

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Fallujah: 2004	★★★★☆
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Period	Modern/Iraq Insurgency	Publisher	Modern War
Conflict/Battle	2 nd Fallujah	Designer	Joseph Miranda
Force Size	Asymmetric. ~ Div	Date	2016
Mvr Units	Bn & Coy for Coalition, abstract for insurgents	Grid Size	Topological, in a 6 x 11 grid, but apart from MSR only column movement allowed
DOWNness	2-3 DOWN	Map Size	Whole city
Players	1	Turn Dur.	No turns!
Player Roles	Cmdr of Coalition forces/Div	Playing Time	~4 hrs first time

Introduction

Subject of the game	The 2 nd Battle of Fallujah, when having failed at the first attempt to take/secure the city in April the Coalition, led by US troops tried again, but with far better awareness of the global narrative.
Scope	Primarily the kinetic asymmetric fight with some very abstract coverage of issues like civilians, media and collateral damage.
Components	~A1 topographic map. 14pp rule book (magazine insert), incl 3pp of tables. CRTs on map along with trackers. 16pp article and 1pp design notes.
Presentation	<p>Good: Nice topological map. Clear counters. Reasonable rule layout. Good QRS info on the map.</p> <p>Bad: Some proofing errors but not as bad as War in the City. Counters don't seem to map 100% onto the orbat in the magazine article.</p>
Designer's focus/objectives	<p>"the game models the full spectrum of operations: ground forces, airpower, intelligence, information/net warfare, ISR and sustainment"</p> <p>Solitaire as "the insurgents were static on the operational level" and "the decision making for the Coalition command as sop much greater (in game terms) than the insurgents There's also the chaos actor....Individual insurgents and fighting groups came and went as each battle developed".</p> <p>"I used a modified version of the Joint staff system to organise the game systems" "this keeps the game in tune with current doctrine"</p> <p>"Deploy ISR markers to reveal enemy forces. This is critical" "Each unit costs VPs, representing a trade-off between military, logistical and political factors"</p> <p>"The time element is in there, modelled as a countdown regarding OPS"</p> <p>"Friction factors burn up many Ops – especially when it comes to securing your avenues of approach"</p> <p>"You can influence the amount of resistance by attacking insurgent morale {mosques}"</p>
Overall system description	This is a fairly standard chit-pull asymmetric game, but the 6 avenues of attack adds a different dimension to it. The random chits are suitably diverse, and the insurgent morale plus the abandoned position chits suitably vary what you face each time. ISR lets you look ahead on nodes,

	but not the actual chits. There is an initiative roll before combat, and combat is then sequential. Initially you have no troops, but use OPs to buy them, then deploy them as need. There is no turn cycle or time relation, you just keep spending OPs til you win or they run out.
Real Battle Notes	Having messed up in April the November assault was far more organised. There was a feint in the S and then the main attack came on 8 Nov on two Bde axis (RCT 1 & 7) from the N, with US troops leading and Iraqi troops securing. Army units tended to go tank first, with infantry support; USMC units did infantry first with tanks in support. Both seemed to work and steady progress was made to clear the city, with all units heavily networked for co-ord and targeting. The E-W MSR (PL FRAN) was reached on 9 Nov and PL JENA (S of city) on 15 Nov. The city was declared secure on 16 Nov, but some insurgent activity continued for a couple of weeks. The operation by TF Wolfpack to secure the peninsular and hospital area to the W of the Euphrates is not modelled.

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	The asymmetric nature of the combat – insurgent units just appear at random and you don't know what you're fighting til you hit them. ISR can be used to give lookahead on nodes, which may suggest better/worse avenues for attack. Fires are abstracted but must be paid for each time. Units damaged in combat can be repaired, but need a FOB or an expensive withdrawal. Advanced rules model Iraqi/US co-ord problems. Unreliability of Iraq army
Important abstractions	Unit strengths are simple numbers for CA tactics and effects not really modelled. SubT represented by chit pull and the Rear Area Raid chit. Time and "force cost/mgt" abstracted by the OPs.
Types of decisions required	Deciding which routes to go down, and when to stop and switch to another route. Force mix and how often to relieve. Use of Fires, but risk of causing CD/losing OP When to set up a FOB How much to secure the rear area
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	How to spend OPs in general – combat itself is fairly cheap, so a lot is about the log side. Combat initiative is won by highest Contact rating +D6, and if coalition wins then can defeat most en first turn, so at no cost, so stacks built accordingly. The stacking limit (2xBn+2xCoy) really restricts rear area movt as movt distances often only 2, and very few Coy size units to hold ground with.

<p>Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)</p>	<p>Far better than initial “it’s broken” comments suggested. The turn-less, OP model is very good, although some idea of passage of time would be good. Chit pull is suitably varied, but possibly more change in absolute number or more dummies to vary further. Grid topo map works very well, focus you on the line of attack The J cell model is a nice way to divide rules Like the way that consolidating the route eats up OP Unreliability of Iraq army</p>
<p>Contributions to the wargaming state of the art</p>	<p>The use of OPs as the sole driver for everything and as the clock ticking down – perhaps one of the best implementations of that type of approach I’ve seen. The topo grid map and avenues of approach. The J-cell model.</p>
<p>Deficiencies</p>	<p>Orbat doesn’t seem to match to counters Not clear that initial 90 OP is budget for game rather than just for Orbat Collateral only effects OP Minimal impact of civilians and CD – just enhances chance of OP loss fm 6s. No modelling or simulation/abstraction of the feint – perhaps can spend OP to get a die roll to remove X chits from pot or draw for first N turns?</p>
<p>Improvements? (beyond fixing above)</p>	<p>Give price for historic orbat, and then have OP budget reduced accordingly Iraqi bns for sy really block routes – is that what happened in reality? Use Coy units or allow 1 extra in static stack? Make collateral an on-map effect as well, eg slowing movement, adding to defence? More granularity in UTZs? Build in some sense of time? (13 OPs = 1 day?) Some way to stop you from charging on one avenue at expense of others – perhaps some negative if lead route is far ahead of next one (historic?)</p>
<p>Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals</p>	<p>The designer notes don’t really give a “goal” as such, but the game does seem to give a good sense of the battle and does cover much of what is talked about in the notes – the asymmetric battle, use of Fires, sustainment issues, ISR, J-cells etc. The role of “netwar” is perhaps overstated (really only 1 advanced rule) and just calling the counters ISR would maybe have been more honest. Possibly a bit too much is abstracted into the OP system, but it works very well.</p>

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	A good game and the turn-less, OP dynamic is really quite different, and maps to some of my own ideas of giving the player the full budget at the start. The avenues of approach model removes the need to micromanage movement and focusses you at the right level of how many avenues, which avenues, and which to prioritise.
Does the game work? Is it a good (enjoyable) game (Veracity)	Works very well and is enjoyable. No real sense of being a slog and the 90 OP is about the right duration.
Does it have real world validity?/Insights? Is it useful game?	Probably more game than simulation, but the OP model does give that sense of how to husband and spend resources against a bigger plan. Very much operational rather than a tactical focus.
Replay value	High, given variability of chit-pull and 2-3-4 scenarios.
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in modern urban combat and/or insurgency operations and/or Fallujah and the Iraq War.
Is the game good value?	\$22 at Noble Knight, £45 on Geekmarket. Definitely good value at \$22, £45 Ok for more serious interest.
Overall Impressions	Would be good play through with the real orbat and sequence to see how well it resembles, but overall a pretty good operational level urban game that could be readily enhanced and expanded to similar battles.

Third Party Reviews	<p>http://talk.consimworld.com/WebX?14@@.1ddbf9ad/41</p> <p>In the ComSimWorld discussion one player saw it as “broken” as they could easily win the game by having one powerful stack careering across the board. In comments Miranda seemed unsure as to whether they were playing by all the rules. Brian Train seems to have liked it enough to create a scenario for it 3rd Fallujah against ISIS (https://brtrain.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/operation-breaking-terrorism-the-third-battle-for-fallujah/)</p> <p>https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/175235/fallujah-2004-city-fighting-iraq/ratings?comment=1</p> <p>Hattusilis_III – “ Interesting puzzle trying to take control of the town and clear out the insurgents, with a wide variety of support potentially available although limited by the number of Operation Points (OP). It's quite a challenge managing 'boots on the ground' - you need stepping stones of troops so you can control key points and move around without needing to fight all the time (especially important for engineers moving by themselves or in small groups). Yet it takes quite a lot of OPs to set this up due to stacking limitations, which also mean that small groups need to secure new locations.” - Exactly what I found</p>
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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	Single OP budget for the whole game for everything
Comms	Not modelled
UxV	NA
CEMA	Not modelled
Other ISR	"Netwar" chits represent ISR assets to identify hidden nodes
Movement	2-4 spaces along a route. Only combat in last space if others unoccupied.
Damage	1 and 2 step units. Can recover at FOS or home base only.
Direct Fire	Single combat factor, roll equal or under
Assault	Rolled into direct fire
Indirect Fire	Air and Arty mission chits with 3/4/5 strength. Pay OPs for each use. Cause collateral on 6s.
IEDs	In random chit pull. Engr can help defeat.
Morale	Only on insurgency side – based on 3D6 < coalition objectives taken, reduces number of chits per attack
Opinion	Bad things reduce OP, eg civilians, media, CD
Victory Condition	Mainly based around holding objective spots and killing insurgents. Too many VPs for killing HVTs?
UTZs	Clear and Building only
Building Damage	Abstracted into OP, no on board effect
Civilians	Chit pull, causes OP loss if any attacker rolls 6s
Subterranean	Not directly modelled, but insurgents can appear in any rear area and have to put a holding unit in to secure each cell to avoid
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	No, good mix of chits, single pot approach, map focuses on avenues of approach nicely, but as above could do with a rule to force some synchronisation between each.

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	4/5 Mar 23	Scenario	Fallujah 2
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- First contact at Train Station, undetected C2. TE 5 vs 5 = 0, OPFOR win draw. C win on 2nd rnd
- pushed on to mosque and 2,4. O morale up, and downed chopper at 2,6 (luckily)
- 32: finally got protect route to 2,6 - Jolan
- Switching to route 6
- 22: pushing down route 6, straight to 6,5. Cleared, onto Clover Leaf.
- 21: My Iraqi stability forces on route 2 just deserted!
- 15: uprising everywhere- costs double
- 17: moved down MSR fm Clover Leaf to take East Manhattan, IED factory
- 10: push on route 2 to take Ma'ahidy Mosque
- 4: push on route 1 to take C2 node at Jolan Graveyard
- ENDEX

(Number before colon is OP count at that point)

RESULTS

PLUS VP: 6+17+14+2+15=54

MINUS VP: 13

NET VP = 54-13 = 41 = Stalemate (needed 51 for tactical victory)

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

Played very well. Now I understand how OPs work you'd really only buy forces as needed rather than having on the bench – think I spent 30OP at start. Would still be v tight to get a good victory in 90OP, and I'm sure you could do an analysis to work out best bang for buck. Just pushing a stack forward as far as it would go as I did on the E route and not worry about securing did seem more efficient, but to get VPs still need to secure, but as mentioned the HVT counters seem to skew the VPs towards killing units rather than seizing ground (which was the ComSimWorld point).

IMAGES

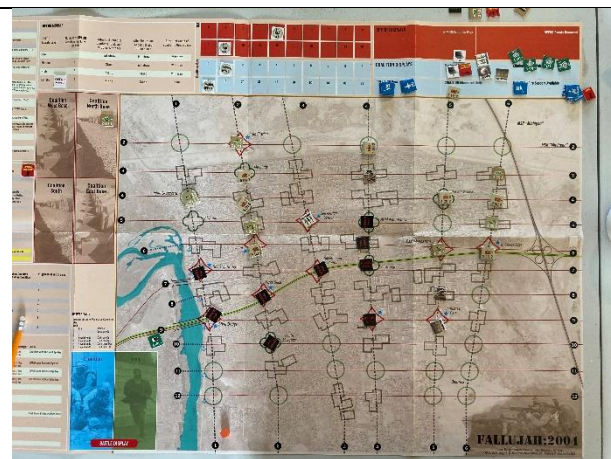


Real Terrain

STARTEX



ENDEX - Detail



ENDEX