

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Phantom Fury	★★★★★1/2
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Period	Modern/Iraq Insurgency	Publisher	Nuts!
Conflict/Battle	2 nd Fallujah	Designer	Laurent Closier
Force Size	Asymmetric. Bn	Date	2011
Mvr Units	It says Squads/Sections (but 3-4 per coy makes Pls?!) for Coalition, abstract for insurgents	Grid Size	61 areas in a roughly 10 x 6 grid covering about 600m x 400m
DOWNness	2/3 DOWN	Map Size	~20 city blocks
Players	1	Turn Dur.	16 turns =~ 1 hr
Player Roles	CO 3/5 th Marines	Playing Time	~2 hrs first time for ½ game

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	The game focusses on the 3/5 th Marines fight on 9 th November, 2 nd day of the battle, in the Jolan District around the Jolan Mosque in the NW of the city.
Components	~A1 map, 200 counters, 16pp rule book, 2-sided QRS
Presentation	<p>Good: Nice map, clear counters</p> <p>Bad: The dotted lines showing area edges are very pale. Counters slightly smaller (and thicker) than normal. QRS needs constant flipping over, would photocopy if playing again. Turn sequence on the map would have been useful.</p>
Designer's focus/objectives	<p>No designer's objectives/notes although designer comments accompany some rules paragraphs to justify some rules/choices.</p> <p>The game explicitly implements the learnings documented in: Infantry Squad Tactics: Some of the Lessons Learned during MOUT in the Battle for Fallujah. Earl J Catagnus Jr; Brad Z Edison; James D Keeling; David A Moon; Marine Corps Gazette; Sep 2005. Again selected sections are used to introduce some rules.</p>
Overall system description	The solo system uses a 3 stage process for enemy placement, first "activating" a zone once adjacent to USMC zones, then placing 2 "suspect" markers on selected floors, then when engaged rolling to see if the suspects are real units, and of what type (guerilla, martyr, IED). Firing and combat are by roll equal or under of Combat Force (CF). Fixed turn sequence of Support-Reinforce-Fire-Move-Assault-Reorg.
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. USMC units did infantry first with tanks in support – which is

	how it is modelled, but Iraqi are used mainly to seize the mosque, not secure.
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The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Block to block fighting by platoons. Individual houses are abstracted into blocks, but separated into storeys so the player is conscious of relative height differences between them and the en, and there are special rules for top down and bottom up attacks. Also special rules for being sniped at as you cross the streets. Streets are otherwise off-limits, you can't advance down them except for tanks. Special weapons like the SMAW, explosives and doctrine like the security teams are specifically modelled. Also the different types of en, guerillas who will escape away if not killed first time, and martyrs who fight to the death.
Important abstractions	There seems to be a bit of a fudge in the game. It is presented as a Bn level game, with 3 Coys, but then there are only 9-12 manoeuvre units which are shown as and called "squad" of 6-12 men, which would make for a company level force. There is also the abstraction that whilst each zone represents a number of buildings there is just one "floor" model for each zone, not one per house. The design abstraction that makes sense is that each squad on the table is representative of the platoons, with other, unshown sections, also active in that zone in the other houses. This sort of breaks down when considering how interactions happen between zones but gives a playable game over the real-estate involved and without getting very tactical and plotting each house and giving it its own floor model. Snipers just a roll against sum of units in range/sight.
Types of decisions required	Turn by turn tactical decisions about where each platoon goes, how to set up the attack on each zone, how much to try and do at range and when to close with the en. Also when to task the limited ISR and Fires missions, and failure triggers an en reaction. What do to about rear areas as not enough troops to hold, and reserves cost VPs.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	The Fire-Move-Assault order leads to some juggling and means you have to keep to a strict order, just going L-R would be easier. The difference between moving next to a Suspect unit and a revealed unit makes it less attractive to engage at range unless you're going to kill it. Otherwise doesn't impinge too much.
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	Most of it. Rules are a bit overwhelming at first but plays really well and seems to have you thinking about the key things.
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	The use of storeys in the zones. The top down and bottom up rules. The way that streets and street crossing is handled (triggers a sniper role) The storey sequence on the Suspect markers. The escape route choices for the guerillas.

Deficiencies	The 3 step way of placing en seems 1 step too much. No civilians.
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	Noting really within the scope of the game.
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	Very good, seems to cover much of what is in the Catagnus paper.

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	Very good, constant decisions about what to do and how to do it. Rules flow reasonably well, with most things being roll-under checks. The special events on Os cause nice narrative variation.
Does the game work? Is it a good (enjoyable) game (Veracity)	The game works well and is very enjoyable. Very tactical.
Does it have real world validity?/Insights? Is it useful game?	Seems could be used to educate on how to clear a similar area with emphasis on small unit building clearance in an asymmetric battle, although some of the approaches could be converted to a LSCO setting.
Replay value	May be limited except to try and get a higher score, but could set up a variety of scenarios on the map, or make new maps as Kozure had started to do - https://boardgamegeek.com/filepage/86462/strike-sword-unofficial-expansion-phantom-fury-rul
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in tactical urban warfare, Iraq or Fallujah.
Is the game good value?	Second Edition is coming out from Nuts! at 50 Euros which is very good. GeekMarket is \$80 so expensive – it is good but only 1-2 plays without working up own expansions.
Overall Impressions	Excellent game at this level of tactical asymmetric warfare, with ideas that could be readily applied to LSCO.

Third Party Reviews	<p>Very positive reviews at:</p> <p>https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/1812543/test-time-six-year-old-review-phantom-fury</p> <p>https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/2466004/shockingly-intense-and-brilliant-solitaire-gaming</p> <p>- suggests that PF was developed out of A Week In Hell: The Battle of Hue with added input from the Catagnus paper.</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	Automatic
Comms	Not covered
UxV	Four UAV missions available on 80% chance, automatically reveal upto 4 units across 2 zones.
CEMA	Not covered
Other ISR	Can recce by fire to reveal.
Movement	4MP for inf, variable for tanks. Good rules for crossing streets, and MP also used to change floors, and can move rooftop to rooftop within a block.
Damage	Coalition are 2 step, insurgents are 1 step.
Direct Fire	Roll CF or under. Only into adjacent areas unless specific LOS detailed. No saves.
Assault	Roll CF or under. En has defensive fire on the way in. O's give special events. Top down/bottom up attacks.
Indirect Fire	Cobra and Fast Air, 2 missions apiece, automatically remove units, Fats air can cause ruins/rubble.
IEDs/Engineering	Generated on a 9 on suspect activation. Also House-bound IEDs to en reaction roll.
Logistics	4 rounds per SMAW, 1 per explosives set
Morale	Not covered for coalition. For en guerillas always flee if survive by a set route
Opinion	Not covered.
Victory Condition	Based on en eliminated and zones taken and own losses
UTZs	Not modelled, although en can have 1-4 strongpoints. Texts suggest that housing was very uniform, but some reports say very jumbled rather than discrete districts. But only 400m x 600m
Building Damage	Only from fast air. Would be good to see from tks as well, and maybe SMAWs.
Civilians	Not modelled.
Subterranean	Not explicitly modelled but infiltration rules.
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	5 Mar 23	Scenario	Baseline
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- 4: closing in on Mosque, activated its zone
- 5: lost UAV call, insurgents fired a HBIED in Zone 13 taking out a squad
- 7: lost another UAV call, infiltration
- 8: Cobra took out insurgents who had fled from 20 to 19
- 9: only 2 insurgents in Mosque, took one out with CAAT, then Iraqi section stormed the Bldg and took the Mosque
- Draw stumps,





RESULTS

- 14VP-4VP -5 = 5 = bitter vic in whole game. Have 17/61 areas cleared at turn 8/16
- Suggestion that you need to clear 35 zone by turn 8 to win!

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

Very good game with lots of good ideas. If you don't touch an area it doesn't do anything, so may be best to concentrate force – as ever.

IMAGES

 <p>(very roughly)</p>	 <p>STARTEX</p>
 <p>Mid game detail</p>	 <p>ENDEX</p>