

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Battle for Ramadi	★★★★★
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Period	Modern	Publisher	Tiny Battle Publishing
Conflict	Iraq/SIS/Ramadi/2015	Designer	Jay Ward
Force Size	~21 Bn vs ~2 Bn	Date	2018
Mvr Units	~Bn	Grid Size	Hex. ~500m
Turn Dur.	~ 1day, Game = 10 turn/~8 days	Map Size	c. 4km x 7km, 12 x 9 hex
Players	1 (AI for ISIS)		

Introduction

Subject of the game	Final battle of Ramadi between ISF (Iraq+ US SF + allied air sp) and ISIS during 22-28 Dec
Scope	Whole battle, all-rams, asymmetric
Presentation	Print and play, good quality graphics. Clear rules
Components	A3 map, one counter sheet, 85 counters, QRS, 20pp guide, 11pp rules. Good designer notes.
Designer's focus/objectives	<p>Designed while battle in progress. Obejctive “try to understand the nature of the battle, and, at that time, assess whether the ISF would be successful”. Encirclement-CTS leadership-airpower.</p> <p>Solitaire as 1) playability, 2) little ISIS knowledge (esp numbers, strategy, C2)</p> <p>Keep things simple. Simple combat system with all arms in one oposed die roll, uncertainty in ISIS, 50% chance of ISF success.</p>
Overall system description	
Real Battle Notes	<p>c.12500 vs c.2000. 350-1000 ISIS killed vs 1000 wounded and 300 killed for ISF. 500k civ displaced, 143 killed.</p> <p>House and mule-borne IEDs. Explosive IED clearance (eg Viper) even in cities.</p>

The Game System

<p>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</p>	<p>The slog through the dense urban area, max 1 new hex per turn Constant threat of en popping up anywhere – so protecting LOC Constant IED threat ISF “Assets” (route clearance, SF, arty, air) help but in short supply More losses reduces tempo (but never reached that point as max 3 offensives ot ensure ratios)</p>
<p>Important abstractions</p>	<p>Only CF differentiates units (even airpower)</p>
<p>Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play</p>	<p>Very simple differential cbt system CF+DMs vs CF+DMs. Margin gives loss chance. Unlimited movt along LOCs (very good). Random generate 3 layer ISIS opposition for each encounter – fighters+IEDs+assets (Emirs, civvies, mercenaries). Random ISIS chance of counter attack vs LOC</p>
<p>Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation</p>	<p>Not sure how good at predicting (esp as says had 50% as a benchmark) Very good at showing the nature of the battle in terms of the grind, the constant IED threat and thre threat to LOCs. This was not a manoeuvre battle! Civvies really just a reminder they are there – nothing you can do about it.</p>
<p>Contributions to the wargaming state of the art</p>	<p>Nice asymmetric AI for this type of engagement.</p>
<p>Improvements?</p>	<p>Not really for what it's trying to achieve. Always the issue that that a unit just becomes a CF 1/2/3/4 rather than anything else. Designer notes talk about the factionalisation of the Iraqi military, so could possibly reflect that when combining, encouraging “single source” columns – if that's what they did in reality.</p>

The Game in Play

Play time	~1-2 hours if really understand it. Would be a lot faster with an app to generate the ISIS threat rather than drawing counters.
Player roles	ISF commander only
Types of decisions required	How many attacks, How to assign troops and support for each attack, how best to protect LOC.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	Free movt in LOC on turn before really helps focus. Delays in retasking air and getting reinforcements feeds in to planning (don't waste air all in one go) Min 7 hexes to fight thru in 10 turns means you have to crack on Lack of knowledge about ISIS strength means you might be fighting 0/1 or 6/8 – so what do you risk?
Evaluation of the player's experience	Good and focussed but a slog. More about resource mgt and risk appetite than tactics. Interesting one to AI on both sides.

Overall Evaluation

Does the game work? (Veracity)	Yep, nothing broken, pretty slick
Does it have real world validity?/Insights?	In terms of nature yes, not in terms of tactics. Does remind importance of LOCs
Is it a good game?	Yes, 4/5
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone who might fight in a city, but only needs 1-2 plays to get the message. Little repeat value once you've had a decent win.
Is the game good value?	Yep, only \$9

MECHANICS

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	# options based on D6 but adjusted for casualties
Movement	Free along whole LOC length – good
Direct Fire	Differential cbt system CF+DMs vs CF+DMs. Margin gives loss chance.
Damage	Whole unit lost or nothing
Assault	In DF
Indirect Fire	In DF
Air Support	In DF. Simple roll to abort if ISIS has SAMs.
Engineers	Engr units nullifies any IED
CEMA	Nil
Morale	Nil – but losses reduce activations
Civilians	Random factor, but nothing ISF can do about them
Subterranean	ISIS can appear anywhere in your rear
Urban Specifics	-2 for urban, -3 for strongpoint, but have to fight for each hex
Other Notable	

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	4-18/2/22	Scenario	Default
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard, ISF in the four AAs

HOW IT PLAYED

Attacked from all four directions, rebuffed on a couple of bridges at first but soon made it to the Justice Compound. Suffered quite badly from ISIS attacks in the first few rounds. Then settled into a pattern with the axis, one from N towards the Government Complex (always with SF and one air and best troops), one E from Justice towards Government Complex (no air, median troops) and one N towards Government Complex (good troops, always engineers and air). Once the link up was achieved that gave me fairly safe LOC so could reduce to two columns, one to Hospital/Mosque other to Station and Stadium, with a third offensive each turn to counter ISIS attacks. By turn 10 had secured all objectives but ISIS had managed to cut a couple of LOCs, but still won on points.

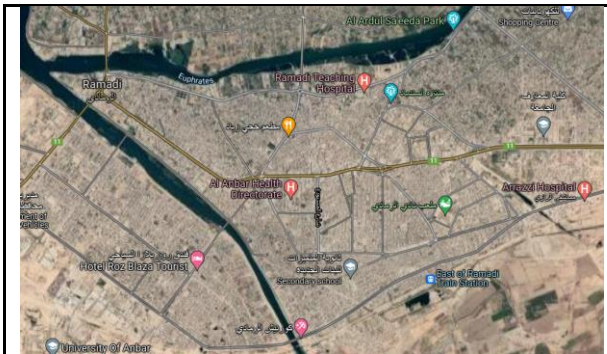
RESULTS

ISF had 10 unit casualties. ISF had 35 VP to ISIS 24. Good ISF win, but like the real battle likely to be ongoing activity to keep the secured ground held.

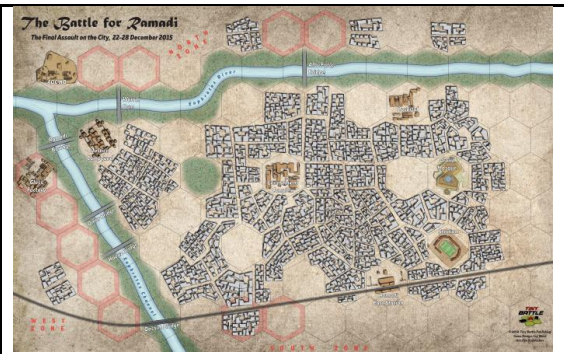
THOUGHTS (c.f. RLAND URBAN)

Mostly in above. Simple but effective game that gives you a real sense of the grind in this type of urban combat. Nice AI that meant you never knew what you were facing til after you'd made your resource allocation and always had to keep an eye on your LOC. Those were probably the main lessons in terms of urban.

IMAGES



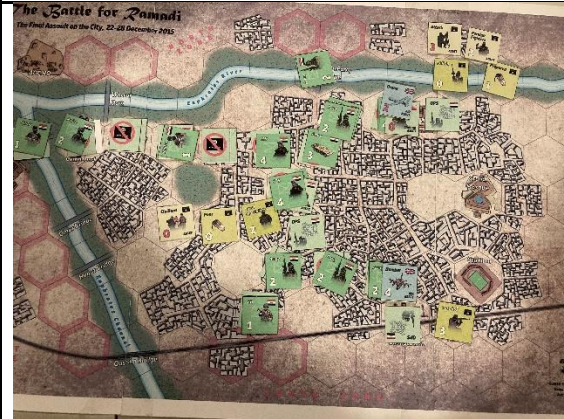
Real terrain



Game board



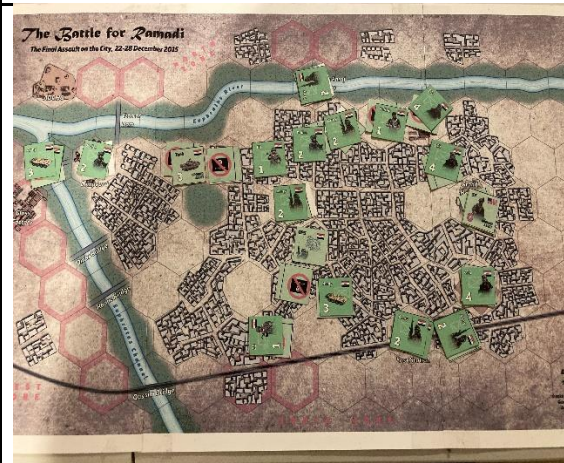
~ Turn 5, W and N routes about to link



Examples of 3 ISIS forces, Engr's cleared IEDs in SE



Penultimate attacks



ENDEX