

## WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

<b>Into A Bear Trap</b>	<b>★★★★1/2☆☆</b>
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<b>Period</b>	Modern	<b>Publisher</b>	Against The Odds/LPS
<b>Conflict</b>	Chechen Wars, 1994/5	<b>Designer</b>	Perry Moore Dev: Paul Rohrbaugh
<b>Force Size</b>	Bde+ vs, asymmetric (2 bn)	<b>Date</b>	2004
<b>Mvr Units</b>	~Platoons	<b>Grid Size</b>	Hex, 100m
<b>Turn Dur.</b>	2 hrs	<b>Map Size</b>	City Centre, 26 x 19 hexes, ~ 2.6km x 1.9km
<b>Players</b>	2		

### Introduction

<b>Subject of the game</b>	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Battle of Grozny on 31 Dec 94 to 1 Jan 95. Focuses on Gen Pulikovsky's attack with 81 <sup>st</sup> MRR, 131 <sup>st</sup> IMRB from NW only.
<b>Scope</b>	The main city centre area, in particular the KPs of the railway station, Presidential Palace and the Parliament building.
<b>Presentation</b>	OK counters and map, thinner than some. 1pp rule set, includes scenario and 1pp designer notes and 3pp play example and 2pp QRS. Separate card QRS.  Rules, and even QRS are quite poorly laid out, for instance the damage section of the QRS with 2 sides and 2 wpn types and 2 target types is covered by 2 dense paragraphs rather than a simple table.  The map uses a very pale pallet which is not at all engaging and hex lines can be hard to see. Counters likewise use a pastel pallet and can be hard to tell the activated side as only loses numbers.
<b>Components</b>	~A1 map, 1 counter sheets, 280 counters. Rules as above.
<b>Designer's focus/objectives</b>	Aims to illustrate how the "urbanised environment negates many of the modern weapon systems" Most of the DN on the history rather than the game. Does talk about Russians pulling back in order to use arty, and Chechen's clinging to the Russian's belts, both historic and both valid/essential tactics in the game.
<b>Overall system description</b>	Fairly standard board wargame. Units have a single combat factor and a movement factor. 20 DMs to consider in Direct Fire. Simple Assault and Indirect Fire (with scatter mechanism). No morale. Win by elimination or VPs (KPs and eliminations).
<b>Real Battle Notes</b>	The 81 <sup>st</sup> were almost totally destroyed, getting bogged down in ambushes etc. 131 <sup>st</sup> initially faired better, then relaxed too much by the railway station, got ambushed and again more or less eliminated on the way out.

## The Game System

<b>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</b>	<p>The asymmetric nature of the fight</p> <p>Happening in an urban setting – firing up/down between floors, limited LOS, blocking wrecks, rubble (not as much as CiH).</p>
<b>Important abstractions</b>	<p>Not too many for the type and level of game.</p> <p>Only ground and “upper” floor. No bldg. heights – so can’t put in a high OP.</p> <p>No C2.</p> <p>All vehs have same armour more or less!</p>
<b>Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play</b>	<p>Hidden chit activation, by Bn for Russia and for D10 units for Chechens. Chechen also get D10 reinforcements for each chit in turns 2-6, and an extra activation chit per turn 1-6. Nice.</p> <p>Movement by simple MA/MP. NO overwatch fire. Nice “Upper Floor” marker.</p> <p>Direct fire by D10+DMs &lt;= FF. Inf FF typically only 3, and automatic +2 DM if tgt in bldg., so base hit of 0 or 1 (20%) before anything else considered. Damage is a D6 on ~50:50 KO or suppression.</p> <p>Non KOs are on a Suppressed-Pinned-Disrupted-Inactive scale, with a nice counter, hvy weapons starting at Disrupted, others at Suppressed.</p> <p>Indirect fire doesn’t scatter is observed at 4 hexes, and can’t be brought t in danger close, esp for Buratinos. Buratinos hit 7 hexes, guns one. Same mechanism as DF but some changes to modifiers.</p> <p>Snipers nicely modelled.</p> <p>Close assault based on #units rather than strength, plus a few DMs.</p> <p>Generally pretty easy to play, would be a lot easier with a better QRS, clearer map/units, and not having to keep switching between D10 and D6.</p>

<b>Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation</b>	<p>So-so. Due to the combat mechanism you still focus on the highest value units and “forget” that things like BMPs have ATGMs. The urban specific wpns (Buratino, Schmel) are very effective.</p> <p>As the Russian you certainly have to deal with a rapidly growing onslaught of Chechen’s then when they reach their highpoint around Turn 6 try and quash them. They can appear nicely to your rear as well. Close assault is VERY bloody and certainly clears them out, but at high risk and you don’t have loads of troops. As a result trying to use Fires is very attractive, very powerful, but very hard to spot given terrain, but a dense patch of Chechens in multiple hexes would be a juice target, hence the hugging.</p> <p>Overall think getting the right lessons but being 3 DOWN the game I just too big to get them quickly. A smaller game on just one Bn column, or a 2 DOWN Bde game may have been better.</p> <p>Also only looks at one axis of the advance, so don’t get the bigger Grozny picture, but that wasn’t the aim.</p>
<b>Contributions to the wargaming state of the art</b>	A reasonable representation of urban on hex. Not sure what predates in terms of the “upper floor” marker which is the only real innovation of a standard game.
<b>Improvements?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better map and counters</li> <li>• Being able to form mixed tanks/inf cbt teams (but not historic?)</li> <li>• Reduce to 2 DOWN or single Bn/2DOWN focus</li> <li>• Elevated OPs</li> <li>• Randomly choose tgt in hex (so don’t pick on the easy/best one)</li> <li>• Better rules layout/explanation/QRS</li> <li>• Move to all D10</li> <li>• More discrimination in target armour</li> </ul>

### The Game in Play

<b>Play time</b>	3 hrs to do ~ 4 moves. Plus 1 before. Target is 14 moves, could get down to ~30min moves.
<b>Player roles</b>	Russia and Chechnya
<b>Types of decisions required</b>	<p>Russia:</p> <p>Which avenues of approach and which Bns on each Tactical hex by hex decisions to get optimum attacks</p> <p>Where to spend relatively limited Fires – but usually limited by Ops</p> <p>Where to send scarce resources – tanks, Schmel</p> <p>Chechnya:</p>

	<p>Where to deploy new forces each go</p> <p>Where to spend limited activation points</p> <p>Which avenue to defend, which to block, how to channel</p>
<b>Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making</b>	<p>Russia: As activation is random by Bn then rear Bn can get stuck if activate before the front ones.</p> <p>Chechnya: D10 roll for pips means that its hard to do a coherent strategy – which may be realistic. No overwatch is a real blow, means Russians can just drive past.</p>
<b>Evaluation of the player's experience</b>	<p>Ok, but a bit of a slog through 14 turns. Real issue is the 3 DOWN nature, with Russian player having c.50 counters, c.80 including vehicles and that's before re-inforcements. Chechens have a similar number. Just too many for me.</p>

### Overall Evaluation

<b>Does the game work? (Veracity)</b>	Just about with the above caveats.
<b>Does it have real world validity?/Insights?</b>	Yes, certainly some of the real experiences come through.
<b>Is it a good game?</b>	<p>So-so.</p> <p>### Likes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chechen build up, very portable</li> <li>- Need to place leaders for OPs</li> <li>- Fire mission call-off</li> <li>- SPDI mechanism, esp counters</li> <li>- Upper floor marker and firing DMs</li> </ul> <p>### Dislikes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Muted map</li> <li>- Unclear which is the activated side</li> <li>- Rear unit activation order issue</li> <li>- Can't mix tanks and inf due to activation sequence</li> <li>- Began to live with the hard to hit stats, but the -1 for already a target of DF means you started to game it by having a #1 unit fire first just to get that extra.</li> <li>- Too many counters, inevitable stacks but can't combine fire</li> <li>- No elevated OPs</li> <li>- Can pick best target in hex</li> <li>- D6/D10 mix</li> <li>- T80 treated as more or less same defence as BMP or RPG</li> <li>- Space is either Urban or non-urban, no gradation</li> </ul>

	A few teaks (hopefully not as many as CiH) could improve it significantly, but being quite generic might as well use one's own game.
<b>Who would be most interested in the game?</b>	Someone who wants to experience a bit of Grozny but is happy to put in the hours. Probably a gamers game.
<b>Is the game good value?</b>	£34 s/h but unpunched and mint from Second Chance. Not a lot of replay value and just too long, so probably not really.

## MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	No real C2 modelling.
Movement	Extra MP for urban, that's all. Wrecks to block, rubble to degrade.
Direct Fire	Minimal LOS except down roads. No bldg. or OP heights. Good up/down DMs
Damage	SPDI model nice counter wise, but too many to recover from (give 2hr turns)
Assault	Simple, DM for up stairs
Indirect Fire	Simple, hard to place Ops and 400m limit for no deviation on OP seems short 70% deviation for map firing seems high
Air Support	NA
Engineers	NA
CEMA	NA
Comms	NA
UxV	NA
ISR	NA
Morale	NA – probably ought to be there given what happened and how units collapsed and pulled back, instead can fight to the end
Civilians	NA
Subterranean	NA
Urban Specifics	Roadblocks. As above, nothing else
Other Notable	Good snipers.

*[Per scenario/run through]*

<b>Date</b>	Sep 22	<b>Scenario</b>	Solo, main game
<b>Players</b>	DB	<b>Constraints</b>	None

## SET-UP

As per standard

## HOW IT PLAYED

Quite a drag, first turn took ages finding stuff in the rules and understanding what was needed. Then got through 4 turns in 3 hrs, but still a lot of faffing around and given the difficulty to hit anything, and hard to get Ops in was just all quite tedious once the lessons had been learnt in the first few turns.

Rapidly found that better to go down multiple axes so that Chechens had to spread, and then to try and get some blue water so that Fires could come down. Chechens do well hugging and can also just appear in the rear (nice bonus on firing). BMPs seemed pretty useless so tended to be ignored. Only go through 5 turns before I gave up.

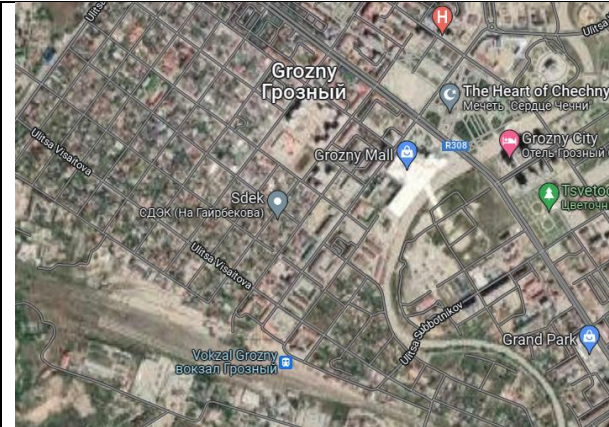
## RESULTS

Based purely on losses (no KPs taken), 24 VP to Russians and 56 to Chechnya, Chechen win

## THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN)

As ever a good game in their but let down by choice of scope or 3 DOWN, poor map/rules clarity/readability and poor dice choice. Does capture some of the main elements though – be interesting to see what else does.

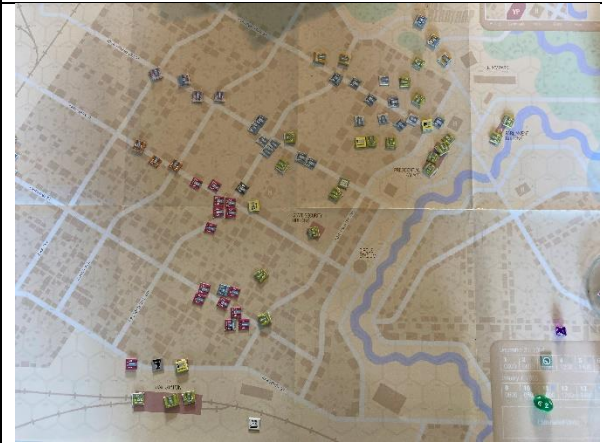
IMAGES



Real terrain



STARTEX



End Turn 3



End Turn 4



End Turn 5

