

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Urban Operations	★★★1/2
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Period	Modern	Publisher	NUTS! Publishing
Conflict/Battle	Upto 2010, incl CWGH	Designer	Sebastien de Peyret
Force Size	Coy/PI	Date	2017 & 2026
Mvr Units	Sections	Grid Size	7m per hex
DOWNness	1 or 2 DOWN	Map Size	about 260m x 180m per map
Players	2	Turn Dur.	Not stated, minutes since move 7x7 = 49m. "few minutes" in the Designers Notes
Player Roles	Coy/PI Commanders	Playing Time	~2 hours
BGG Link	https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/437189/urban-operations-second-edition		

Introduction

Subject of the game	Modern(ish) urban combat at PI/Coy level
Scope	As above, but excludes drones. Scenarios include CHWG, Mogadishu, Fallujah, Basra, so symmetric and asymmetric
Components	4 53x2 hex maps, bunker and SubT extensions, 40pp rules, various PACs, units card, scenario event card decks, wooden blocks (82 Green, 74 red)
Presentation – Good	Most of it
Presentation - Bad	Some rules sections very long, QRS could be better (and not on back page)
Designer's focus/objectives	Based on live and FTX experiences at CENZUB and intended to be used as part of a professional soldier's training). Balances between realism and playability, but always about teaching good habits. Ranges artificially restricted through EPs to reflect clutter not shown on the map. "The games mechanics thus prompt all sides to take account of the presence of the civilian population". "for instructional purposes any damage to friendly forces and the civilian population is more severely penalised than that inflicted upon opponents". "More careful in their operations.... High explosives affect everyone indiscriminantly". Rejects idea of different size blocks for foot and vehs. Log and cbt sup wrapped up in the PI Sp block. OSL reflects morale, protection TQ, etc as well as firepower.
Overall system description	Relatively conventional, almost miniatures based. Alternate pl activation, overwatch, firepower value by 5 hex range increments, with blast areas for HE (inc guns). Dice only give a +1 to winner, but also have a Critical Hit function – so roll first.
Real Battle Notes	n/a

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Most of them, esp limited lines of sight and engagement ranges, pl cohesion
Important abstractions	- Single protection value for bldgs. - Limited bldg destruction/rubblisation, no fires - No "upper storey" only roofs - Urban clutter subsumed into shorter wpn ranges - Building interior zones "No mans lands" blocks to represent mines, barricades. TICs/TIMs but also civpop.
Types of decisions required	Fairly standard pl/coy cmdr, not too effected by rules/map

Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	• Range bands mean 5 hex decisions • CH means firing always useful
How well do game decisions map to real life decisions	• Seems to be pretty good, with above caveats
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	• scenario sheets, and structured intro scenarios • 3D support notion • Dummy reintroduction • Covering fire nice, (fm nearby unit) 6EP • Actually quite simple combat, but CH complicates a bit • Keeping PI Cmdr central
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	• Dummy reintroduction • Covering fire nice, (fm nearby unit) 6EP • SubT map • Blast area from larger kinetic actions • Backblast/prohib of some ATGM indoors • Tank over pressure
Deficiencies	• thick white cylinder for roof top • Diddy turn counter • Needs a turn sequence PAC - ah on back page with QRS, should be separate • Double sided TEC • OSL recovery in game ?! • EP illustration before definition! • Scenario cards too small for blocks, esp if embossed • Due to decorative flooring, v hard to spot actual roofs • Very dense rules • Limits where can open breach • Iconography (side arrows) • Needs NMZ PAC • LAW as response • Nothing on LAW ammo • Treating AFVs as 3 step units • Assault too like firing • No reduction once lost 1 step, maybe ok
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	• Drones • Clearer on interplay of firing/scouting/hidden
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	Pretty good, although may now be a bit out of date as nothing on drones May still be a bit gamey and fussy, esp with all the cards and complex iconography

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	Pretty good, but rules quite dense, but basic mechanisms of activation moving and firing work well – although some confusion around spotting/unhiding
Does the game work? (Veracity/Internal Validity)	No real issues
Is the game engaging?	Yes, very playable and moves fast
Is the game useful – for what?	As above, may not be a bit dated. Would push it for training.
How valid is the game? Is the game realistic?	Again tempered by lack of drones, and one ground/roof and single construction type, but given provenance one has to assume reasonably realistic
Does it provide any special insights	Tank overpressure
Replay value	Very high given number of maps and scenarios and periods. It is generic after all.
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in urban, but period specific may prefer more period specific games (esp Fallujah and Mog), and for modern players lack of drones makes less interesting
Is the game good value?	Yes, but as ever 82 Euros make quite expensive
Overall Impressions	Not a bad game, and many good point, but was far better in 2017 pre-drones, but the 2 nd edition hasn't really taken the opportunity to bring it up to date.

Third Party Reviews	(v1) @Kensuzu - "Urban Operations" goes beyond the normal goals of a commercial game. Most wargames aim at accessibility, balance, or entertainment. This one instead chooses to impose cognitive overload and psychological stress as part of its core design. That makes it less of a casual game and more like a serious training tool—a system where the mind of the player becomes part of what is being simulated."
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Interesting Expansions	None
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MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

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

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	Alternating platoon impulses, automatic
Comms	Cohesion distance fm MU to pl cmdr, pl comdr to coy comdr/CP
UxV	None!
CEMA	None!
Other ISR	Eye-ball only, hidden units, dummies
Movement	MA based, standard MP costs.
Damage	3 step units, whether section or single veh!
Direct Fire	FP in 5 hex range steps, D10 gives Critical Hit options or a +1. 1OSL (step) unless CH when 2. No differences in cover type.
Assault	Same as fire but with an assault factor
Indirect Fire	"3D effects" – D10 roll for this ,next or unavailable. Blast area in EP with decreasing OSL loss. No extra test for damage, is automatic.
IEDs/Engineering	In No Mans Land counter. Also Fortification marker.
Casualties	3 step units, but no on table effect beyond loss
Logistics	Cbt Sp marker which can recover cas/OSL. No ammo/OOA?
Morale	Wrapped into OSL.
Opinion	Not covered
Victory Condition	Scenario based, achieving mission objective, e.g getting of board, eliminating enemy
UTZs	Just from map layouts, but not different construction
Building Damage	9+ causes part building collapse, then even=barricade, odd=fortified(rubble), both eliminate 1 block
Civilians	Appears as no mans land counters, moves each turn, moved by en player first 3MP away.
Subterranean	Entry and exit points placed as counters. Set of underground tunnel segment maps. Behaviour inside pretty normal.
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	Not really

Triad Representation

	Challenges		Solutions	
	Elms	Comment	Elms	Comment
Civilian Population	3	Civilian NML counters, active NPCs, can be killed	1	Scenarios may have RoE
Civilian Infrastructure	2	- Bldgs can be damaged - TIC/TIM as NML counters	0	
3D Man-Made Terrain	10	- SubT maps - Only roofs not storeys - Only one PV - Blocks for SA challenge - IED and Mines in NML counters – can have delayed/unstable explosion - Rubble as Fortification, only on damaged square - C2 command chain	12	- HE effect from main guns - Sniper units - Dozer units - Fortification counter - Artillery, mortars and CAS as 3D effects - Deception from blocks - Night rules - Engineer blocks to remove IEDs - Breaching symbol on blocks, open in 1 turn

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	16 Jul 26	Scenario	Introductory 1 & 2 & 3
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

Introductory 1

Just moving units against a static non firing enemy. Only got ½ pl off in 5 turns, rest within 3 sq

Introductory 2

- Patrol caught in street, but they plus Warrior take roof top target out in 2 turns
- BMP ambushes patrol next, inflict loss, but Warrior moves into position and degrades it
- Then score a KO against inf in turn ,
- Inf then ambushed from doorway, but get a CH on first round, but fights off assault

Introductory 3

- RUS get caught going S of bldg 19, but storm in the back of 18, wounding and forcing defenders out
- RUS Comdr tries to snipe thru wall, but gets CH against, RUS charge out of B18, kill US in firefight, the. 2nd squad charges into US in courtyard and takes them out.
- Then Alamo last stand of US PI Comdr, killed in T5

RESULTS

Won 2 of 3. Seems well balanced.

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

Nothing beyond above

IMAGES



Basic Layout



SubT Map Extension



Scenario 1 – End Game



Scenario 2 – Mid Game



Scenario – Mid/End Game