

## **SOF Warrior**

Modern Skirmish Rules – Britton Publishers

[www.brittonpublishers.com](http://www.brittonpublishers.com)

**Special Operations Forces** or SOF is a specialised modern forces version of Final Combat. People that know how Final Combat plays know what they are in for, if you don't then read on ...

As it says in the introduction both Final Combat and SOF Warrior are designed for the experienced gamer and I'd say those experienced gamers who are at home playing both role play games and tactical table-top miniature games. Both sets are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the current crop of simple, quick play, over in two hour sets of rules a lot of people now tend to play. There have been a lot of rules over the past few years that purport to be 'ultra-realistic', very few actually deliver the goods – how does SOF Warrior rate?

These rules will not be for everyone but that is not their aim, a squad level game representing a few minutes of actual combat can last for hours. It has an Excel spreadsheet to help you add up the modifiers needed when firing. You figure out how far to move based on the average yards per second speed of a character doing the action portrayed on the table. Ideally you need an umpire to run the game and you need a lot of time. When we have played it is often left out to come back to later. All ranges are 1:1 and the level of detail makes you want to play with figures with lots of character so 20mm plus, which means you need a big space, the intro scenario for 20mm figures is 12'x 6'. We are now playing SOF Warrior in 10mm but the blast radius of anything larger than a grenade is still frightening. Playing in 28mm and having an HE shell land anywhere on the table makes you realise just how far from 'reality' most rules are.

SOF Warrior is a fantastic mix of Role play and miniature war-gaming. The characters have 16 attributes ranging from 'Power' to 'Hearing' and can have up to 33 skills. Each action chit pulled is based on a second of 'worthwhile' action on the table. The chits determine who can do an action in that segment of time. Unlike other card or chit driven systems though you are not left waiting for the right card to come up, any troop can activate who has that chit rating or higher. Thus better quality troops are going to get to do more actions, this simple but elegant mechanism works well to simulate detailed Special Forces action and to differentiate troops of all types.

Let's briefly look at how you conduct fire with the rules, this presumes you have already seen, heard or smelt your target – each character has a weapons' skill attribute. To this you apply a number of 'modifiers'. There are 56 modifiers to work through and the end result is a number you have to roll to achieve a hit. The crunch is though you roll a die for every round that is fired that second. If a figure fires a SAW for their action and the target is subject to the whole seconds worth of fire you roll 12 dice (simultaneously) and see which ones are on target. You then determine the location of any 'hits' on the target, if the location area is covered by any protection or cover, the calibre of rounds penetration value is checked. If it passes through then you roll to see what damage is caused to the target. The damage range is incredible and you may just end up lying there whilst you bleed to death without having any say in it.

I can't really do the 'realism' of these rules justice in the limited space of a short review; just let me say I have never come across a set of rules where you can determine if you can smell your opponent. The hit determination and damage caused gives you a reality shot in the arm (pardon the pun). You really do not want to find yourself in front of any automatic weapon in these rules and if anyone ever claims good cover from being behind a hedge or fence then let them play a couple of rounds of these rules – they will soon change their minds.

Vehicles are comprehensibly covered and live up to the same amount of detail, you will not want to have many on your gaming table for various reasons apart from the complexity, the blast radius for an HE shell for instance! But stalking and taking out a tank, especially with the modern anti-tank weapons gives a great game.

All this may sound a bit daunting and to an extent it is, if you are used to throwing a d6 adding modifiers for soft or hard cover and then rolling a saving throw to see if you remove the figure or not then you are in for a shock. But the rules do play very smoothly. Yes the spreadsheet speeds up determining what you need to roll, but after a few games you have a feel for what sort of number will be needed and very often we just roll the die and check if the number rolled seems to be near. The rules are also surprisingly intuitive and so long as the game-master knows the ins and out a 'newbie' can enjoy the rules by saying what they would do in reality – I just tend to get my troops to hide behind something very hard, but maybe that's just me!

The rule book is 174 pages long which contains all the information you will need to conduct actions using your favourite SOF. There is a sample scenario which gives you detailed characters and tasks which gets you off to a good start and there is an active yahoo group to keep you going.

Like Final Combat, its WWII sister set, SOF Warrior is the ultimate in 'paper realism'. My main gripe with 'realistic' rules is that I can normally replicate the same results with my favourite rules in a fraction of the time. Also the more complicated and realistic a set gets the more I tend to think they have less 'feel' about them, perhaps because the fact they take so long means that you lose the frantic nature we all suppose combat has. So in the end I would rather play NUTS than say 'Face of Battle' as it gives a better game, less detail but feel wise more 'realism'. Many rules purport to be realistic but in the end they aren't as they do not give you the 'feel' of being there, which in the end is as realistic as I want. So if I am to take at least twice and often three times as much time playing the game I want to feel that I am 'there'. I want it to be different than my normal rules. SOF Warrior and Final Combat achieve this. The extreme detail bizarrely doesn't bog the game down. Yes it takes a long time to play. You have to invest effort into this baby. But then so do the other rules at the 'sharp end' of the realism scale and because of the mechanics it doesn't feel like it is bogged down. If I want to play 'realism', mechanic wise SOF Warrior and Final Combat will be the choice every time because they have the detail and the 'feel' which puts them way ahead of the other contenders for the crown.

Like I mentioned at the beginning of the review these rules will not be for everyone game wise, but I think every one should own Final Combat and/or SOF Warrior if you play WWII/Modern skirmish, even if you never actually play a game the information contained in the rules is tremendous. I don't often get the time to play at such a level but it is nice to know that when I do there is a set of rules that can cater for anything I can throw at them. At present we are preparing an action based on a small segment from 'Black Hawk Down' and we'll let you know how it goes and although it may be heresy to Ben Lacy's (the author's) ears I have already started on some stats for SG-1.