

COMBAT

We continue with our in-depth look into the mechanics of the MERCS table-top miniature game. In the last issue we touched on movements and Snap to Cover. Now, it is time to get into the combat system.

MERCS combat, once a player has decided to attack, consists of four basic steps.

1. Pick a target
2. Get a Firing Number
3. Weapon Strength vs. Armor Value
4. Blood and Armor Failure

The first step is self-explanatory. However, it isn't without merit to state that the more a player understands his MegaCon and his opponent the line between what is an obvious target blurs considerably. Player's begin to bait "pot shots" in order to gain tactical advantage later in the game, or to control a side of the table.

FIRING NUMBER (FN)

MERCS uses a basic target number and modifier system like many other games. The target number in the case of MERCS is referred to as a Firing Number and is used to determine if an attack is a hit or a miss. Firing Numbers range from five to eight depending on the weapon. Lower FNs are attached to single-shot weapons that provide a higher opportunity to hit, while the higher FNs belong to weapons that give the player more occasions to hit.



In fact, this theme of opportunity vs. occasion seems to be a common thread woven into the MERCS game system. The player is constantly choosing between two

things: move or attack. Moving will allow the player to gain a better tactical advantage on the table and offers bonuses to the FN. Thereby granting the player more occasions to effectively attack his opponent. However, having a low FN means little if the player loses the opportunity to attack.

The trick MERCS employs, and what makes it more tactical, are the modifiers. They are weighted in such a way that attacking a target head-on, in cover yields little success, but attacking from the flank or rear is devastating. Likewise, catching a target without cover provides both opportunity and occasion. The punishment for tactical mistakes can be shockingly vicious when playing an opponent with experience.

For example, the CCC Medic has a semi-automatic weapon (which means he gets two attacks vs. one target) with base FN7. If he fires on a FCC Chemical Engineer

1. at long range, in the front arc, and in half cover the CCC will be firing two shots at FN8.
2. at long range, in the flank arc, and in no cover the CCC will be firing two shots at FN5.
3. at short range, in the rear arc, and in no cover the CCC will be firing two shots at FN3.

Moreover, these are numbers are not taking into account the Personal Abilities of the attacker or his allies. Hidden within this relatively simple system is a tiered reward system that compensates smart tactical play.

However, it does take a couple of games to get used to, especially if the player is used to other miniature games. Beginning players FNs hover around the eight/nine/ten area. As players get more games under their belts, though, FNs come down to a very manageable five/six/seven. This is where the game gets fun, and players tactics truly affect the table in a tangible way. It is quite invigorating to know your plan won the day as opposed to the army you play.

In the end, if the dice rolls equal to or greater than the FN, that target is considered to be hit. The next step will determine if those hits will do an damage.



WEAPON STRENGTH VS. ARMOR VALUE

One of the more refreshing parts of the combat system is the ease at which players can determine damage. There is no mitigation roll, or ability to soak damage. If the target is hit and the armor pierced, then the target is damage. On the other hand, this means with only five MERCS on a side, the stakes are pretty high.

Each weapon has an assigned weapon strength. If the weapon strength meets or exceeds the target's armor value, the target is damaged or in MERCS terms, Blooded. Both weapons and armor have values between one and four (one being weaker, four being stronger).

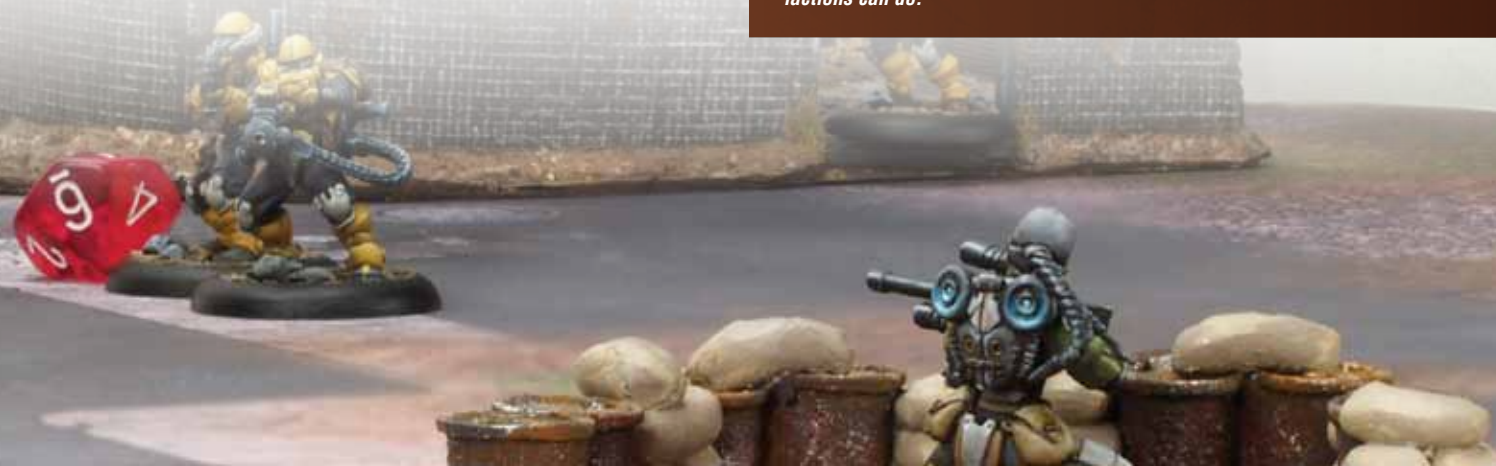
For instance, the CCC Sniper has the only weapon strength four gun in the game. Likewise, the USCR Behemoth (a monstrosly menacing mini) has the only armor value of four in the game. However, MERCS emphasis on tactics being what it is, weapon strengths are boosted by being in the flank or rear arc of a target.



The assault rifle of the CCC Medic has a weapon strength of two. Without maneuvering out of the front arc, he can pierce armor value two and under. Targets with armor values of three or four, the CCC Medic would need to advance to the flank or rear of the target. The flank and rear of a target provides the attacker with a bonus to hit **and** a bonus to damage.

$$\text{Wpn Str } 2 \geq \text{Shield} = 1 \text{ Blood}$$

Alternatively, there is a second way to interact with the weapon strength vs. armor value relationship.



BLOOD AND ARMOR FAILURE



In MERCS, Blood equals damage. It is pretty straight forward. If a MERCS take damage equal to the amount of Blood he has, he is dead.

Armor Failure isn't quite so simple. The second part of the weapon vs. armor relationship consists of making armor failure rolls. If a target is hit, regardless of weapon strength or Blood, that target **must** roll to see if his armor fails.

$$d10 \geq \text{Shield}$$

If the target passes his armor failure roll, then the sun is shining and he can go merrily about his way. If his armor fails, he loses two of his movement points (last issue we discussed movement) and he loses one armor value. And it is in this that good, strong tactics can overwhelm even the densest of armors.

Armor failure is the great equalizer. It insures that no matter the situation, if opportunity meets occasion, pull the trigger.

Armor Failure also affects some of the special things certain factions can do.

MERCS HAS THREE RANGES: MELEE, SHORT, AND LONG.

If a player can see a target, and has the right weapon, then he can attack. However, there are bonuses for firing at targets in short range.

MERCS use d10s and is always measured as equal to or greater than the target number for success.