

# Israeli MOUT Training

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Combat in built-up areas is not altogether new to the Israeli Army. In 1948 and again in 1967 the city of Jerusalem was a battleground of major significance for the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Unfortunately, though, the IDF then relegated to secondary importance the tactics and techniques it had learned during those years. Later, during the fighting in Suez City in October 1973, the traumatic losses the Army suffered at the hands of the Egyptians affected its entire approach to MOUT training. As a result, the Israeli Army now conducts realistic and concerted training in MOUT operations at its MOUT training facility in the Negev Desert.

Israeli Army units regularly rotate through this facility, which is divided into two separate villages, one on a slight rise and the other on low ground. The buildings are of concrete block construction, which makes it easier to repair or replace damaged or destroyed portions.

The facility contains a variety of buildings with different interiors — one, two, or three stories, some with open court rooms, others with balconies, railings, staircases, and a variety of room arrangements.

The inside of each room is lined with a bullet-absorbent wall, which permits the firing of weapons in each room without fear of ricochet or damage to the concrete block. These liners are replaced in sections, as needed. Normally, to extend the life of the liners, only weapons of 5.56mm are fired inside; 7.62mm weapons can be fired into the walls but with a corresponding decrease in the life of the liners.

The training the Israelis conduct in this facility is extremely detailed at the

small unit and individual level, because these are the levels at which urban combat normally occurs. All of the soldiers are taught individual techniques for such combat, including procedures for carrying weapons, methods of moving outside of and into buildings, methods of entering openings, and techniques for firing weapons. These techniques are standard throughout the Army, and the trainers are the leaders of the units being trained.

## BATTLE DRILLS

After the soldiers master these individual techniques, they are organized into assault teams to practice simple battle drills. This training is initially done "dry" with emphasis on both speed and precision. When mistakes are noted, immediate corrections are made.

When the squads and teams are proficient in their techniques, the platoons begin conducting exercises that include maneuvering into the complex. Finally, when everyone has been rehearsed, the soldier's weapons are loaded (IDF soldiers always carry their ammunition), and the units are given orders to attack the villages.

All organic platoon weapons are used, and plenty of targets are provided for both the suppression and the assault elements. Armored vehicle hulks and fuel drums are placed randomly around the facility to simulate the enemy, and subcaliber RPG training rounds are used against the vehicles and the outside walls of the buildings.

The attack on the villages, which takes place at combat speed, gives the

troops an idea of what it is like to have live rounds being fired next to, over, and around them. As with all other training exercises, unit leaders act as safety officers while they lead their units through the exercise.

When the attack is completed, the unit members gather for a critique. If time permits, the units repeat the exercise until they perform it correctly. In this manner, the units build teamwork and instill confidence in their men.

One of the problems in conducting such a live fire exercise is the safety of the soldiers. Because the fighting is so decentralized, it is difficult, for example, to keep troops from entering through two different doorways into the same room and shooting at each other. Also, it is absolutely necessary for all soldiers to wear earplugs. The sound of live ammunition being fired inside a room is markedly different from the sound of blanks, and soldiers who fail to take this precaution suffer accordingly.

The Israelis, in building and using the MOUT training facility, have shown that they clearly understand the difficulties and the threats an attack on a built-up area poses. And the IDF's treatment of Beirut, with extensive air and artillery attacks, underscores this understanding. Certainly, the units of the IDF are much better prepared to conduct battles in such areas, if they must, after training in their live fire facility.



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