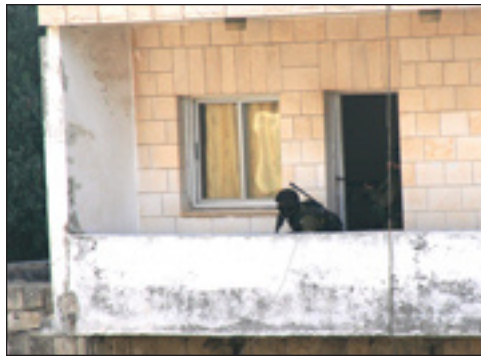


WALKING through WALLS



a game of asymmetrical warfare

by mark vallianatos

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“Aviv Kochavi, then commander of the Paratrooper Brigade, explained the principle that guided the attack of the refugee camp of Batala and the adjacent Kasbah (old city) of Nablus: ‘We interpreted the alley as a place forbidden to walk through, and the door as a place forbidden to pass through, and the window as a place forbidden to look through, because a weapon awaits us in the alley, and a booby trap awaits us behind the doors... This is why that we opted for the methodology of walking through walls. [...] Like a worm that eats its way forward, emerging at points and then disappearing.’ “

- Eyal Weizman

Walking through Walls is a game of asymmetrical warfare – specifically the deadly triangle formed between state armies, insurgents/guerillas/terrorists, and civilians.



don’t understand? How applicable is the old phrase about destroying a village to save it? As insurgents, how do you challenge the might of a state military apparatus? What kind of future can be birthed through violence? As civilians, how do you live when the building you dwell in and the way you think have become battlegrounds? When and why and how do you take sides?

This first draft was written for a “Sight and Sound Game Design Challenge” run by Jason Morningstar. Rules at http://www.bullypul-pitgames.com/projects/sight_and_sound/. Thanks to Jason for the impetus for drafting this. Image C (an old man walking through a tunnel), sound B (someone running) and concept C (‘scour’- to clean or search) together made me think of passageways and chases and civilians caught amid terrorism and insurgency and occupation. They also reminded me of Eyal Weizman’s writings, such as <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507/weizman/en>. Text on soldiers worming their way through people’s homes provided the inspiration for using strings to measure obstacles and risks and stories. (His essays also point to Deleuze and Guattari’s book a thousand plateaus,

The game is obviously partly about the war that my nation’s government is currently waging in Iraq as well as the broader ‘war on terror.’ The rules, however, are applicable to any modern low-intensity, counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism struggle.

The title is borrowed from Eyal Weizman’s articles on the Israeli Defense Force’s urban combat strategies in the occupied territories and Southern Lebanon. The phrase “walking through walls” becomes a metaphor. This kind of low-intensity armed conflict, traditionally considered more limited than state-to-state wars, in some ways breaks down more boundaries and burrows deeper into private space. Tanks still rumble through streets but armed men also commandeer buildings for sniper nests, pierce holes between floors and rooms to create tactical pathways inside



with its rhizome-based social theory, so the string thing seems doubly appropriate.) From there, thousands of days of reading the latest about ongoing wars and terrorism gave me more than enough additional ‘color.’ Gillo Pontecorvo’s film *The Battle of Algiers* and a variety of war-related games I’ve played or read also influenced *Walking through Walls*.

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peoples’ homes, and rip the walls off apartments to expose the insides like concrete doll houses. Combatants without uniforms blend into the population, sometimes being sheltered by civilians, sometimes murdering them to prove they can still strike at will. All the while the beliefs of the populace at large and the thoughts and flesh of individuals subjected to torture are considered valid operational targets.

While there may be moral judgments or political views implicit in how *Walking through Walls* is written, players in the game can cycle between the three ‘sides’ of the war, with each vantage point having its own dilemmas.

As soldiers, how do you combat an unconventional enemy embedded in a society you



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The photographer (man in tunnel) by joaquimalves gaspar http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:The_Photographer.jpg
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I must note that as just a game dealing with the topic of asymmetrical warfare, *Walking through Walls* makes no pretenses of granting an experience anything at all like the real thing.

Comments/feedback to markvalli at gmail dot com

Setting up

Walking through walls is a game designed for three players, although two or four or more can play with slight modifications. You will need four index cards, pencils or pens, a few feet of string or yarn, and scissors. A single-hole punch will help, but you can use a pen or the tip of your scissors if necessary. A ruler is also useful but not strictly necessary.

The game requires 8 pieces of string – two per index card. Two of the strings will be pulled through the dwelling card. Cut them so they are approximately twice the length of the index card and set them aside with one of the blank index cards. The other 6 strings will help ‘count down’ events that can happen in the game. They need to be measured out and

marked a little more carefully. Each of these strings need to be two units in length plus a number of units equal to the number of players. So for a three-player game the strings should be cut to at least five units in length. Depending on how much string you have available, these units of length can be centimeters, inches, the width of someone’s hand, etc. Make sure they are long enough that you can mark down a few easily visible pen/pencil marks on the strings and that these lines are far enough apart to be distinguishable.

After the strings are cut, punch holes near two opposite corners of three of the blank index cards. Write “Fuse” near one of the holes and “barrier” near the other. Thread a piece of string through the holes and tie them to the corners of the cards. Now mark down evenly spaced lines starting one unit of measure-

ment from each end of the string. If you have three players, then there will be three lines, one near the end of the string, one near the middle, and one near the index card. Make sure the lines are visible enough to see when the string bends different ways.

Decide what conflict your game will be set in. You can be as geographically and historically specific as you like - or situate your game in a vaguely defined time and place (the modern middle east, a Latin American megacity in the near future, etc.) The game was written with urban warfare in mind but can also be placed in a remote rural location as long as there are dwellings there.

Take three index cards. Write ‘army’ on top of one (you can specify which army if you have chosen a defined setting); ‘insurgents’



(or ‘terrorists’ or ‘guerillas’) on the second, their faction identified if you have established it; and ‘civilians’ on the third.

Pass the cards around so that each player can write down the name of one member of that group as well as something (or a few things) significant or memorable or interesting about that person. Members of the army should be soldiers in one small unit, listed insurgents part of the same cell, and civilians residents of the same house or apartment. You can read and react to what other players have written. So, for example, if the civilian card lists a wife and husband, the third player might write down one of their children or a widowed mother of one of the couple.

Distribute the cards among the players to set each side’s primary objective for the game. You can pass them out randomly or talk to see which card/side of the conflict you prefer to start with.

Write down an objective that the people listed for the side (whose card you have in front of you) will have for the game. This should not be the overall goal for the entire war (drive

out the foreigners, restore stability and crush the terrorist network, stay alive, etc). It should be a shorter term – but still significant - objective that will aid them in accomplishing the overall goal. Examples might be to identify and capture the leader of the insurgent cell in the university district; assassinate the vice minister of security; obtain an exit visa for our children. It’s fine if some of the objectives are measured in hours (take advantage of the holy day cease-fire to restock up on food and supplies) and others in days or weeks or months (recruit a suicide bomber to infiltrate the officers’ training program). Jumping back and forth between the different time scales can make for an interesting narrative. If there are two players, each of you can write down the objective for one of the sides and you can discuss and agree on the remaining objective. For games with four or more players, collaborate on one or more of the sides’ objectives.

Read the objectives out loud so all players know what each side is after.

Pass the index cards for each side to an adjacent player. They will write down the “Barrier” for that side. The barrier is an obsta-

cle that the side is aware of- something they know they will have to take care of before they achieve their objective. Read the barriers out loud.

Pass the card again so that another player writes down the “Fuse” for the side. The fuse is a harm that might befall the side (either one of more named members of the side, or the whole group). The fuse shouldn’t be a version of the barrier. For example if the civilians objective is to get visas to flee the country and the barrier is they don’t have enough money to bribe consulate officials, then the fuse shouldn’t be ‘family is robbed so they can’t afford visas.’ Read the fuses aloud.

In a game with three players, each player will have written the objective for one of the three sides, the barrier for another, and the fuse for the third. If there are two players or more than three players, you will need to collaborate on some of the barriers and fuses similar to how you created the objectives.

Draw a crude map of the layout of a house or apartment on the remaining index card. Label the rooms. Leave some space between

the map and the edge of the card, and label what's next to each side of the dwelling (alley, adjacent apartment, vacant lot, etc). In a corner of the card, draw a small up arrow and down arrow and write what's above the dwelling (roof, another apartment) and what's below the dwelling (restaurant, basement, nothing).

Place all four cards on the table so everyone can access them.

Taking Turns

Pick a player to start the game. Players take turns choosing from among three possible actions: writing triggers, cutting strings, or pulling strings through the dwelling.



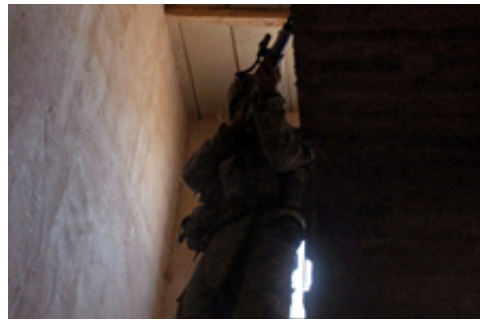
Pulling Strings

The two strings prepared for the dwelling index card represent possible incursions of the army or the insurgents into the house/apartment where the civilians live. On your turn, you can punch a hole in one of the outer walls or the roof or floor arrow of the dwelling map and pull a string through it. Say whether the army or insurgents have entered the house, describe the circumstances and what the visitors/intruders do. Once a side has entered the home on any later turn any player other than the player who caused the entry can punch a second hole in some other exterior wall of floor/ceiling, pull the string through the second hole so that it enters and exits the card, and describe how the army or insurgents have created an exit and are using the dwelling not just as a hiding spot, temporary base, etc but as a route through the surrounding area. Since both insurgents and army can enter and leave the home, there can be up to four holes in the card.

Having their house taken over does not automatically prevent the civilians from achieving their objective. In fact, because the hearts and minds (and homes) of the populace are

Writing triggers.

You can write down a "Trigger" associated with any empty line on any barrier or fuse string. A trigger is an event that will happen when the string is cut on that line. Trigger events are specific instances of 'progress' towards the removal of barrier or threat of a fuse or side events that spin off from the barrier or fuse. For example, if the fuse for the insurgent side is that two of the cell members are killed by a missile shot from an unmanned drone, a trigger could be the insurgents being told that the drones are being deployed in the district, or perhaps a cell member arguing with a local shopkeeper (with implications that the store owner might inform to the army). Triggers can only be activated by other players, so try to write triggers that you think the rest of the players will find engaging. A line is not available if a



being contested by the army and insurgents, different types of entries and exits can cause consequences for some or all of the sides:

entry by soldiers = cut insurgents' barrier + write one trigger on civilians' fuse
 Exit by soldiers = cut army's barrier + write one trigger on insurgents' fuse
 entry by insurgents = write one trigger on insurgents' barrier + cut civilians' fuse
 Exit by insurgents = cut army's fuse + write one trigger on insurgents' barrier
 The first pull that places both army and insurgents inside the dwelling creates a firefight inside the building = one (extra) cut to all side's fuse

Cutting string is followed by a scene narrated or role-played by one or more players. The topic of the scene will be player's choice if a string is cut at a blank line, or a trigger event if a string is cut at an already written trigger. Pulling string always results in at least one cut, or in the case of firefight inside the dwelling, three cuts. The player who acted decides how to play the scene; and, if the scene requires role-playing, which player will take the role of various characters in the scene. If

trigger has already been written down for that line or if the string has already been cut to or past the line.

Cutting strings

You can cut any barrier or fuse string at the next line in towards the card. If the line you cut is empty then you create and narrate or role-play a scene of your choice related to the fuse or barrier or the group's efforts to achieve their objective. If the line you cut has a trigger then you narrate or lead a scene dealing with the trigger event. You are usually not allowed to cut a string if that would mean activating a trigger that you wrote. (The exception to this rule is that you may cut your own trigger when you have no other possible actions.)



a firefight breaks out, then scenes should be lead by different players with the player who pulled the string having first choice.

Possible formats for scenes include:

Roleplaying of characters listed on the index cards.
 Roleplaying of some listed characters and some other characters invented for the scene by the lead player, or just involving other characters.
 Narration by the lead player of what happens: what characters do, say, think.
 Narration by the lead player through a specific medium of a letter or email sent by one of the characters, an entry in a journal or blog, etc, a report up the chain of command or police report, story in the media, etc.

Ending the game

The game ends when the fuse and/or barrier has been entirely cut on all three cards. If a side's barrier is eliminated (before or after their fuse is) then the side achieves its objective.