

# Room Clearance in MOUT

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Room clearance techniques, as described in our current doctrine for military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT), are designed for a dual purpose. Properly applied, they should reduce casualties and also hasten the accomplishment of a MOUT mission. Unfortunately, the techniques taught today can, in fact, increase both military and civilian casualties and delay mission accomplishment by wasting ammunition and increasing logistical requirements. Minor changes in our doctrine can reduce this wanton use of firepower and improve our ability to accomplish a MOUT mission.

The Army's doctrine for room clearance can be found in FM 90-10, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT); FM 90-10-1, An Infantryman's Guide to Urban Combat; and TC 90-1, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain Training. The training circular, which was recently distributed, contains the latest techniques being taught to our soldiers. Briefly, those room clearance techniques are:

- The clearing team positions itself to one side of the entry point into a room.
- One soldier cooks off a fragmentation grenade for two seconds and throws it vigorously into the room.
- When the grenade detonates, two soldiers enter together.
- The front man moves to the left as the rear man moves to the right, and they fire into opposite portions of the room, spraying with automatic fire.

- A third man covers the team's rear and blocks the door from enemy soldiers or from other friendly clearing teams.

- Cleared rooms are marked according to a unit's SOP.

- The team consolidates to continue the mission.

There are several problems with this procedure. First, it assumes that all occupants of the buildings being cleared are enemy. Some accounts of MOUT battles in past wars, particularly World War II, may lead one to believe that most of the occupants of a city had left before the fighting began. But numerous autobiographies and after-action reports mention that civilians were killed or wounded when soldiers threw grenades and sprayed a room or basement with automatic fire before identifying the occupants. And in future conflicts civilians are much more likely to be mixed with combatants, because increased urbanization, particularly in Europe, has left fewer rural areas either for refugee evacuation or for combat.

Additionally, it is more likely that most of our future conflicts will be of the low-to mid-intensity kind, in which the civilians will be less likely to leave the cities. (Vietnam and Lebanon are examples of this type of conflict.) Unfortunately, our MOUT doctrine appears to be written more for high-intensity conflicts. (FM 90-10 vaguely addresses the problem of noncombatants with a general statement that only military targets may be attacked,

but it does not explain to our soldiers how this will be accomplished in urban areas.)

In addition to civilians, our own soldiers can become casualties from the use of excessive firepower. Thin walls, doorways, and windows will not stop the fragments from the grenades presently in the Army's inventory, and ricochet rounds are a constant danger within buildings.

Besides causing needless casualties, the practice of spraying every room with automatic fire is a waste of ammunition. In practical terms, one can easily imagine a member of a clearing team depleting his basic load of ammunition before clearing 15 rooms, many of which will not even be occupied by enemy forces.

Although ammunition expenditures are expected to be greater in city fighting, the demand is exaggerated under our current doctrine. With time, attacking soldiers will learn not to waste so much ammunition, but this knowledge will not come from training but from costly experience.

With just a few changes in our training and equipment, these deficiencies can be rectified. My proposed changes are based on tactics and technology used by special operations forces throughout the world and on recent experience with city fighting in Lebanon. The primary goal of these proposed changes is to keep friendly forces as secure and safe as possible during room clearance. Additionally, these changes would result in a decrease in noncombatant casualties as well as in the amount of small arms ammunition re-

quired to support urban operations.

The first proposal is a specific change *not so much in doctrine as in presentation*. For example, TC 90-1 states that the minimum number of men in a clearing team is three (including the soldier at the entrance covering the rear). Although this is a good number with which to train, the training manuals should emphasize that the assault party organization is flexible. As long as the basic principles of room entry and clearance are followed, two to four men could safely clear the inside of a room. The first two men entering would move from left to right and right to left. Any additional personnel entering would scan the top half and the bottom half of the room. In other words, the responsibilities would be divided on the basis of the number of soldiers available to clear rooms.

The next proposal is one that does require considerable change in our doctrine. That is, the Army would need to develop an offensive grenade similar to the so-called "flash-bang" concussion grenade used by special operations forces in hostage rescue situations. (At one time, the U.S. Army had an offensive grenade in its inventory—the MK3A2. It was designed so that the force of its explosion was dissipated mainly in the form of shock waves instead of high velocity fragments.) The bright flash and loud noise of such a grenade would stun the occupants of an enclosed space for a few seconds but would not necessarily kill or maim them. The blast effects would give friendly forces enough time to clear a room before the occupants could recover their senses and react.

This type of grenade has been used successfully by numerous SWAT teams in the U.S., by the British Special Air Service during the recovery of the Iranian embassy in London, and by the German GS-9 during the assault on a hijacked airplane in Mogadishu, Somalia. Although these examples are from special operations, there is great potential for using such grenades in conventional military operations on urbanized terrain.

With the reduction of needless deaths from grenades, there would still remain the problem of small arms fire in room clearance. Again, borrowing from special operations tactics, we could, through additional training, eliminate the require-



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ment to spray automatic fire blindly into a room. Soldiers must enter rooms quickly following the explosion of a "flash-bang" grenade to take advantage of the stun effect.

A technique to help soldiers enter a room is to have the first two soldiers who are going into a room cross through the doorway. For this technique, the two men are positioned on either side of the entrance, and the man closest to the door-knob opens the door by kicking it open or by firing at the doorknob. After tossing in a grenade, the man next to the door's hinges crosses into the room following the explosion. He crouches low as he moves and keeps his rifle pointed along his line of sight.

The second man immediately crosses behind the first man through the doorway in a higher stance with his rifle over the first man. The second man looks behind the door and then back to the center of the room. Both look at the hands of any oc-

cupants. They scan for weapons, grenades, and enemy uniforms, and fire at the people who have them. They clear all the way through the room to the far side, checking behind furniture along the way and talking constantly with each other so they will be always aware of their relative positions. They fire only when necessary. If there are additional members of the clearing team, they follow the second man through the entrance, scan up and down, and support the first two soldiers from a position just inside the entrance.

Codewords are designated for enemy hand grenades and booby traps. A member of the clearing team who notices a grenade or booby trap uses the codeword to alert the others. This keeps any occupants from deceiving the clearing team by shouting "grenade." When each of the first two members of the team has cleared the room to the far wall, he shouts "clear." The team leader then announces "all clear," and the team withdraws.

They mark the room and move on to the next.

This type of room clearance requires more training, but the benefits to be gained are worth the extra effort, and the training can also be interesting for the soldiers. Targets similar to those used by the FBI and SWAT teams should be developed for use in the Army's MOUT live-fire training facilities. Civilian targets should be mixed with opposing force (OPFOR) targets—and different objects could be placed in their hands, such as purses, cameras, pistols, or rifles—so that the assaulting soldiers could develop the proper reactions. MILES equipment could also be used for this training, and personnel in civilian clothes could be integrated with the OPFOR soldiers. Additionally, quick-fire training should be incorporated regularly as part of marksmanship training. Again, soldiers must be given an opportunity to develop their reaction time

when fighting at close range.

These proposed changes would not completely eliminate noncombatant or friendly casualties in city fighting, but the positive effect on the morale of both the local population and the friendly forces would be of great advantage to an assaulting force. After all, an alienated local population can greatly hamper the accomplishment of both tactical and strategic objectives. And it is well to remember that noncombatant casualties receive much greater attention today than they did before the age of television and satellite communications.

Although ammunition requirements for urban operations would still be much greater than those for operations on open terrain, the proposed changes would reduce the overall amount needed. Since city fighting requires so much in the way of resources, our doctrine needs to accommodate, to a certain degree, our antici-

pated logistical constraints.

With an increasing likelihood of our fighting on urban terrain in future conflicts, our MOUT doctrine deserves closer study. Reducing civilian casualties and our logistical requirements would certainly improve our ability to accomplish MOUT missions. Incorporating the outlined proposals into our doctrine would accomplish these goals and contribute to the Army's continuing improvement in *AirLand Battle* doctrine.



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# Live Fire Exercises

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Live fire exercises require a considerable amount of an Infantry company's time and other resources, but they do not guarantee a good return on the investment.

At their worst, live fire exercises are counterproductive and potentially dangerous. More closely akin to demonstrations, they are characterized by numerous controllers and carefully rehearsed soldiers following a rigid scenario. Such exercises teach soldiers the wrong lessons, destroy their confidence in themselves, and teach their leaders absolutely nothing.

At their best, however, live fire exercises can teach soldiers more in a couple of hours than they would learn from days of blank firing and the leaders more than they would learn on countless FTXs. A properly designed exercise will tax a company's SOPs and find training weaknesses

that otherwise would never come to light short of actual combat.

To conduct this kind of exercise instead of the worthless kind, a company commander must take several steps—securing resources, planning the exercise, organizing and preparing the range, appointing controllers, and then executing the entire exercise.

A live fire exercise begins with an ammunition forecast and a range request. The ammunition must include service rounds for all the weapons the exercising unit has. (The only exceptions are that 40mm target rounds are used instead of 40mm HEDP, and 35mm subcaliber rounds instead of LAWs; AR 385-63 mandates that live rounds from these weapons be fired into permanent impact areas.)

If the mission allows it, claymore mines, hand grenades, and demolitions

should be used. In a light infantry company, it is better to use Dragon rounds against simulated bunkers instead of against armored hulks. The use of the Dragon in such a role is very likely, and both Dragon gunners and riflemen must become accustomed to its launch signature and its explosive effect.

After securing the needed resources, the company commander begins his planning. The mission he chooses for the training will be a function of the resources available and the battalion commander's training guidance. Limited training land may also restrict the type of mission and the unit echelon that can be trained. For a platoon live-fire exercise, for example, the ideal area is an installation with a low troop density. (A good example is Fort Hunter Liggett, California, where a unit can choose the real estate it needs instead