

Black Ops: Tactical Espionage Wargaming

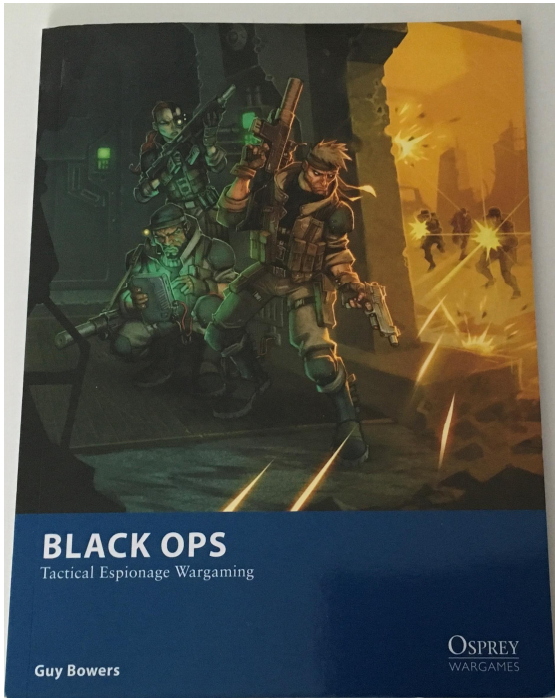
Osprey Wargames Series No. 10 (2015)

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Review by Paul Le Long

This is a wargame that simulates video games like Metal Gear Solid, Syphon Filter and Splinter Cell. It is small-scale 1:1 skirmish set in the modern era and might typically have a small team of Special Forces sneaking into a secret base, silently killing some goons, stealing the secret plans and making their escape. Missions include assassination, extraction, espionage, sabotage, raid and surveillance. Factions include, Militia, Conscripts, Professionals, Special Forces, Mercenaries, Ninja, Fanatics, Intelligence Agencies and Specialists.

The game is flexible though I have run a World War II scenario using British Commandos attacking a German outpost. These rules would be perfect for something like The Dirty Dozen or Where Eagles Dare or The Guns of Naverone. There are two types of game I Standard and Stealth. Stealth mode is where



things get interesting for the soloist because you are playing (for example) the Commandos, sneaking up to an enemy base. The enemy has lots of sentries controlled by an AI mechanic and they react according to how much noise you make, how dark it is, how much cover you have and so on. Often a guard will just yawn or might turn around and look in this or that direction or he might get curious and move somewhere to check out a noise. Sooner or later, someone is going to raise the alarm and the shooting will start. The mechanism for this is quite simple but it plays very nicely indeed.

The rules themselves are nothing special but they do the job. I found the way modifiers were applied a little counter-intuitive but overall they are fine. The scale of the game is small I probably won't have more than a dozen figures on the table and you will recruit and arm your force with a variety of weapons and equipment needed for the mission. Not quite roleplay levels of character generation but a definite emphasis on sensible recruitment of your team. The opposition will often be standard cannon fodder

mooks but maybe with an evil mastermind, anti-hero or similar in charge.

If you like man-to-man skirmish games set in the modern era, especially with a Special Forces type element, then these rules are for you. As I say, they can accommodate anything going back to WWII as well. Missions can be rolled randomly so, for example, you roll and the result indicates a Sabotage game; you roll again and this gives you a target of a supply of drugs. Where? Another roll tells you it's on an airplane terminal (for which a sample map is provided as well as some set-up instructions). You can play a whole randomly generated campaign this way. This together with the automated actions of guards in stealth missions makes Black Ops ideal for the solo gamer.

Recommended.