

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

We Are Coming Nineveh	★★★★☆
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Period	War on ISIS	Publisher	NUTS! Publishing
Conflict/Battle	Mosul, 2017	Designer	Juliette Le Menaheze, Harrison Brewer, Rex Brynen, Brian Train
Force Size	~Corps vs Bde/Div	Date	2023
Mvr Units	Abstract, ~= Bn/Bde	Grid Size	Area, ~500m
DOWNness	2-3DOWN for ISF	Map Size	Old City plus immediate outskirts c.12 x 12 areas, ~8km x 5km
Players	2	Turn Dur.	2 weeks
Player Roles	Cmdr of ISF/Coalition Force Cmdr of ISIS Force	Playing Time	~3 hrs on first time

Introduction

Subject of the game	The Battle of Mosul, Feb - Aug 2017
Scope	The final stages of the battle as ISF closed in on the Old City after ~4 months of fighting E of the river and around the city
Components	c.A1 map. 20pp rules, 12pp history and design notes (3pp), 93 blocks, ~150 cards. No QRS or PACS.
Presentation	<p>Good: Good map, counters, rules, all clearly laid out/styled. Nothing superfluous. Little “chrome”</p> <p>Bad: Colours on map and counters to differentiate regions/forces could be clearer.</p>
Designer's focus/objectives	<p>“wanted WACN to be accessible, playable by newcomers to wargaming and grognards alike. Consequently we have endeavoured to keep the game uncluttered and intuitive, while retaining historical and military accuracy”</p> <p>“a game which explores the tactical challenges of the urban operations in Mosul while at the same time reminding players of the depraved brutality of Daesh”</p>
Overall system description	Modern 1 or 2 players game with areas not hexes, blocks not counters and lots of cards. In the pre-game players buy capability, ideally matched to their chosen objective focus (casualties, collateral, time). Game is IGO-UGO with Support, Movement and Combat subphases. Each unit has reducing TN to hit, and is eliminated once taken 2-4 step losses.
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	The culminating battle in the old city. The relative strengths and weakness of the different ISF units – Army, Police, CTS. The asymmetric fight. The fog of war in urban. The risk of collateral damage. The ongoing IED risk and the availability of newer tech – eg ISR, EW etc. The use of human shields.
Important abstractions	No C2. Fires abstracted to single card. All units are notional/abstract combat values. Only 3 levels of terrain (Clear, Urban, Old City).
Types of decisions required	How to choose capabilities to map objectives. Strategy – eg importance of isolation. Start points. Where to mass troops. Positioning for best 2-3 units for each fight. Risk of collateral fm fires. When to use single use/single use per turn cards. Mini-decision games on some cards – to chance or not. When to spend CPs.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	Single area movt is slow, so need to get right unless use fast movement. Stacking limits esp in old city focusses on positioning best troops Disruption fm withdrawal can be hard to recover from. Slow CP recovery ensures careful husbanding Collateral seems to be primarily from event cards, so didn't seem like much agency.
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	Map, and overall design style Random events – nicely described and triggered (1 or 6) CF round edge of block as also step loss worked better than expected, not too many placement fails Simple rules, easily picked up – although a QRS would help Not too many extra/odd rules.
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	Brings the whole area/block/cards model nice together. Triple track of casualties/time/collateral with one chosen as priority.
Deficiencies	There didn't seem to be enough differentiation between Old City and other urban areas. Why do only Daesh Veterans get the benefit? If ISF attacked they get no benefit. Better colours on map and blocks to differentiate. Collateral Damage treated as a fail rather a natural by product. Most CD came from cards not player combat choice. The “depraved brutality of Daesh” isn't really evident beyond the human shield card. Felt no different to opposition in any other asymmetric type game.
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	Could do with a QRS Areas a bit small once in old city, but big areas of map unused – distort the relative scales a bit?

Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation	Very good education game. Hits designer's objectives by giving a sense of the battle and some of the broad decisions in an easy to play format. Could teach almost anyone to play it. Outcome of trial game was very close to historic.
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Overall Evaluation

Does the game work? (Veracity)	Yes, all mechanisms very solid
Evaluation of the player's experience	Good game, keeps moving, doesn't get bogged down or become a slog, always decisions to make
Does it have real world validity?/Insights?	It's more of an education game than a training/analytic game, but that is what was intended and does give a reasonable sense of the battle, although Daesh may be a bit tame and the collateral damage a bit underplayed/out of player control.
Is it a good game?	Yes
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone wanting to see good modern wargame design, interested in Mosul or urban warfare.
Is the game good value?	Yes. c.£70 though so some may see it as a bit pricey.

MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

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

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	IGO-UGO, 0-3 CPs per cmdr for extra actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshing pool of CP • Allocate CP to recover, reroll or extra move
Comms	None
UxV	Capability cards for UAVs
CEMA	Capability cards for EW
Other ISR	Use of blocks. Small number of dummies (rumours). Blocks revealed when attacked
Movement	1 area per turn unless on major road when unlimited (2 week turns and ~5km area1) No armour in old city 3 limit to stack out of city, 2 in Old City
Damage	2-4 steps per unit. Each typ reducing CF by 1.
Direct Fire	Na
Assault	1-3 units vs 1-3 units. Rol \geq CF/TN of each unit for a hit/step loss. Saves on armour only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CF from 2+ to 6+ to score hits. Hit = step reduction. • +1 to ISIS veterans in Old City • +1 to tanks in open • Save for armour. • Optional re-rolls from cards or Comdr • Assaults only, no ranged fire • Fall back if don't elim en. Some tps can force 2nd round.
Indirect Fire	Only from cards. Own D6 table from no effect/CD to step losses, but no CD + step loss.
IEDs	IEDs as blocks, single use, again own 1-6 results table. Sides of block show type: IED, Large IED, VBIED.
Morale	Disruption from cards or if exceed stacking through withdrawal
Victory Conditions	Triple track of casualties/time/collateral with one chosen as priority.
Building Damage	CD mainly from failed FIRES, and some cards
Civilians	Human shields Wrapped up in CD Some event cards
Subterranean	Has tunnel options
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	Random Events on 1 or 6, depending on current top card. Nice descriptions, often with mini decision and D6 result table (although can judge % benefit).

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	9 Oct 23	Scenario	Main game
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- Police hit with disruption and resilient vet
- Ashbal delayed CTS in S,
- Police and Army breaking supply lines and sp CTS attack fm S
- End turn 5 (late Apr): W and S suburbs cleared, ISIS tenuous hold on supply line. Only Cas1 and Col2. Police still disrupted.
- Turn 8 - we'll into Old City. Still stiff resistance on LOC, EOD team lost.
- Turn 9, fight for the Mosque, ISIS MDA, very bloody. Over half old city taken, but no ISF losses so far
- Turn 10: only 4 old city and 3 suburban areas left, but one straggler vs rear areas
- T11: human shields! But good UAV and fires. Mosque taken, only 1 city and 1 suburb left

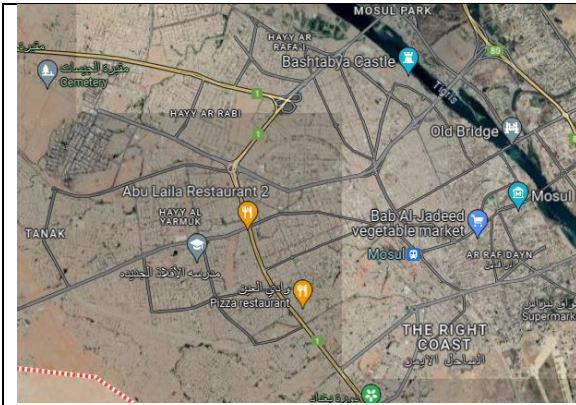
RESULTS

- 2 cas, only 1 real + 3 weak = 5
- 7 collateral
- 12 turns
- Competing:
 - ISIS: casualties: ISF were moderately low, one below historic
 - ISF: collateral: moderately high, historic
- VP:
 - $12+10+14 = 36 =$ near major ISF victory

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

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IMAGES



Real terrain



STARTEX



End Turn 5



End Turn 6



End Turn 10



End Turn 12 - ENDEX