

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

The MOG	★★★★
----------------	------

Period	Modern	Publisher	White Dog Games
Conflict/Battle	Mogadishu	Designer	David Kershaw
Force Size	~Bn	Date	2023
Mvr Units	Squad or Pl – but see below	Grid Size	~66 areas
DOWNness	~2	Map Size	~2km x 3km
Players	Solo	Turn Dur.	Abstract, ~ 1-2 hrs?
Player Roles	UN/US force commander	Playing Time	~1-2 hrs
BGG Link	https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/380325/the-mog-mogadishu-1993 https://www.whitedoggames.com/mogadishu		

Introduction

Subject of the game	The Black Hawk down episode of Op Gothic Serpent, and other skirmishes during US operations in Mogadishu
Scope	Most of the operation, although the actual crashes are abstracted, as are the allied forced.
Components	22x17" map 88 5/8 th inch counters – VERY thick 16pp rule book 2pp QRS 2pp play example
Presentation – Good	Very good presentation overall Counters are very thick and so easy to handle Sidebar nature of the rulebook for FAQs is innovative, but not 100% sure it always works Text order also interesting with set up, then combat, then turn sequence and main rules Map very clear
Presentation - Bad	Counters have a very busy background, and the “Pinned” side not too obvious. Lettering very small.
Designer's focus/objectives	Not stated, “simulating the military actions”
Overall system description	Solo game, with chit pull for enemy. Each turn random number of enemy placed, which then swarm towards the action under the control of a reasonable AI. All scenarios revolve around US capturing an HVT and then getting away to safety. Combat is very simple, the turn sequence very logical and it all moves pretty fast.
Real Battle Notes	See the film, helicopters shot down by RPGs and the mission then became about getting the crews out as much as the HVTs, and the relief mission got stuck and also had ot fight its way out.

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Street fighting (NOT building fighting) Swarming of the mob Combat causes casualties who need to be got out
---	---

Important abstractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combat is very simple • Not even PV for being in a building • The relief common is handled very abstractly (and very well) • The crashes are just casualties, no surviving/fighting crew <p>There are a couple of sleights of hands involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weird multi level units, SOF=12-15, PI=30-40, SNA=50-100, Militia=100 • Sneaky map shift too – photo shows lots of small buildings, but areas which seem to be a “building” cover a far greater area, so 25\50 buildings on the map. Would seem a simpler, tighter area game without the sat photo – almost too small.
Types of decisions required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to build the initial force – eg air power (helos) vs SF vs regular troops vs transport • Where to do your heli-drops • Choosing exfil routes • When to use helos • Everything else pretty much driven by staying alive
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	<p>Probably not too much, things happen, you have to respond.</p>
How well do game decisions map to real life decisions	<p>Possibly pretty good, real sense in the game of when do I just cut and run and try and get back to base as the enemy swarms</p>
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the short scenario/force approach, very accessible • Road segments • Area randomisation – 66 areas = D66 • Very simple combat • SNA lose AT if pinned, not AP
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casualty mechanic, every KO unit leaves a casualty, and if left on board or seized by enemy its VP to them • Relief convoy mechanic – and abstract build out forming a chain which becomes a quick escape home – although possibly too random
Deficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None really on its terms, but lack of any PV for being in a building seems a bit much. It has DM-1 for night, so why not DM+1 for defender in building. When moving it means no difference in using open streets vs buildings – but then perhaps buildings should be slower – but that would up everybody x 2
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House rule +1 for defender in building, maybe even +2 if defending assault
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	<p>Hard given lack of designers notes, but gives a good game which certainly feels like the film</p>

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	Overall a good game, you know you're not going to defeat the enemy, its just a case of extracting the HVT and any cas. AI works very well, and although a lot on encounters on the board its pretty easy to work through them as most are just moves. Was thinking it needed a way to flag activated, but just rotating the key counters is probably enough.
Does the game work? (Veracity/Internal Validity)	Yes, very much so.
Is the game engaging?	Yes
Is the game useful – for what?	Not sure, lack of any real urban detail would not make it useful for urban training, but maybe give people a cinematic sense of it
How valid is the game? Is the game realistic?	Yes and no. Yes it seems to recreate at least the cinematic experience, but no in the sense there are no PVs for buildings, no civilians etc
Does it provide any special insights	That units don't typically just die, they have casualties, and even if they die don't you want the bodies back
Replay value	Reasonably high for the half dozen scenarios in the rules, but not sure beyond that.
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone who's seen the film! As a reviewer notes below its not a bad intro to solo wargaming.
Is the game good value?	At ~£50 a copy probably not quite, for £25-30 definitely. As ever suffers from US postage so UK rarity costs.
Overall Impressions	A good game, not as fiddly or as tactical as Day of Heroes which I could see more being used for training/edutainment, whereas this is firmly in the entertainment/possibly edutainment box.

Third Party Reviews	<p>Wynarator Nope – “This game hits the sweet spot: fast, thematic, and fun. It’s not perfectly balanced—bad dice rolls can flood the board with enemies near your forces, while lucky rolls push them far away. But honestly, that unpredictability adds to the experience. The “bad” rolls create memorable stories: a supposedly easy mission suddenly turns into a nightmare ambush, trucks explode, troops get cut off, and everything spirals out of control. That’s exactly what I want from a game like this. Even when I lose, I enjoy it—because the chaos leaves me with stories worth retelling.”</p> <p>Michael Boyd – “The Mog is a total overlooked gem in my opinion.”</p> <p>Peregrine Nicholls – “It's a fabulous game. I "GM" it as an introduction to board wargaming for non-wargamers and this has proved very successful, almost every player has been enthralled and caught up in the tension of Black Hawk Down! One "victim" has now bought their own copy and posted rules questions on the Geek!”</p>
----------------------------	---

Interesting Expansions	None
-------------------------------	------

MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

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

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	Automatic
Comms	None
UxV	Pre UAV
CEMA	None/NA
Other ISR	None
Movement	1 sq, vehs 2 sq on roads
Damage	Pin then KO, but leaves as Casualty – great
Direct Fire	D6+FF vs D6+FF, Pin if >, KO if double
Assault	D6+FF vs D6+FF, loser KO
Indirect Fire	None – exc helos, 1=miss, 2-4=pin, 5+ = KO
IEDs/Engineering	None
Casualties	Yeh! Leave a cas counter whenever unit KO'd, needs to be rescued before caught by Somalis
Logistics	None
Morale	None
Opinion	None
Victory Condition	Minimise bad stuff whilst achieving objective
UTZs	None
Building Damage	None
Civilians	None
Subterranean	None
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	None

Triad Representation

	Challenges		Solutions	
	Elms	Comment	Elms	Comment
Civilian Population	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Civilian Infrastructure	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
3D Man-Made Terrain	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influences movement Roadblocks No DM for in bldgs.! 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None? Maybe helos?

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	4 Feb 26	Scenario	Black Hawk Down
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- Turn 1
 - Helo took out RPG ambush just outside of stadium
 - Ranger fights off assault with ease
 - Platoon debuses and takes out rest of ambush
- Turn 2
 - Platoon KO on street, cas left
 - CSAR goes in, fights off SNA
 - Ranger lost assaulting RPG nest, but taken by pl
- Turn 3
 - Khat! First Technical, 2nd by Stadium, out of counters
 - luckily technicals miss Humvee and Truck!
 - Heli failed to get RPG team by new cas, RPG pins Humvee
 - CSAR disembarks into assault and takes out RPG team
 - Decided to head S to UN4 with main body, have picked up 2 cas plus prisoners, very filmic like fight to get the rest of the guys out, will need vehs to come back for them
- Turn 4
 - Roadblock removed
 - Last heli vs technical, pin it
 - RPG just misses loan HUMVEE, and 2nd HUMVEE
 - Delta and PI risk dashing into street to escape noose and move closer to home
 - Ranger KOs one technical, but one still lurking and no helos
 - Prisoners and one cas to safety,
- Turn 5
 - Riot at UN 1, so Humvee can't come out
 - Technical appears near UN4, in line with truck, misses!
 - Other technical misses delta team in open
 - Truck gets home, Humvee out
 - PI and Delta moving down street, linked up with last cas
 - Northern Ranger mouseholing to UN1
 - Final Humvee outside UN2 gates facing Technical
- TURN 6
 - Riot at UN3, out of the way
 - Technical misses!
 - Sniper kills Ranger with last cas, 2cas!
 - RPG team pins Delta in street, who was going to secure cas! luckily Techncaill misses
 - Northern Ranger fights one off, but killed by SNA, another cas
 - Bad turn!
 - HUMVEE gets to safety
 - Northern cas lost as cant rescue in time
 - OK to shoot into area with cas? KO SNA with the 2 cas

- ENDEX as can stop other cases being taken

RESULTS

MPP: $3+8+18=29$ =just in the Terrible bracket!

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

Good game with some replay value. Certainly shows the merit in having simple rules.

IMAGES



Real Area



Black Hawk Setup – pre crash



Crash sites added



End Turn 1



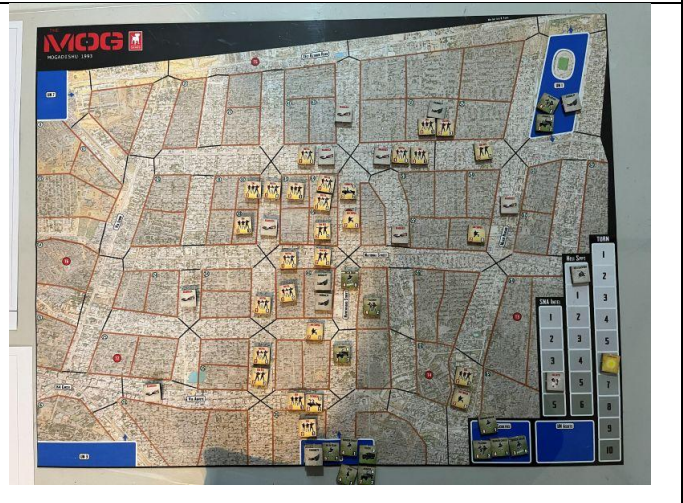
End Turn 2



End Turn 4



End Turn 5



End Turn 6/ENDEX



ENDEX detail