

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Second Fallujah	★★★1/2
------------------------	---------------

Period	Modern/Iraq Insurgency	Publisher	Compass Games/Paper Wars
Conflict/Battle	2 nd Fallujah	Designer	Steve Lieske
Force Size	Asymmetric. Div	Date	
Mvr Units	Companies, plus attached Pls	Grid Size	51 areas in a roughly 6 x 8 grid . 1" = ~ 570ft so c. 800m x 500m (so each area about the whole of Phantom Fury – which makes sense as that's a Bn/Coy game and this is Coy MU)
DOWNness	3 DOWN	Map Size	~20 city blocks
Players	2	Turn Dur.	7 turns, ea 1 day, 8-14 Nov
Player Roles	Cmdr Coalition Forces Insurgent leader	Playing Time	~3 hrs first time
BGG Link	https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/367198/second-fallujah		

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 whole battle from 8 th Nov to 14 th Nov E of the Euphrates.
Components	A1 sized map, ~250 counters, 9pp rules, 1pp orbat, 4pp solo bot, 2pp counter sheet copy.
Presentation - Good	Well laid out, text seems denser than actually is in terms of rules. Nice counters, especially the colour code for E/W entry. Good map with clear zones overlaid on clear aerial photo of Fallujah and good iconography. Excellent orbat well matched to reality and counters. Best looking of the three (c.f. Modern War Fallujah 2004, & Phantom Fury)
Presentation - Bad	No QRS (but simple but OK one on BGG).
Designer's focus/objectives	6pp historical article and 1pp developer's notes (by game developer not designer). Unfortunately it's more a guide to play than a guide to design but does highlight: the backlash track to reflect the constraints the US operated under and the ability of cadre units to keep generating militia – and so the importance of killing them early.
Overall system description	It's essentially an area impulse game, with players alternating area based impulses. En starts pre-populate, but en player can spawn militia units by cadre units (including when en enters adj areas) and move others. There are up to 13 impulse pairs in a turn, but the turn ends when the coalition player rolls < impulse # on a combat roll, so typically only 5-7 impulse pairs a turn. Combat is comparison of CF+DM+2D6.
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.
--	--

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Asymmetric nature of the combat (different combat methods for each side, militia just regen but cadre/Fedayeen don't, Coalition only takes Backlash hits, not cas).
Important abstractions	No hidden information. No IEDs. No influence ops etc. Missed opportunity to use CA/MP units etc. Engr units seem pointless, just a +1 so all cbt engr abstracted. Very simple single type of air support, available every impulse if desired. Armour is a +2 modifier, SF are +1. No civilians. CD not really present.
Types of decisions required	Typical area impulse game, what stacks to build to optimise DMs, where to go, which order to hit units, especially since only ~50% of units will get the chance to activate each turn.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	As above, all about trying to optimise attacks before the countdown expires and min/maxing the stacks (8 counter stack limit, but -1 for mixed Army/Marine).
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	Plays very well, easier than the rulebook makes it sounds. Good area-impulse implementation. Needs for Iraqi's to be present at mosque fights. Cadre just keep generating militia, but no militia if any local cadre eliminated. Then separate Fedayeen as the more symmetric fighting force.
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	Random end of turn built into the combat role is nice.
Deficiencies	Within the game as present not any really. Nothing I'd really change/house rule if playing again. Not sure what the role of Engrs are though beyond a generic +1, more useful as rear area security. No random events or other forms of local colour. Seemed to be quite a lot of "exceptions" in the rules, but not so apparent in actual play (just forgot or rarely relevant?) Stacking and DM rules make quite gamey – the search for the perfect stack The militia DMs needed a lookup table from the UTZ number which was annoying.
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	No, not for what it is.
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	Assuming the goal is an enjoyable game to get to better know the Fallujah terrain and the fight that was there, and some of its issues at a very high level then it works well. Might be tempted to try and strengthen the ROE issues to give players a better sense that that as don't really impede game play – although I possibly lost because of a high backlash count.

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	A nice implementation of the area-impulse model, with a focus on being efficient given limited duration of the turns. In fact only had 41 impulses in whole game – and 51 areas to take! Bit surprised when ended dominating the board that I lost!
Does the game work? Is it a good (enjoyable) game (Veracity)	Yes, enjoyable and seems to give a reasonable sense of what happened – the end state was perhaps more realistic than the “easy” game suggested – interesting issue to explore when that happens.
Does it have real world validity?/Insights? Is it useful game?	It feels a bit/lot more gamey than the other two, and I think I’d play those if I wanted insights, Fallujah 2004 for the operation picture Phantom Fury for the tactical one, but for a gamer wanting to “know” Fallujah this is probably the best bet. Need to read more about Fallujah itself but the way that Fallujah 2004 represents the various Bde/Bn axes seems more realistic, than units freely careering around the city. Absence of civilians/CD makes its use for doing something like Gaza limited.
Replay value	Only to beat the score. No other scenarios really possible, but mechanics would translate to other Iraqi (and similar) city fights.
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in the Iraq war mainly, less use than the other two for generic urban.
Is the game good value?	\$40/£40 for what is probably a one off game makes it expensive – but you do get the rest of the 48pp magazine – so good deal for Compass fans.
Overall Impressions	More gamey than the other two, but a fun and relatively quick play.

Third Party Reviews	<p>https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3139278/two-thumbs - says game system is similar to/from Mike Rinella</p> <p>https://www.armchairdragons.com/articles/unbox/unbox-fallujah2/ - compares Second Fallujah and Fallujah 2004</p>
----------------------------	---

MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

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

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	Area by area impulse, and rolling < impulse number in combat ends turn, so typically only 5-7 impulses per turn. No other friction.
Comms	None
UxV	None
CEMA	None
Other ISR	None – very limited use of recce to try and pre-trigger actions
Movement	Movt allowance and cost depends on presence and state of en
Damage	Insurgents take as counter loss, but costs depends on situation. Coalition takes loss as backlash.
Direct Fire	In assault
Assault	Delta of CF+DMs+2D6. Terrain/UTZ modifier to insurgents only (in attack and defence) Interesting that none of the 3 used a ratio CRT – assumed as asymmetric
Indirect Fire	Single generic fire mission but can be used every impulse if wanted.
IEDs/Engineering	Engr units but only gives a generic +1 to combat.
Casualties	AMTRAC unit gives -1 to casualties to reflect medevac
Logistics	None
Morale	None
Opinion	Backlash track driven by allied casualties (ie loss of US resolve) and by attacks on mosques without Iraqi presence (local/religious hostility)
Victory Condition	Essentially a countdown for the insurgents based on loss of Fedayeen and Cadre units, loss of mosques, loss key sites and MSR.
UTZs	Areas rated 0 to 4 based on UTZ. Only effects Insurgent side.
Building Damage	None
Civilians	None
Subterranean	None – although infiltration rule
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	none

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	7 Mar 23	Scenario	Baseline
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard, rather than with solo mods. Played two-handed rather than using solo bot, but looked at bot to get an idea of priorities.

HOW IT PLAYED

- 1.7: into all but 1 of N edge, but only secured 1 area
- 2.5: only really got E flank activated, but 1/3 Mar managed to push fwd to Ind area, and secure LOC
- 3.5: don't even get thru W flank, but have 2 more areas, 55 VP
- 4.8: Attack stalled again on Furqan Mosque. Imam al Shafi mosque taken, and 1/3 Mar now pushing W down MSR. Fire Mission against Fedayeen dug in at Surta Centre failed to move them, and ended phase! Had to assign Army to REP, no idea how to keep doing it if get S of MSR. Only about 6 cadre and 6 fedayeen left.
- 5.5 Doing well clearing E end of MSR, but after good drive S 3/5 Mar comes unstuck at Al Jamoria East, and not even a VP!
- 6.6 Forced end as C phase had culminated with all but W end of MSR and want regroup for final attack. 6 cadre, 1 fed left.
- 7.5 ENDEX, just not quite enough activations to take the remaining Insurgent hold out around W end of MSR at Martyrs Cemetery and al-Kabir Mosque. 1/8 Mar and 1/3 Mar made it to the S edge of the city.
- t.i: is the turn number followed by the last impulse of the turn

RESULTS

Only 10 of 51 areas in en hands, 6 of those without defenders, only 2 mosques and 3 obj not taken. 1F and 6C left.

Minor Ins victory with 29 pts, 12 fm Political, 12 fm Cadre

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

A very enjoyable game, not as complex or as bitty as first thought, but certainly more gamey than the other two. Quite surprised that despite dominating the board the Insurgents had a minor victory – but perhaps that is suitably realistic as you think you've won the battle on the ground but that's not how its seen outside! Certainly the best game for learning the Fallujah geography and orbat.

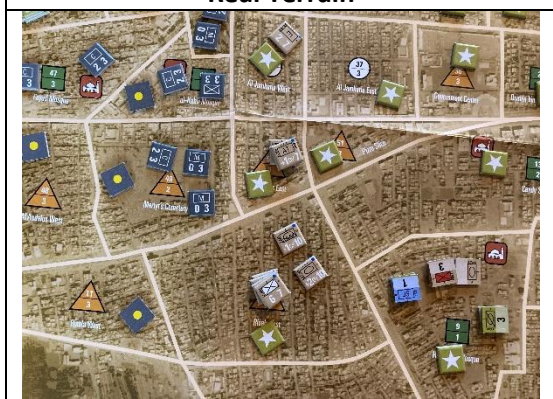
IMAGES



Real Terrain



STARTEX



End game detail



ENDEX