

A black and white photograph of soldiers in a trench during a battle. In the foreground, a soldier is kneeling on the left, and another is kneeling on the right operating a machine gun mounted on a tripod. In the background, two more soldiers are visible, one holding a rifle. The scene is filled with smoke and the sounds of combat.

SUCS

Small Unit Combat System

2d6 wargaming in the far future

by

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Small Unit Combat System

The small unit combat system (SUCS) is designed as a simplified unit level tactical combat system for 2d6 OGL games. SUCS draws its inspiration from a number of sources, particularly several Avalon Hill games (Tactics II, Axis and Allies, Anzio), the very short OnePageRules games (Warstuff, Covering Fire!, Grimdark Future) (<https://onepagerules.com/>), Skirmish (based on the old GDW Asteroid), Stargrunt II from Ground Zero Games, Mongoose SRD large scale battle rules for mercenary units (<https://www.traveller-srd.com/mercenary/>) and Very Simple Generic Miniatures Rules as updated by Andrew Domino (<http://dominowriting.com/SimpleMinisRevised.pdf>). The intent of SUCS is to keep the spirit and basic mechanics of the 2d6 system transferred from role playing to war gaming. SUCS tries to create a fast paced, decisive game where the emphasis is on speed of action and having fun beating the crap out of your opponent. It is being released under the Creative Commons Attribution non-Commercial 3.0 Unported License (CC-by-NC 3.0)

The transition from RPG to wargaming requires a different mindset. Role players get into a character, one single entity who embodies their hopes, fears, behaviors, and continues for many sessions. Wargaming is all about the larger picture, and individual units are risked and sacrificed for the ultimate victory. Units die, and if nobody on one side dies it is an unusually lopsided victory. In addition, role players tend to enjoy creating and equipping their person, vehicle, or friends with a variety of capabilities. In wargaming, however, combat effectiveness is the only consideration. Role players are almost always acting cooperatively with other players, and while the referee controls the enemy they are not usually bloodthirsty or the characters won't survive to play again. In wargaming, there are usually only 2 sides and the enemy is there to be wiped out. A referee can be helpful for settling disputes, but is often unnecessary. Finally, role players often develop specialized strategies that make use of their personal equipment and style in a combat. Wargaming simplifies the combat, where life or death is determined in a single roll and specialization of units is more restricted. Both wargaming and role playing can be wonderful fun, but the approaches and expectations are often radically different.

The small unit combat system best simulates squad or platoon level encounters. It works reasonably well for individual soldiers or at most up to company strength units. Larger units such as a naval destroyer encounter or brigade level strategic fights have so many complexities and multiple options available that they quickly become unworkable. It also does not deal with logistics questions as combats are resolved quickly and entirely on what individual units are can carry. One shot weapons such as MANPADS, for example, cannot typically be resupplied when fired. It also requires that all units be considered as essentially the same size and tech level as their opponents unless modified by their tech level. It makes no sense for a WW I rifle to have the same offensive capability as a 20th century Gauss rifle infantry squad or an infantry battalion.

Perhaps the most controversial choice in SUCS is to avoid injured or damage/reduced/routed units. While in reality an APC might be damaged but still have some functions available, it also adds a significant degree of complexity to record keeping for each individual unit. In order to keep the game fast paced with decisive conflicts, a victory or loss duality is determined by tactics and luck. It is not realistic, but then few people consider real war fun.

For the record, this is my first attempt at implementing a 2d6 mechanic into wargaming. I have tested units against each other in limited playtesting and not tried to reach across tech levels. My current impression is that multiple weapons (ie. tanks firing shells or machine guns) is too expensive for the flexibility, and ranged attacks may be too inexpensive for the benefits gained. Transported units for slower craft may also be too expensive for value. Comments and suggestions are welcome and I would love to hear how this system worked in your hands.

Order of Play

Determine initiative each turn by rolling 2d6; highest side acts first. The game is played on a 4'x4' or 4'x6' map with various terrain pieces in play. Units are placed one at a time within 12" of the player's home edge until all units are placed. A player with more units than the other activates all of the excess units at the end of the turn. A game consists of 4-10 turns, agreed to before the start of play.

During a turn, each player chooses 1 unit to activate in turn, and that unit may perform 2 actions chosen from: move, attack, reorganize, dig in (counts as 2 actions), support, guard, melee. Only the support, reorganize and move actions may be taken twice. Attack and support actions require units to equal or better their target number (with modifiers) on a 2d6 roll. Units with stealth require an attacker to make a successful target number roll before any other attack or effect is determined. If a unit cannot target an enemy it does not count as an attack but does use a unit action. A second attack attempt may be made against the same stealth unit in a turn if the first unit failed its target number roll, but only 1 actual attack roll per unit may be made.

Actions

move: moves up to one standard distance as modified by terrain

attack: may attack one or more units from current position. Some units have alternative attack options (tanks may have a cannon or machine gun attack). Automatic weapons (machine guns, gauss guns, multiple missile launcher, etc) may attack 2 (or sometimes more) units in the same turn as long as they are within 2" of one another. For very high rates of fire (rotary autocannons, VRF gauss guns), fire switches from unit to unit (with no repeating!) as long as the next unit is within 2" of the last target.

support: make target roll to aid other units as spotter, jammer, etc within its range. Give another unit line of sight, reorganization, +1 armor OR +1 attack depending upon the unit's function.

guard: delay an attack to allow fire on enemy troops moving through their line of sight or attacking
may not be combined with an attack action (ie. only 1 attack action per turn)
may target a stealthy unit only if they succeed on a separate target number roll
only have one chance to target a stealthy unit, but if failed it does not count as its attack
can occur simultaneously with the enemy movement; a strafing unit might be killed even if it successfully attacks its target(s)
units on guard may fire in the following turn if they did not fire on guard the previous turn
this does NOT count as their attack in the new turn but is held from the earlier turn

dig in: prepare to repel attacks, giving +1 armor starting next turn. It must be a unit's only action in a given turn, and they must reorganize before moving. Units may begin a scenario as dug in.

reorganize: remove 1 unit suppression (ie. disorganization caused by the enemy) marker

melee: requires 2 units to be directly adjacent to one another with no more than 0.5 altitude between
the unit that moves into base contact with an enemy unit makes an attack roll
if the defender is not eliminated, it may make a return melee strike at the attacking unit
melee return strikes do NOT count as an attack
enemies in base contact MUST either attack (melee), move, or reorganize if suppressed
suppressed units in melee receive a -1 modifier on all attacks or return strikes
units with stealth are not required to enter melee; the attacker must make a target roll first

To make an attack, roll the unit's target number on 2d6 vs. their defense modifier (armor + cover). A success does attack value damage to a target unit. A success by +3 over the target number does +1 damage to the unit. If the damage done to the unit is more than its armor, it is destroyed. If the damage done is equal to its armor, a d6 is rolled: 1-3 means the unit is suppressed, 4-6 means it is destroyed. If the damage is less than the armor value, the target is considered attacked but otherwise unaffected.

Unit Features

There are 8 major features of each unit

Attack- how much damage the unit inflicts upon the enemy

Armor- how difficult is the unit to damage

Speed- how quickly can the unit move

Mobility- how a unit responds to terrain, determined by unit type

Range- how far away a unit must be to attack

Transport- how many/types of units may be carried inactively

Stealth- how hard is it to target the unit, includes camouflage, ECM, etc

Support- how a unit may benefit other associated units

parentheses around values indicate a special condition on an action, rounded up

(range) means that a unit must be at least 1/3 its base range distance away to attack

ie. a mortar unit with a range of 18" would need to be 6" away to attack

(mobility) requires that a unit (typically a flying unit) must move at least 1/2 that many spaces

(altitude) requires that a unit have a minimum altitude to act

transport units carry other units inactively to a new location where they can become active

all carried units are destroyed if the transport unit is destroyed

all carried units may be released after transport movement

disembarking units may move 1/2 its speed or take cover adjacent to the transport unit

they may not attack in the same turn they disembark, although they may defend

some transport units may attack as well as move other units (armored personnel carriers)

units must be at an appropriate altitude to disembark

Altitude

Altitude- height compared to base level at which a unit is found

-1 underground or underwater- sappers, borers or submarines

0 ground level- infantry, tracked/wheeled vehicles

0.5 ground effect- hovercraft and air cushion vehicles

ignore move or cover modifiers for roads, clear, broken, hills, marsh, water, river

1 low level- helicopters, combat air support vehicles

2 mid level- fighter-bombers, cargo aircraft

3 high level- strategic bombers, interceptors

4 sub orbital- artillery, satellites

5 orbital- spacecraft

flying units may take an attack action in the middle of their move

fighters may make strafing runs against ground units

bombers may attack units below them during a move

1 altitude unit counts as +12" range and +1 cover for the purpose of attack against a unit

(ground effect vehicles at altitude 0.5 count as altitude 0 when defending, 1 when attacking)

changing altitude equals 12" of speed per unit of altitude

Unit Quality

determines the target number on 2d6; this is a HUGE determinant for a unit's success

quality	target	percent	type of soldier
1	10	16.7%	raw recruits, conscripts (cannon fodder)
2	9	27.7%	inexperienced but trained (green soldiers, garrison troops)
3	8	41.7%	trained, average troops (professional troops for major power)

4	7	58.3%	expert, high quality troops (veterans, paratroopers, rangers)
5	6	72.2%	elite troops, battle tested (SEALS, SAS, recon, special ops troops)

Suppressed Units

become suppressed by surviving a successful attack from an equal attack value
by any 2 attack rolls which might possibly cause damage

an attack 1 unit might cause damage to a unit with 2 armor

an attack 1 unit can never cause damage to a unit with 3 armor

can be suppressed any number of times, even to the point of preventing any successful action

1 suppression may be removed by 1 reorganize action

unsuccessful attack tries against a stealthy unit do not count for suppression. Actual attacks do.

Close Combat (melee)

When 2 enemy units are directly adjacent to one another, they are considered to be in close combat (range 0). In these cases, the unit that moved into close combat MUST make an attack against an adjacent unit. If the unit has no actions left, the attack is considered to be an automatic fail. If the attack fails, the adjacent unit may make a 'free' attack upon the enemy which moved into close combat range. This free attack causes the unit to become suppressed. If a unit moves adjacent to 2 or more enemy units, it may attack only 1 enemy unit but each enemy may make a 'free' attack and become suppressed. Units with a range of 0 may only engage in close combat. If a unit moves into close combat with a stealthy unit, they may try to attack, but if they fail to target the enemy their second action has been used. If 2 opposing units remain in close combat during the next turn, they may only reorganize (to remove suppression), attack the enemy unit in close combat, or move at 1/3 speed out of close combat. (The 1/3 speed movement is meant to simulate a controlled retreat.) Units at different altitudes may never be in close combat.

Terrain Types and Effects

road: movement cost is halved (2 hexes per 1"), 0 cover

clear: movement cost decreased by 1/3 (move 3 hexes per 2"), 0 cover

light forest: movement cost increased by 1/3 (move 2 hexes per 3"), +1 cover

heavy forest: movement cost doubled (1 hex per 2"), no ground or ground effect vehicles, +2 cover

broken: movement cost doubled (1 hex per 2"), +1 cover

field: 0 cover

hill: altitude=1 (includes +1 cover against attacks from a lower altitude)

fortification: count as being dug-in, movement cost doubled (move 1 hex per 2")

buildings: +1 cover, movement cost increased by 1/3 (move 2 hexes per 3")

urban: +2 cover, movement cost doubled (move 1 hex per 2")

marsh: +1 cover, no ground vehicles

water: no ground units

river: triple movement cost (move 1 hex per 3")

some terrain types may be combined (ie. road over a hill, urban fortifications, river through forest)
player whose unit is in the hex determines which effect is applied at any given time

Tech level

While it is difficult to say exactly what changes between any given tech level, the easiest unit numbers to manipulate are armor and attack values. 21st century infantry wear a number of defensive clothing articles such as flack jackets, ceramic inserts, and kevlar pads that would be the envy of any Civil War trooper. Today's soldiers would feel the same envy for basic armor from the far future. Just as our

armor would provide excellent protection against most Civil War weapons, future armor would be equally overwhelming compared to today's weaponry. A basic +1 to +3 for attack AND +1 to +3 for armor (depending upon how different the tech is) would be reasonable, and should be agreed upon in advance. Crossbows might be useful today even against a soldier in a flack jacket; an armored fighting vehicle would not feel threatened. Approximate tech ranges are listed below for various war equipment.

TL0 -TL2: Primitive: Bows, spears, leather armor, plate armor, cavalry, knights, catapults
TL3-TL4: Gunpowder, Age of Sail: cannon, muskets, revolvers, Trafalgar, Napoleonic Wars, Civil War
TL5-TL7: Modern War: machine guns, tanks, aircraft, simple drones, missiles, World Wars, Ukraine
TL8-TL11: Early Stellar: grav vehicles, laser weapons, crystaliron armor, robot and drone warriors
TL12-TL15: Stellar: superdense armor, battledress, PGMPs, gauss guns, plasma cannons, meson guns

Unit Costs

a minimal unit has 0 attack, 0 armor, 6" movement, 0 range, 0 stealth, 0 transport, altitude 0
base cost: 2 pts for raw unit, 4 pts for green unit, 8 pts for regulars, 12 pts for veterans, 16 pts for elite
+4 per attack

+2 per 6" range

+2 per 6" movement

+1 for amphibious (ignores river and water terrain movement modifiers)

+4 for automatic weapon, per additional unit able to be hit

 a flechette gun may have an attack of 0 but automatic fire so could hurt 2 unarmored units

+4 per armor

+6 for stealth

+2 per unit transportable

+2 per support action (+1 armor, +1 attack, reorganize; LoS action is included for support units)

additional weapons start at attack 0, and increase separately at 1/2 normal cost

 only 1 weapon may be used per turn, and the most expensive weapon is at full price

+4 per altitude unit (ground effect is +2)

+2 disembark from altitude (ie. paratroopers)

 takes 1 full turn to accomplish and units count as altitude 0.5 during that time

-1/2 value if a restriction is placed on how a unit may operate

 if a unit may only fire at more distant units, the range increase would only cost +1

 if a unit must move at least 1/2 its movement every turn, each increment costs +1

 if armor works only against certain types of attacks, each increment costs +2

 a unit adds an additional weapon (say smoke) but can only use one or the other +1

Special rules for commanders

Commanders, whether sergeants, captains, or generals, are critical for effective coordination of military units. Eliminating enemy commanders is one of the most effective ways of degrading an opponents power. In SUCS, each army is expected (and pretty much required) to have at least 1 commander unit. That unit may have the features of any other unit, but must include having the support action reorganize. Any unit that goes beyond the range of any commander (by choice or by having their nearest commander killed) has an additional +1 added to their target number, making every attack more difficult. If all of an army's commanders are killed, units effectively become disorganized and may only take 1 action instead of 2 in any given turn. This is a HUGE disadvantage. For example, if a unit becomes suppressed, the only action it can take is to become unsuppressed. Once all of an army's commanders are gone, they are essentially fighting a holding action until the battle ends.

commanders must have a range of at least 6" and the support action reorganize
units which lose their commander or exceed their range have +1 added to their target number
armies which lose ALL their commanders may only take 1 action per turn instead of 2
(even bad orders are better than no orders at all)

TL 0-2 armies

<u>unit</u>	<u>extra cost</u>	<u>attack</u>	<u>armor</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>range</u>	<u>transport</u>	<u>stealth</u>	<u>support</u>
infantry	0	0	0	6"	0	0	0	-
longbowman	+8	1	0	6"	12"	0	0	-
heavy infantry	+12	1	2	6"	0	0	0	-
knight	+18	2	2	12"	0	0	0	-
mounted archer	+15	1	1	15"	12"	0	0	-
spear man	+6	1	0	9"	3"	0	0	-
cavalry	+11	1	1	15"	0	0	0	-
armored infantry	+8	1	1	6"	0	0	0	-
crossbowman	+11	2	0	6"	15"	0	0	-
commander	+12	0	1	12"	12"	0	0	reorganize
catapult	+12	2	0	6"	12"	0	0	-
wagon, horse	+11	0	1	9"	0	3	0	-
riverboat	+9	0	1	12"	0	(3)	0	-
dragoon	+14	1	2	12"	0	0	0	-

