



ZURMAT

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Zurmat Afghanistan, 2008:

A remote district in turmoil, a few hours south of Kabul, bordered to the east by the sheer mountains where the Americans almost captured Osama Bin Laden in 2001, Zurmat is a mostly Pashtun district that the government of Afghanistan has only the thinnest veneer of control over. Taliban forces move freely across the dusty roads at night, spreading terror with their night letters, threatening anyone who cooperates with Kabul.

Just now, an American infantry company sets up a Forward Operating Base (FOB) outside the district center. The Afghan Army is starting to patrol, drones are heard above, and the occasional jet swoops low, explosions following in its wake. Meanwhile, in the mountains of Pakistan, bearded men in secure caves are determined to stand up to this increased Coalition presence. By mules, motorcycles, and camels, weapons and ammunition make their way into Zurmat. This will not be a quiet year...

OVERVIEW

Zurmat is a two-player (Coalition versus the Taliban) game played through a series of rounds, each representing one month of real time, during which players try to achieve their commander's objectives while always trying to gain control of the people's hearts and minds. Each round begins with a random event, then the Coalition player takes their turn, followed by the Taliban player. Each turn you will take an action and may play cards. The game ends when winter arrives. Since winter cards are part of the deck of random events, the exact ending of the game may not be known until perhaps even the last turn of the game.

GAME COMPONENTS

Shared Components:

- Rulebook (1- yep, you're reading it now)
- Event Cards (15)
- Map Tiles (16)
- Calendar Board
- Control Markers (11)
- Roadblock Black Cube (1)
- School/Fort markers (16)
- Fort dice (1)
- Yellow Turn Cube (1)
- White Winter Cubes (3)

2 sets of player components:

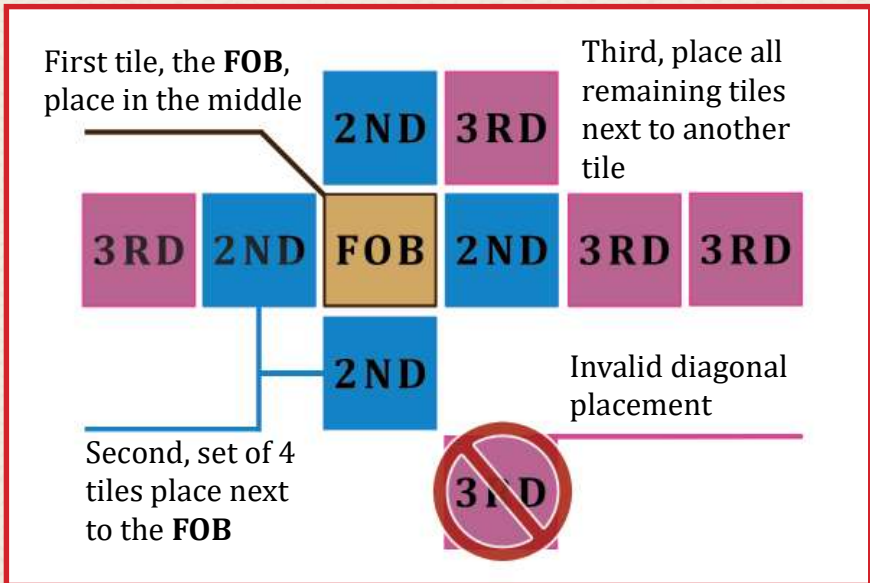
- 3 Afghan Dice
- Coalition player also has 3 U.S. dice
- Population discs (50)
- Population Bag (to hold your Population Discs)
- Faction units (Cubes) ANA or Taliban (25)
- Coalition player also has 5 U.S. units
- Objective Cards (10)
- Tactics Cards (16)
- Operations Cards (5)
- Player Board (1)

GAME SETUP

The last player to visit Afghanistan chooses sides... but if that doesn't help, draw a cube at random to figure out who is who.

Step 1: Prepare the District

Build the map by first placing the **FOB tile (#1)** in the center of the table. Shuffle the rest of the tiles and deal 5 to each player. Starting with the Coalition player, take turns adding 1 tile at a time to the map. Each tile must be placed so it is adjacent to at least 1 other tile already on the map, horizontally or vertically (i.e., not diagonally). The first 4 tiles must be placed adjacent to the FOB tile. After that, the tiles may be placed in any arrangement the players choose. You can place the tile in any orientation.



Step 2: Set Up the Calendar

Place the Calendar board between the players, near the map. Shuffle the Event cards and create a face-down draw deck next to the Calendar board. Place the yellow Calendar cube on the "March" space.

Step 3: Starting Schools and Forts

Place 2 School discs and 2 Fort discs on the FOB tile. Place the rest of them near the Calendar board.

Step 4: Prepare Your Forces

Each player takes all of the components for their side. Put all of your Population discs in your Population bag. Set your player board in front of you, along with your dice, Operations cards, and unit cubes.

Step 5: Prepare Tactics Decks

Shuffle your Tactics cards and create a face-down deck next to your player board. Draw 2 cards to create your starting hand.

Step 6: Establish Starting Control

The Coalition player places a Control marker with the ANA side up on the FOB tile. The Taliban player then chooses any 2 other tiles to place Control markers on with the Taliban side up.

Step 7: Deploy Starting units

The Coalition player places 5 U.S. and 5 ANA unit cubes on the FOB tile. The Taliban player then places 8 Taliban unit cubes, distributed between the 2 tiles marked with Taliban Control markers, in any combination they choose.

Step 8: Determine Population Loyalties

Each player randomly draws 11 Population discs from their Population bag. Do not let your opponent see which discs you have drawn! Then place one Population disc face down on each tile. You can place the disc on any tile you want. You can place your Population discs in any order you want. When this is done, there will be 2 discs on each tile—1 from the Coalition player and 1 from the Taliban player. Placing one of your Faction discs adds influence to a tile, making it a vital element of the game, whereas a Neutral disc is really just a bluff ([see page 6](#)).



Playing Hint: This can be done simultaneously. To help you remember which tiles you have placed discs on, place your discs on the side of the tile closest to you.

Important: Once a Population disc is placed, you **cannot** look at it again, unless an action or a card allows you to! You must try to remember whether the population in each area is loyal to you or not! You can always look at them before you place discs.

Step 9: Receive Orders

Shuffle all of your Objective cards together, then draw 4 at random. Examine your Objectives (without revealing them to your opponent) and choose 2 that you will attempt to complete during the game. Place your chosen Objectives face-down in front of you, and return the rest of your Objective cards (without revealing them) to the box. Note that some Objective cards cannot be combined together.

Step 10: Prepare Operations

Take your 5 Operations cards and place them face up below your player board in any order you choose, assigning 1 card to each of the Operation Level numbers on your player board. The higher the number, the more effective that Operation will be when you choose to execute it ([see page 6](#)).

You are now ready to begin!

THE GOAL OF THE GAME

Your goal is to complete the missions assigned to you by your commander (represented by the Objective cards) while winning over the hearts and minds of as many of the Afghan people as you can (represented by control of the map tiles). These accomplishments are represented in the game by "Victory Points" or "VPs." The player who has the most Victory Points at the end of the game wins. (I know, we're really breaking new ground here!)

See the WINNING THE GAME section on [page 17](#) for full details.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Zurmat is played over a number of rounds called “Months,” corresponding to the months of the year. Each game Month is divided into six phases, which must be played in order:

- 1) Draw and Resolve Event Card
- 2) Assign Population
- 3) Draw Player Cards
- 4) Coalition Action
- 5) Taliban Action
- 6) Advance Turn Cube or Game End

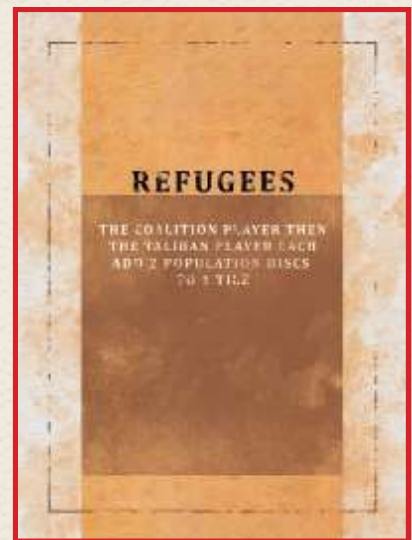
Phase 1: Draw and Resolve Event card

During this phase, you will reveal 1 Event card from the deck and carry out its instructions.

There are more Event cards than Months in the game, which means that you will have unused cards each game. That way, each game is different and harder to predict!

The Event cards affect both players. If a card states that it affects 2 different tiles, the Coalition player chooses the first tile that is affected, followed by the Taliban player. The Taliban player may choose the same tile that the Coalition player chose or a different one. [See page 16](#) for detailed explanations of some Event cards.

Example: The “Refugees” Event card is revealed at the beginning of June. First, the Coalition player draws 2 Population Discs from their bag and places them on any single tile. Then the Taliban player does the same. (Does not need to be the same tile.)



Some Event cards give both factions a way to earn additional VPs by completing some action before a time limit runs out, while other Events have an on-going effect that can last for more than one Month. Place any on-going Event face up on the Calendar board, in the appropriate space.



Example: At the beginning of April, the “Election” Event card is revealed. It occurs in 2 months so it is placed in the “Effects in Two Turns” space of the Calendar board. At the end of the Month, it is moved to the “Next Turn Effects” space, and at the end of May it is moved to the “Current Turn Effects” space. At the end of June, both players count the number of tiles they control, and the player who controls the most takes the “Election” card and keeps it face up in front of them. They just earned 2 VPs!

Winter Events

If the Event card is a Winter Event, it will instruct you to add Winter cubes to the end of the Calendar board. This means that the game will end earlier! If it is the beginning of the final Month and a Winter Event is drawn, finish that Month normally before ending the game. The game ends early only if the Calendar cube moves onto a Month with a Winter cube on it.

Example:

It is September, and there are already Winter cubes on November and December. You draw another Winter Event card...

The cube will go into the October box.



At the end of the turn the game will end, as there will be no more empty months left. If this had been October, and you drew another Winter month, you would play out the turn like normal, then end the game.

Phase 2: Influence Population

During this phase, both players will add Population discs to the map, starting with the Coalition player and followed by the Taliban player.

First, draw 1 Population disc from your Population bag for each tile you control (i.e., which has a Control marker with your faction symbol facing up). You may look at all of the discs you have drawn before you place any of them. Anytime you place discs you can look at them first.

Then, place your discs on **any** tile or tiles of your choice. You may place more than 1 disc on the same tile if you wish. As always, place your discs **face down** so your opponent does not know if they are Neutral or Faction discs. Once a disc has been added to a tile, you may not look at it again.

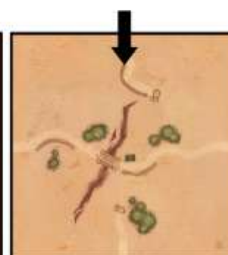
After the Coalition player has placed all their Population discs, the Taliban player draws and places theirs.

Example: In the first Month, the Coalition player only controls the FOB tile, so they only draw 1 disc to add to a tile. The Taliban player will add 2 discs since they start the game controlling 2 tiles.

This tile gives 1 Population disc to the Coalition player



This tile does not give any Population discs

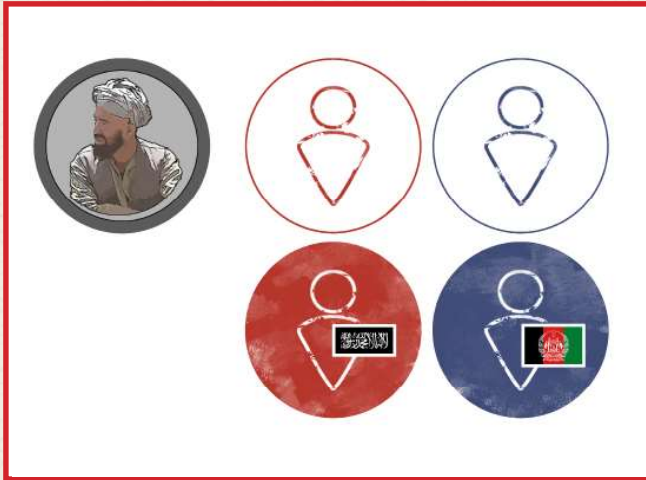


Each of these tiles gives 1 population disc to the Taliban player for a total of 2 discs.

Population Discs

You have **2 types** of Population discs in your Population bag:

- Neutral—These discs are really just decoys because they have no effect on who controls a tile. (Please don't tell the neutrals that they are just decoys, it really hurts their feelings.)
- Faction—These discs have your faction's symbol on them, and they show that the population in an area supports your side (or at least some of them do). You need these to control a tile.



Half of the discs in your bag (50) are Neutral, and half are Faction discs.

The backs of all Population discs are the same, regardless of which side they belong to. You will have to try to remember which discs are yours, and which belong to your opponent!

Remember: Once a Population disc is placed on a tile, you cannot look at it unless an action or card allows you to!

Phase 3: Draw Tactics Cards

Each player draws the top Tactics card from their own deck and adds it to their hand. There is no limit to the number of Tactics cards you can hold at one time (but remember that you only get to draw 1 card each Month!).

You can play any number of Tactics cards during your faction's Action Phase (Phase 4 for the Coalition or Phase 5 for the Taliban). Some Tactics cards can even be played during your opponent's turn. If a card can be played out of turn, it will be indicated in the card text.

See ["Tactics Cards" on page 14](#) for more information.

Phase 4: Coalition Actions

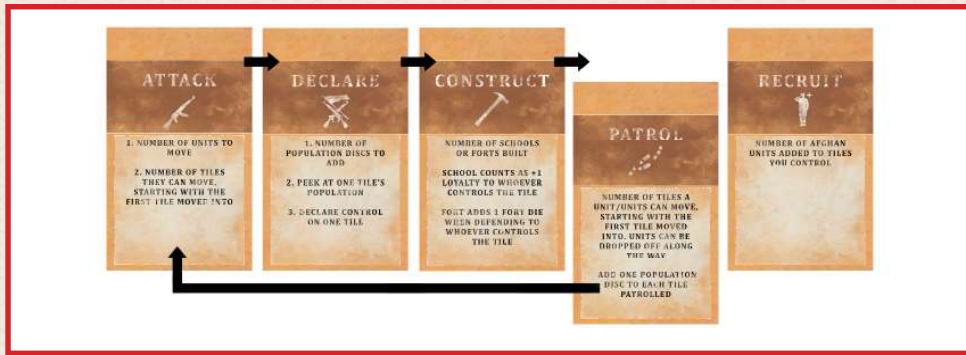
Now, the Coalition player will choose 1 of their 5 Operations cards to play. This will determine which action they get to take this Month. See ["Operations" on page 7](#) for details.

The position of the card on your player board determines how effective your action will be, indicated by the number above the card you have chosen: the higher the number, the more effective the Operation. This number is called the "Operation Level."

After you complete your action, remove the chosen Operations card from your lineup. Then, move the remaining cards to the right to fill the now-empty space. Finally, place the Operations card you just used below the "0" on your player board.

Example: The Coalition player has decided to use her Patrol Operations card this Month. Since it is under Operations Level "3" on her player board, she will be able to move 3 of her units during her action. Then she pulls the Patrol card, shifts the 3 cards left of it 1 space to the right, and moves the Patrol card so it is under the "0" on her player board.

Design Note: Effective military operations often require extensive planning and logistical support to make sure that all of the materials and manpower needed are in the right place at the right time. In the game, this is represented by the Operations Level on your player board. As cards move to the right



from Month to Month, the resources and planning for that kind of operation increases, improving the effectiveness of that mission.

With Swapping, you can discard any tactics card to swap any 2 operations cards at any point during your turn.

Phase 5: Taliban Actions

After the Coalition player has completed their action (including any Tactics cards played), the Taliban player does the same, following the same steps as Phase 4.

Phase 6: Month Ends

As soon as the Taliban player completes their turn, the Month ends. Move the Calendar cube forward one Month on the Calendar board. If the Calendar cube moves onto a Month that has a Winter cube on it, or if it moves off of the December space, the game ends immediately (see page 17).

If there are any cards in the “Current Month Effects” box, discard them from play. Move any cards in the “Next Month Effects” box to the “Current Month Effects” box, then move any cards from the “Effects in Two Months” box to the “Next Month Effects” box.

Now you are ready to begin the next Month with Phase 1: Draw Event Card.

OPERATIONS

Each Month, during your turn, you **must** choose one action to take by selecting one of your Operations cards. Your options are:

- Recruit** Add Afghan units to the map
- Construct** Add Schools and/or Forts to the map
- Declare** Add Population discs to the map, peek at 1 tile, then determine who controls 1 tile
- Attack** Use your units to attack enemy units on the map
- Patrol** Move your units and add Population discs to the tiles you move onto.

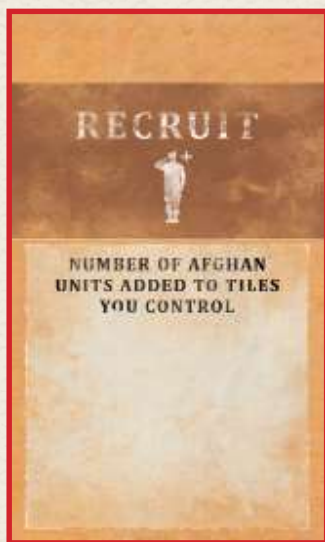
Once you have completed your operation, place 1 of your cubes on the matching box of your player board. This allows you to keep track of how many times you have completed each type of Operation during the game, which is needed for some Objectives.

(Hint: Remember to track your actions even if you don't have a matching Objective—it will help keep your opponent in the dark about what you're really trying to do!)

Example:
You take your second declare action, so place a second cube in the declare box.



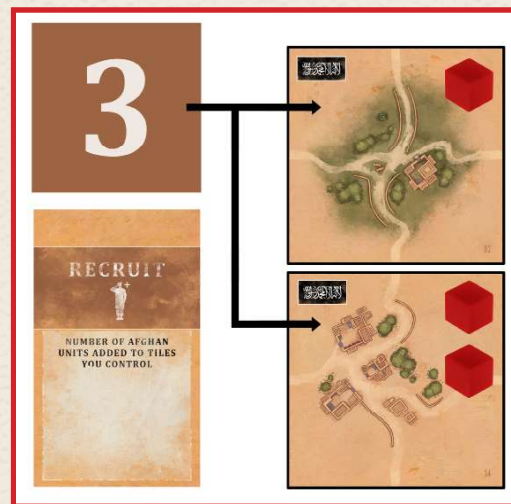
Here are the different Operations in detail:



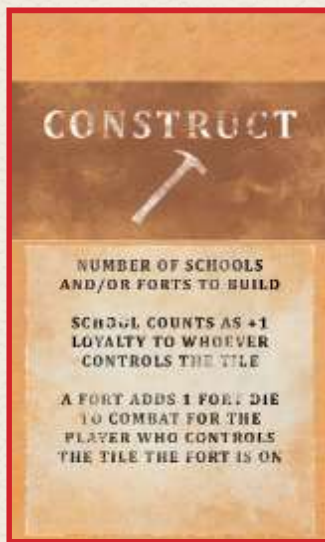
Recruit Operations

When you execute a Recruit Operation, you get to add a number of Afghan unit cubes (Taliban or ANA) to the map equal to the Operations Level. You may place your new units on any combination of tiles *that you control*, even if there are enemy units present on that tile. This does not start a battle.

The Coalition player cannot recruit more U.S. units. (What you have at the start is what you get. Budgets and all that. Fnord.)

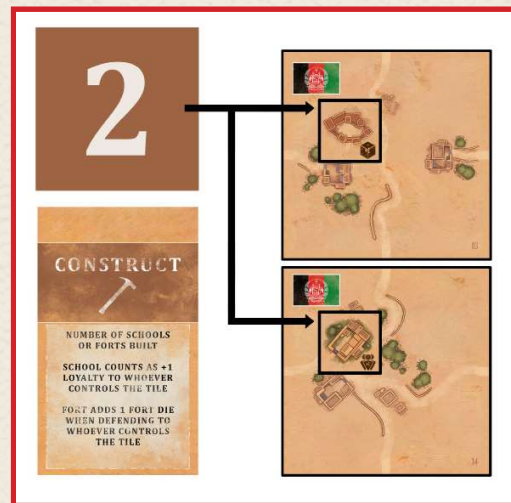


Example: The Taliban player chooses to execute a Recruit Operation, which is under the "3" on her player board. She adds 2 Taliban unit cubes to 1 tile she controls, and a third to a different tile she controls.



Construct Operations

The Construct Operation allows you to add any combination of Schools and/or Forts to the map, up to the Operations Level. You may place the new buildings on any combination of tiles that you control, even if there are enemy units present on that tile. However, there can never be more than 2 Schools and 2 Forts on each tile.



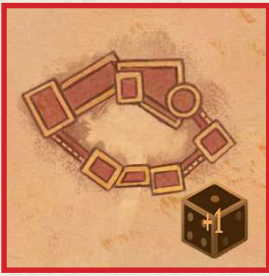
Example: The Coalition player is executing a Construct Operation which allows her to place 2 buildings on the map. The FOB tile already has 2 Schools and 2 Forts, so nothing additional can be built there. She decides to add 1 School to a tile that she controls which is far from the nearest Taliban forces, and 1 Fort on a tile she controls that is occupied by 2 Taliban units.

The Effects of Buildings



Schools: *A center of learning, true, but also a great way to convince people that you are on their side (or that they should be on yours...).*

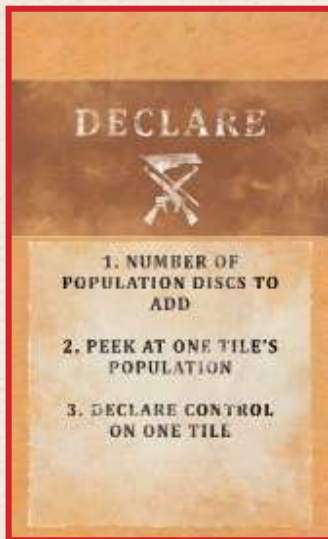
When a tile declares its loyalty (see "Declare Operations," below), the player who controls the tile adds 1 Loyalty towards controlling the tile (this does not mean that you add one of your faction discs - it just counts as +1 Loyalty to your total when declaring Loyalty on the tile).



Forts: Since ancient times, militaries have used fortifications not only to protect their personnel, but also to help control the surrounding countryside.

Each Fort on a tile allows the player who controls that tile to roll 1 Fort die during **every** battle fought in that tile (see below), whether they are attacking or defending. Forts can be used to take a loss during a battle, and be removed from the tile.

Be careful! If you lose control of a tile to your opponent, any buildings on that tile remain there and your opponent can now use them as if they had built them!



Declare Operations

This Operation is the main way that you can gain control of a tile, by forcing the people who live there to “declare” which side they are loyal to. Lots of things happen during a Declare Operation, and you must do them in this order:

1. Add Population Discs
2. Check Intel
3. Choose 1 Tile to Declare Control

Step 1. Add Population: First, you get to add influence to the map in the form of Population discs. Draw discs from your bag equal to the Operations Level. You then assign those discs to **any** tile(s) you choose, just like in the Influence Population Phase ([see page 5](#)).

Step 2. Check Intel: Remember earlier when I said you can't look at Population discs once they were placed? I lied. My apologies. In this step, you get to **secretly** look at **all** of the Population discs on any 1 tile of your choice. This will not change who controls the tile, but you will know how many Faction discs are on that tile (at that moment...).

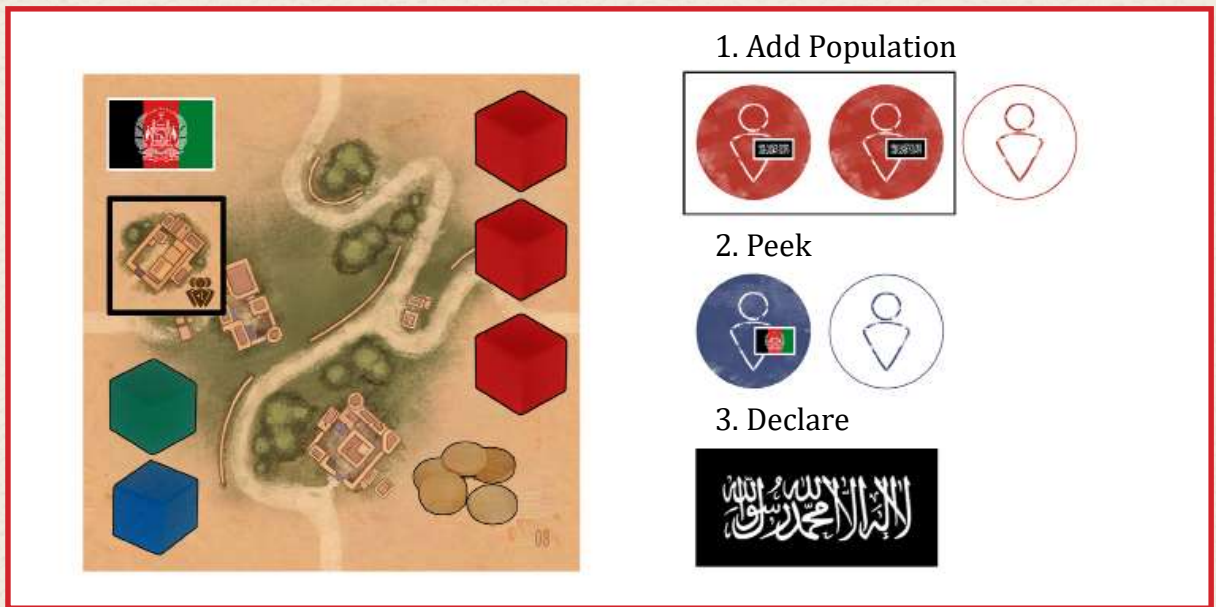
Step 3. Choose 1 Tile to Declare Control: Finally, choose any 1 tile to declare its loyalty. You **are not** required to choose the tile where you checked intel in Step 2, but you **must** choose 1 tile. Reveal all of the Population discs in the chosen territory. The player who has the **most Loyalty** on that tile now controls that tile (along with any buildings on it). Place (or flip) a Control marker if needed.

Four things provide Loyalty in a tile:

- Each Faction disc provides 1 Loyalty to the faction whose symbol is on that disc.
- Each unit provides 1 Loyalty to its faction.
- Each School provides 1 Loyalty to the player who currently controls the tile.
- Event cards can provide an additional Loyalty as well.

Add up your Loyalty in the tile and compare it to your opponent. The player with the highest Loyalty takes control. If there is a tie, the player who currently controls the tile maintains control.

Important: After control of the tile is determined, remove **all** Neutral Population discs from that tile and return them to their original bags. Then, remove pairs of Faction discs from both factions, on a one-for-one basis, until only 1 player still has Faction discs remaining, and return those to their bags as well. This **may** mean that **all** of the Population discs are removed (and that's OK!). It is even possible that the tile will be completely empty (no Population discs, Schools, or units), and the current controller (if any) **still** wins the tie.



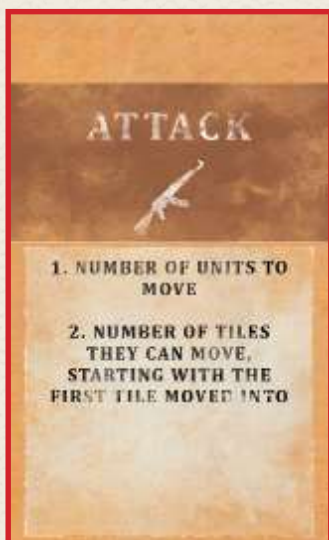
Example: 1. The Taliban player has chosen to execute a Declare Operation, which is under the “3” Operations Level on her player board. She draws 3 Population discs from her bag: 1 Neutral and 2 Faction discs. She puts both Faction discs on a contested tile and places the decoy on a different one.

2. Next, she peeks at the contested tile. She finds 1 Coalition Neutral and 1 Coalition Faction. She only had a decoy there before, but with the Faction discs she just added, she now has 2 Taliban Faction discs.

3. Finally, she decides to have that tile declare its loyalty. Here’s how it plays out:

The Taliban takes control of the tile! She flips the Control marker over so her symbol is showing. All the Neutral discs are removed, along with an equal number of Faction discs from each side (in this case, 1 each, leaving 1 Taliban disc on the tile). The units on the tile are not affected, but the School is now controlled by the Taliban.

Taliban Faction Discs:	2	Coalition Faction Discs:	1
Taliban units:	3	Coalition units:	2
Schools:	0	Schools:	1
Totals:	5	Totals:	4



Attack Operations

As “Old Blood and Guts” once said, “The object of war is not to die for your country but to make the other bastard die for his.” The Attack Operation is how you do that.

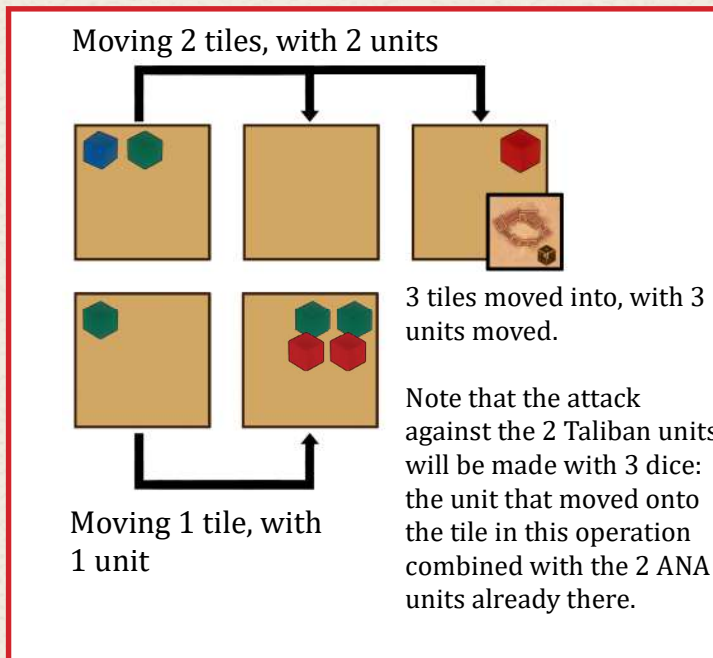
When you execute an Attack Operation, the Operation Level above your Attack card determines both the number of units you can move and the maximum number of tiles those units may move before fighting (see “Moving units” on page 13).

You **must** attack at least 1 enemy unit and/or enemy-controlled Fort when you execute an Attack Operation. You **cannot** use this action to simply move units across the map (you can use a Patrol Operation for that). When moving units for an attack, you may split your units and your movement between tiles, as long as the **total** number of units you move

and the total number of tiles you move onto does not exceed the Operations Level.

Example: The Coalition player uses her Attack Operations cards, which is under her "3" Operations Level. She can move 3 of her units up to 3 tiles away to attack the Taliban controlled fort tile, while the 3rd unit reinforces a tile with 2 ANA units and 2 Taliban units

After moving all units you choose to move, you must then initiate combat on any **tile(s)** that you moved units into using the Attack Operation.



Resolving Combat

Declare which tile you are attacking. The attacker reveals any card(s) they will play, then the defender reveals any card(s) they will play. Both sides will roll a number of dice equal to the number of units they have on the tile. If there are any Forts there, the player who controls that tile will also roll 1 Fort die for each Fort. The attacker (that's you, whoever executed the Attack Operation) rolls 1 die for each attacking unit. This will be all of your units in the tile, not just the units moved or activated with this Attack Operation. The defender rolls 1 die for each unit they control on the tile where the combat is being fought. This could be more units than they have dice for. If so, roll all of the dice once, record or remember the results, then reroll the dice until every unit has had a die roll.



Important: All combat is simultaneous. There is no turn order for rolling, and every unit gets to roll even if it is destroyed.

After rolling the dice for both sides, apply the results of the roll:

Each Hit you roll causes your opponent to lose one unit or Fort of their choice from that tile. You can choose to lose units and/or Forts under your control in any combination.

The US unit dice and the Fort dice all have the Block symbol on some faces. Each block you roll **cancels** 1 hit that your opponent rolled.

Once every unit has rolled, and all the losses have been removed from the map, the combat ends. It is possible that units from both sides will still remain on the same tile after combat. There is only ONE roll for combat. You DO NOT keep rolling until only one side is left. Control of the tile never changes because of an Attack Operation (you need to use the Declare Operation for that).



Forts: A Fort adds 1 Fort die to combat for the player who controls the tile the Fort is on. Fort dice have Hit and Block symbols on them. A Fort can be used to take a loss due to an enemy Hit, removing it from the map.



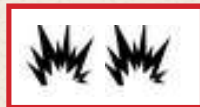
Combat Example: The Taliban are at it again. The Taliban player is executing an Attack Operation with an Operation Level of 4, which allows her to move 4 Units into a village controlled by the Coalition. They join 1 Unit left there after a previous battle.

Since she has 5 Units on the tile, the Taliban player will roll 5 dice. She does not choose to play any tactics cards

Seeing that he is outnumbered, the Coalition player decides to call in some air support, playing his "Air Strike F16" card. This lets him roll an additional U.S. die.

The Bones are tossed...

The Taliban Rolls this:

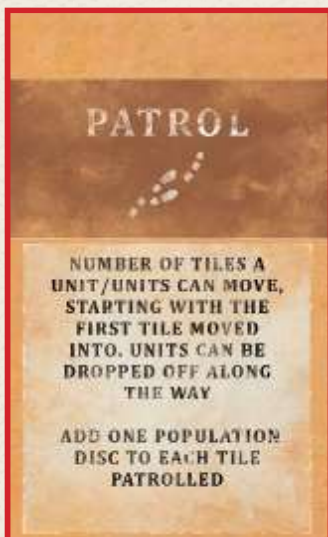


The Coalition Rolls this:



The block stops 1 of the Taliban Hits, so the Coalition suffers only 1 loss. He decides to remove the Fort. The Taliban cannot block any Hits, so she must remove 2 of her Units. This ends combat.

Patrol Operations



You can use a Patrol Operation to move your units and increase your influence on the tiles that they move through. The Operations Level determines how many different units you may move, and the total number of tiles you may move them onto (see "Moving units" on [page 13](#)). It also determines the maximum number of Population discs you can place on the tiles you are patrolling.

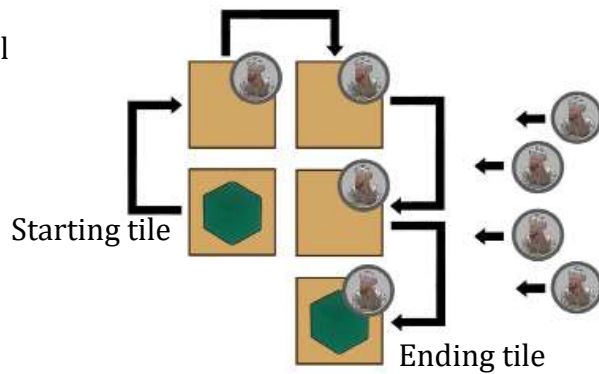
First, move the units you choose to move. Your Patrol **cannot** move onto tiles with enemy units or Forts (that requires an Attack Operation). You can split up your units and your movement between tiles, as long as the total number of units that you move and the total number of tiles moved onto does not exceed your Operations Level.

After you are done moving your units, place 1 Population disc (from your bag) on **each** tile that your Patrol moves onto. You may "double back" when you move so you can add 2 discs to the same tile.

Draw 1 Population disc for each tile your Patrol moved onto, examine them, and then choose which disc goes on which tile. You can only draw and place discs on the tiles your Patrol actually moved onto. If your movement was cut short due to hitting the end of a road or some other event (or card), you will draw and place fewer Population discs.

Example: The Coalition player conducts a Patrol Operation with an Operation Level of 4. She decides to send only 1 unit on the patrol, as her goal is to add influence, not move units. The unit takes the road from the FOB tile and moves in a circle. Since she moved 4 tiles, she pulls 4 discs from her Population bag. She gets 4 Neutrals, but pretends to agonize over which one goes where while the Taliban player takes careful notes...

First, make the patrol



Second, add population discs, one for each tile moved into

Moving Units

You may move units under your command when you execute a Patrol or an Attack Operation. When moving units, you must follow these rules:

- Units must always follow the roads on the tiles. When a unit starts moving, it may follow any road shown on the tile it occupies.

Example 1 (see below): A U.S. unit on the center tile can move in 4 directions when leaving that tile.

- If the unit reaches the end of a road, it must stop moving for that turn.

Example 2: The US unit moves west onto the left tile, and must stop moving since the road ends at the first village. Next time the unit moves, it can again move in 4 directions, following any road that leaves that tile.

- A unit can only enter a tile with an enemy unit or Fort if you are executing an Attack Operation. The unit must stop moving as soon as it moves onto an enemy-occupied tile. You may enter and/or move through an enemy-controlled tile, as long as there are no enemy units or Forts located there.

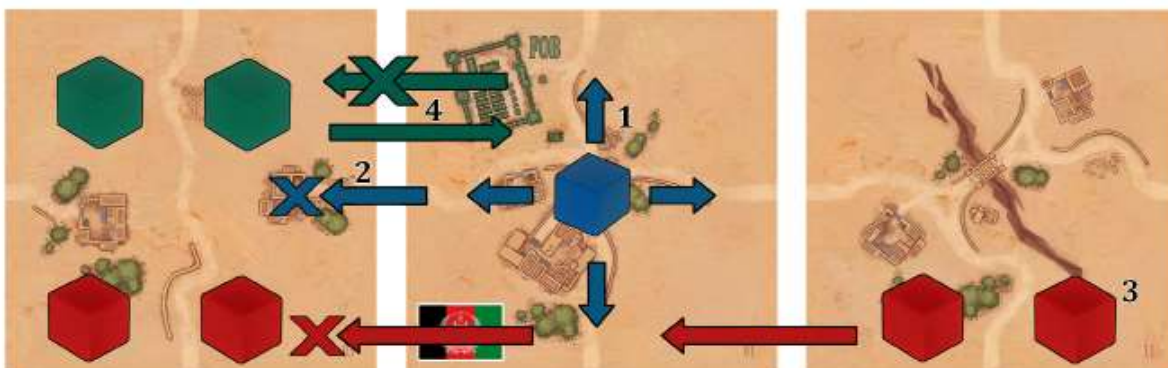
- A unit that is on Patrol cannot enter or move through any tile with an enemy unit or Fort.

Example 3: Two Taliban units move west out of the river tile, through a Coalition-controlled (but now unoccupied) area, then west onto a contested tile occupied by 2 ANA units and the U.S. unit. The Taliban must stop moving upon entering this tile. Since they are entering an enemy-occupied tile, this MUST be an Attack Operation.

- If a unit shares a tile with enemy units on it before moving, that unit can leave that tile as normal. However, if the unit were to double-back and return to the tile, the regular movement rules would apply.

Example 4: An ANA unit on the left tile, now occupied by a pair of Taliban units, is chosen for a Patrol Operation. The unit can leave the enemy-occupied tile as normal (following any road), but after leaving the tile it cannot return there as part of this move, since a patrolling unit cannot move onto a tile with enemy units.

- When counting tiles for movement before an attack, the tile the unit starts on does not count.
- There is no limit to the number of units you can have on the same tile.



TACTICS CARDS

During **your turn**, in addition to the Operation you have chosen to execute, you may play **any number** of Tactics cards from your hand (though remember that you only draw 1 card per Month!). You may play Tactics cards before, during, or after your action for your turn.

Example: The Coalition player plays the “Irrigation Project” card before her action to add +2 to the Operations Level.

Some Tactics cards can only be played as part of a specific action or during a battle.

Example: The “Air Strike AH-64” card can only be played during a battle.

Playing a Tactics card may allow you to take more than 1 action during your turn.

Example: The Coalition player is executing a Patrol action. After completing her Patrol, she plays a “Village Declares” card, allowing her to force 1 tile to declare its loyalty.



A few Tactics cards can be played during your opponent’s turn. Cards with a lightning bolt symbol can be played on the other player’s turn. You **cannot** play a Tactics card during your opponent’s turn unless the card specifies that you can (or that it can be played during a battle).

Example: The “Taliban Atrocities” card can only be played during the Taliban player’s turn, and only after they declare what Operation they are going to execute that turn.

Important: Tactics cards are **not** considered Operations, even if they recreate the effects of an Operation or allow you to carry out an action. Therefore, any action granted by a card **does not count** towards completing your Objectives (see page 17).

Example: If you play a card that allows you to send out a patrol, you do not add a cube to the Patrol Action box on your player card.

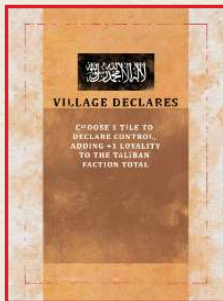
Tactics Card Clarifications



Cards with a lightning bolt symbol can be played on the other player’s turn.

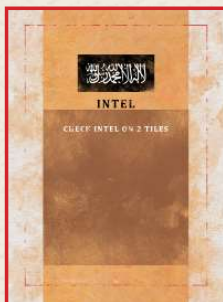


Cards with a Plus sign symbol must be played in conjunction with an Operations Card.



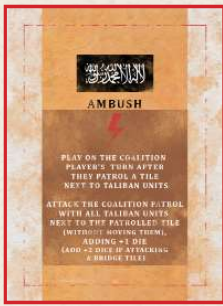
Village Declares

Conduct only the Declare Control Step (Step 3) of the Declare Operation on the tile of your choice. If the card adds +1 to your Loyalty, this lasts only for the duration of this action—do not add a Faction disc to the tile.



Intel

Conduct only the Check Intel Step (Step 2) of the Declare Operation on the tile of your choice.

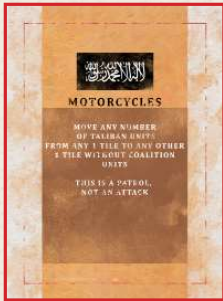


Ambush

This is a one-sided battle. The units involved do not actually move, but they attack as if they were in the same tile as the targeted units. Your opponent does not roll any dice during this battle.

After the ambush, surviving patrolling units choose if they want to continue their patrol.

Taliban Cards



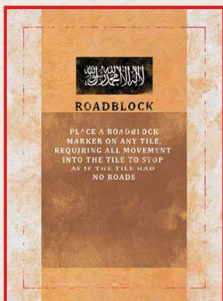
Motorcycles

Since this is a Patrol action, you do get to add 1 Population disc to the destination tile. Remember: since this is not an Attack, the destination tile **cannot** contain any enemy units or an enemy-controlled fort. Just pick them up and teleport them, do not move them from one tile to another to another.



Bad Intel

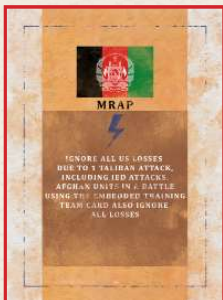
While this card is often used to pull units **out** of combat, you could just as easily use it to bring adjacent units **into** combat...



Road Blocks

Add the roadblock tokens to the roads leaving/entering this tile. Once placed roadblocks stay for the game, they cannot be removed.

Coalition Cards



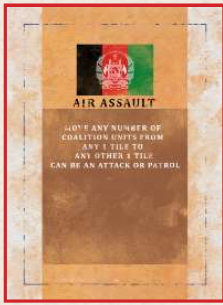
MRAP

Play this card after you declare which units will be removed due to taking Hits from any battle.



Drone Strike

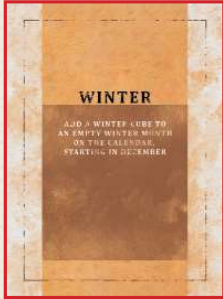
Although this is an independent attack that cannot be combined with a regular Attack Operation, you can use it against Taliban units that were the target of a regular attack this turn.



Air Assault

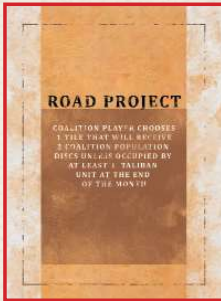
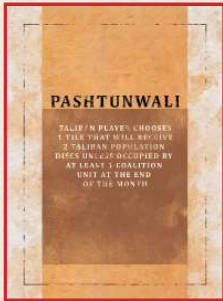
If you use this as a Patrol action, a Population disc is added to the destination tile. However, if it is a Patrol, the destination tile cannot contain any enemy units. Move all the units moving to the destination tile, do not move them from one tile to another to another. Complete the battle immediately if it is an Attack.

Event Card Clarifications



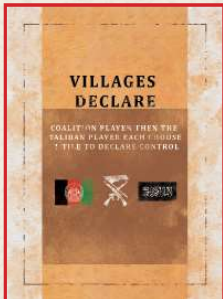
Winter (12-14)

When a Winter Event is drawn, place 1 Winter cube on the spaces at the end of the Calendar, starting with December. These turns are not played in this game, as winter has come early. Winter cubes can only be placed in the shaded Winter Months. Ignore any additional Winter Events if all of the shaded Winter Months already have a Winter cube.



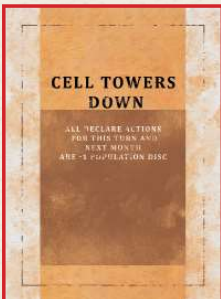
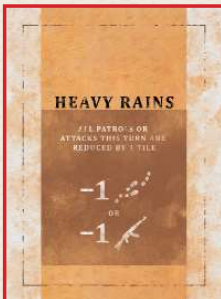
Pashtunwali/Road Project (5-6)

When this Event occurs, place this card on the tile the player selects. If that tile does not have at least 1 opposing player's unit on it by the end of the turn, the player who placed this card draws 2 Population discs from their bag and adds them to that tile, then removes the card.



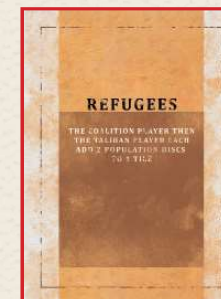
Villages Declare (2-3)

Each player conducts the Declare Control Step (Step 3) of the Declare Operation on the tile of their choice (as always, Coalition player first), without adding any influence or peeking at the discs.



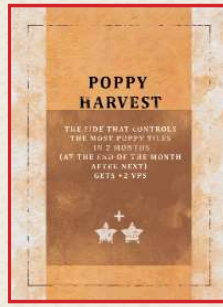
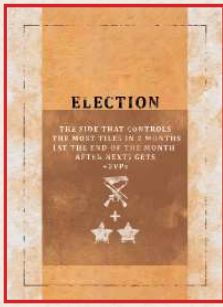
Bigger Budgets/Heavy Rains/Cell Towers Down (4, 7-8)

These events can increase or reduce the Operations Level for both players if they both select the affected Operation while the card is in effect.



Famine/Refugees (9, 11)

As always, the Coalition player resolves the card's effects first, then the Taliban player. The Taliban player may choose to use their effects on the same tile that the Coalition chose.



Election/Poppy Harvest (1, 10)

Place the Event card on the “Effects in Two Months” box of the Calendar. If the game ends before those Months are complete, then the VPs are awarded in the last Month of the game. For example, if the “Poppy Harvest” card is drawn in October, but the game ends in November (due to a previous Winter Event), the “Poppy Harvest” scores in November.

These cards are scored during the Month Ends Phase. Give the card to the player who meets the conditions on the card. If there is a tie, no one gets the card.

WINNING THE GAME

The game ends at the end of December or at the end of the last Month that does not have a Winter cube on it. At this point, each player adds up their Victory Points.

The player who has the most Victory Points (VPs) at the end of the game wins (what did you expect?).

There are 3 ways to get VPs:

- You get 1 VP for each tile you control at the end of the game.
- You get the VPs indicated for each Objective card you successfully complete during the game (typically by having enough unit cubes in the matching Operations box of your player board).
- You may earn additional VPs from some Event cards.

If you are tied, the one who controls the most tiles wins. If you are still tied, there’s always next year...

Example:

The Taliban player has 6 tiles, completed 3 Patrol Operations to earn that 2 VP card, and won the Election event card for another 2 VPs.

The Coalition player has 5 tiles, had the most Afghan units to earn that 3 VP card, and won the Poppy Harvest event card for another 2 VPs.

Both sides have 10 VPs. The tie breaker is who has control of the most tiles, so the win goes to the Taliban!

Designer's Notes

I first entered Zurmat district on December 5th, 2007. We had trouble sorting the convoy out, so it was after dark when we started bouncing down the series of giant potholes that serves as the main road through Zurmat. The lunar-like fine dust kicked up from the tires made it really difficult to see, but eventually I saw what looked like someone having a bonfire in the distance. As I got closer, I realized it was the still-burning hulk of an Afghan fuel truck the Taliban attacked earlier in the day... Welcome to Zurmat!

Creating a Counter-Insurgency (COIN) game was something I'd wanted to do ever since I returned from Afghanistan. There have been a few COIN games published, but almost all of them are large, campaign-wide affairs. I wanted to put together a game about what it was like at the ground level, especially the aspect of not really knowing whether the people like you, or want to blow your truck up. Hopefully, this game is both fun to play and perhaps allows people to explore what decisions are made at the smallest level of a counterinsurgency.

My mission during deployment was to be a mentor to an Afghan National Police battalion commander. It was an unusual assignment, especially since I am not a civilian police officer or a Military Policeman. But my Afghan police were armed and equipped almost identically as the Afghan army was, and spent their deployments usually manning security checkpoints, just like the army did, so it was a great chance to see how the government forces operate.

The Afghan leaders that I met and served with were definitely a mixed bag. The corruption card in the game certainly came out of real-world experiences, unfortunately. So did the Taliban atrocities too. I saw the aftermath of an entire family killed because the Taliban thought a daughter in the family was secretly having an affair with a policeman.

The blimp, the MRAP, drones, night letters and IEDs were all present during my tour in 2007-8. Looking back over 10 years now, I still can't say whether one system was more critical than another towards making the district more stable. Nor can I say who really "won" during my time in Zurmat, which I think is not that unusual in a counterinsurgency. While not knowing if you won or lost would not be a positive game feature, waiting until the last moment to find out if you won or lost (a regular occurrence during playtesting) is about as close as I could get.

Honestly, the biggest struggle I had with the game was trying to work out a balance between kinetic (shooting at each other) and non-kinetic (building schools, drinking chai with elders, recruiting soldiers and police). Many features of the game were done years ago, but I could not figure out a way to avoid this becoming a tactical shooter or a worker-placement game. Finally, I played *Civilization: A New Dawn* and realized if I took the role-selection mechanic it used and modified it for Zurmat it would be the solution I had been looking for. I've read and heard this before, but I truly believe now that if you want great inspiration for game design, get out there and play games!

Finally, I'd like to thank Matt Hiske for getting me back into historical board gaming after a 20+ year break by shoving a copy of *Conflict of Heroes* at me. Also, I'd like to thank Uwe Eickert (the designer and publisher of *Conflict of Heroes*) for mentoring me for the last few years.

Thanks gents!

Tim

Terms

Faction	The two sides of the game: Taliban and Coalition
FOB	Military term: "Forward Operating Base," it is tile #1, the first tile placed in the game
Fort	Adds 1 Fort die to combat for the player who controls the tile
Population Disc	Double sided counter: One side has a generic Afghan elder, while the other side is either a faction disc or a neutral
School	Provides 1 Loyalty to the player who currently controls the tile
VP	Victory Point

Operations

Recruit	Add Afghan units to the map
Construct	Add Schools and/or Forts to the map
Declare	Add Population discs to the map, peek at 1 tile, then determine who controls 1 tile
Attack	Use your units to attack enemy units on the map
Patrol	Move your units and add Population discs to the tiles you move onto

Combat procedure

Each side rolls 1 die for each unit in the tile where the combat takes place.

The dice in the game are not a limit: you can record/remember the first results then roll for additional units to add to the results.

Player that controls a tile with a fort adds 1 Fort die for each Fort on the tile.

Each player can play Tactics cards to add additional dice.

Combat is simultaneous.

Each "hit" removes 1 enemy unit. Owning player chooses which unit to lose.

Tactics cards can also be played after the dice roll if they impact the number of hits.

There is only 1 round of combat, opposing units can both remain in the tile.

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Credits:

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Developer	Aiden Brooks
Graphic Artist	Dominik Sinkevic
Cover Artist	Grace Densham
Editing	Vann Lee, William Niebling

Playtesters:

Jim Matt, Rick Stefanich, Ken Shogren, Uwe Eickert, Tracy Blakeman, Cate Densham, Vann Lee, Brian Sinclair, Curt Royer

Example of Poppy Tile:



Example of Bridge Tile:

