At a high level probably not too bad – as ever all about mustering right mix of forces in the right place.
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	Simple mechanics that seemed to work well

Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	None, mainly cloning WACN
Deficiencies	All just too small Could have had a better QRS – mainly showing turn loop and all main rules.
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	Would have a VP points track so can see how doing which might encourage to back way from Fires
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	Can't tell as no goals

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	Not bad, get through game in about 90 minutes, very simple loop for each turn. Doesn't drag and not complicated
Does the game work? (Veracity/Internal Validity)	Yep, systems fairly tight, just a few rules questions.
Is the game engaging?	Yes, hidden units always mean you don't know what is next
Is the game useful – for what?	Yes, certainly a quick way of learning about what happened as Mosul and some of the challenges at a very hi level. Useful intro to urban wargaming.
How valid is the game? Is the game realistic?	Pretty valid I'd have said, as long as only taken as an introductory educational piece
Does it provide any special insights	No, apart maybe for highlighting the time/civ cas/destruction tradeoff
Replay value	Maybe 1-2 times more to see if can improve score, then none
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in urban, C21 military history
Is the game good value?	Yes, free!
Overall Impressions	Pretty good simple game, but more than just a Beer & Pretzels game

Third Party Reviews	None found
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Interesting Expansions	None
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MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

(include Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	Auto, all activate, but stacking limits
Comms	None
UxV	None
CEMA	None
Other ISR	One CS action to flip an ISIS counter
Movement	Max 1 or 2 areas, Mech can carry
Damage	1 or 2 step units
Direct Fire	In assault
Assault	Compare cbt factors for both sides, then 2:1, 2:2 or 1:2 dice, plus optional CS dice, and side with highest single number wins, ISIS wins ties.
Indirect Fire	Once CS action to remove one ISIS
IEDs/Engineering	IED counters in ISI mix, flip most valuable unit – nasty
Casualties	None
Logistics	None
Morale	None
Opinion	None – although could say that rubble and civcas contribute to final score is a reflection of opinion
Victory Condition	Clear city of ISIS with 9 turns. The grade of victory affected by turns+civcas+rubble+own losses
UTZs	1,2 or 3 PV
Building Damage	Rubble counter caused by IEDs, use of armour, use of Fires in support of attack, add +1 to defender
Civilians	Hidden counters. Treat as CivCas if attacker has fewer humanitarian icons than there are Civilian humanitarian icons
Subterranean	None – but infiltration by random die roll at start of each turn into a random, non-garrisoned area
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	RoE reflected by reducing CS and civcas mounts

Triad Representation

	Challenges		Solutions	
	Elms	Comment	Elms	Comment
Civilian Population	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civilian counters and civ cas Global attention through contribution of damage and civcas to final score 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian icons = CIMIC/CA teams RoE reflected by reducing CS as civcas mounts No issues with coalition forces
Civilian Infrastructure	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
3D Man-Made Terrain	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rubble counters from air strikes, IEDs and Armour. Rubble adds to defender PV protects defender 3 different PV levels No armour in Old City All hidden ISIS units IED counters 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infiltration actions ISIS Fortifications Armoured dozer only seems to be there to protect the armour

FROM PLAY NOTES

Likes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• combat mechanic nice;ish• Nice humanitarian mechanic• Like civ cas reducing Fire Missions• Need to garrison vs infiltration
Dislikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not really enough space on map for ISF at start, and no real rationale - Orbat useful• Dice almost always 2/3:1• Could do with less dense layout, even if extra page, whole page QRS bit wasteful and more a key/legend
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Dummy any more?• Can you attack across 4 corners• No Rubble fm CS air/drone/artty strike• What do ISIS Local fighters do? Essentially dummies. Or just enable PV etc?
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very much We Are Coming Nineveh light

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	3 Dec 25	Scenario	Core game, no options
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- Cleared E bank by end Turn 4
- Cleared 4 & 5 on turn 5
- Then 3 & 6 on turn 6, luckily had SF for attack on Old City

May have forgotten the odd shield and rubble +1 to ISIS, but given that ISIS seemed to win most combats not a lot of difference!

Also forgot stacking limits, but again may not have made a huge difference

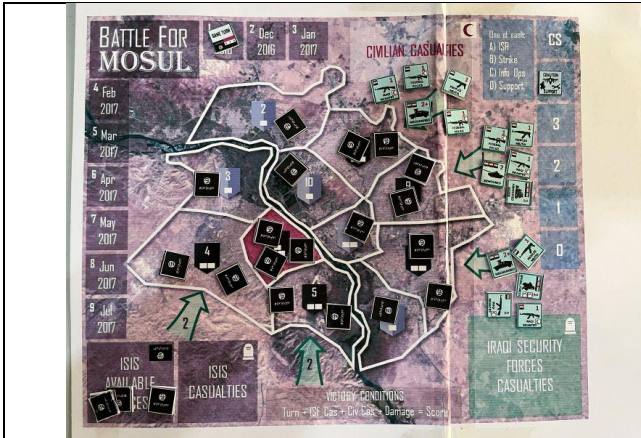
RESULTS

Won at end of Turn 6, Score = 17, = Pyrrhic victory (8 rubble!)

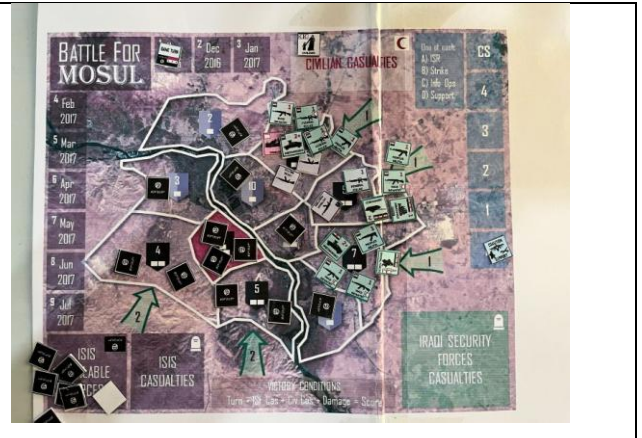
THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN, only for subsequent plays)

Very much We Are Coming Nineveh light

IMAGES



Set-up



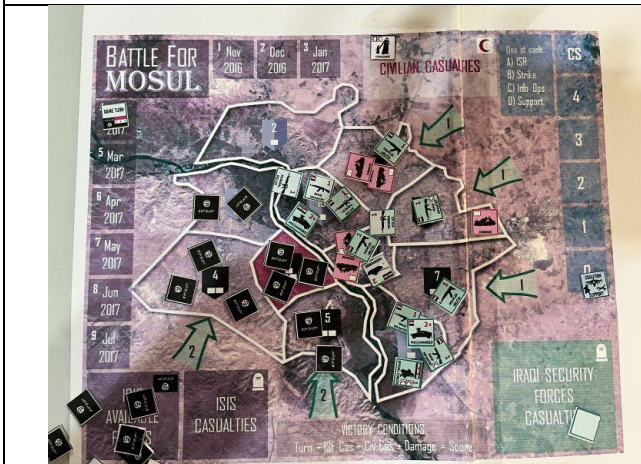
End Turn 1



End Turn 2



End Turn 3



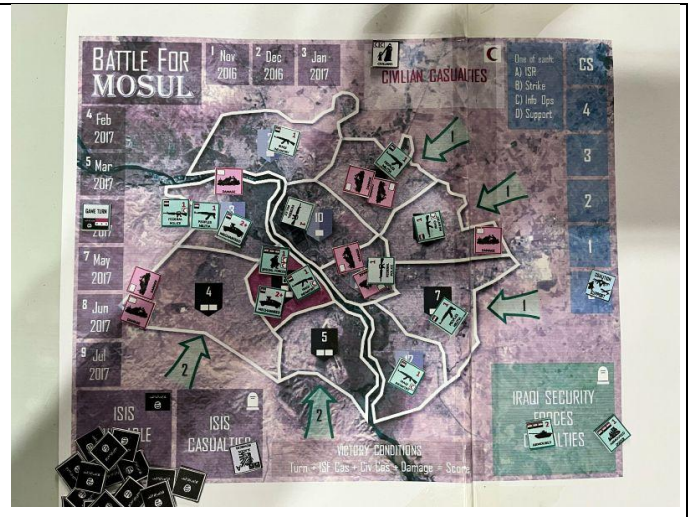
End Turn 4



Start Turn 5 (redeploy)



End Turn 5



End Turn 6 (ENDEX)