

Commandant's Note

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URBAN OPERATIONS: TRAINING TO MEET THE CHALLENGE



This is a challenging and an exciting time for all of us at Fort Benning, and I look forward to serving as your Chief of Infantry as we train Soldiers and leaders to fight and win the global war on terrorism. The Maneuver Center of Excellence is becoming reality, and we look forward to once again training tankers and infantrymen side by side as General George Patton did here on the eve of World War II, where they were to face and overcome challenges they could hardly have imagined.

Today's urban operations (UO) include some of the greatest challenges that Soldiers can face. And urban combat, a sub-set of UO, can be the costliest of missions in terms of lives, materiel and other resources such as the sheer time it takes to dislodge a determined enemy from his lair. When we add the implications of urban stability and support operations and urban sustainment, we face a significantly more complex challenge. The lessons of Stalingrad, Aachen, Najaf, and Fallujah attest to the collateral damage that ensues from urban combat, but this does not mean that we must avoid going after an enemy who goes to ground in built-up areas. The urban fight, like the conditions of any battlefield, will continue to be won by capably trained, led, motivated, and supported Soldiers. In this Commandant's Note I want to give an example of an early urban operation in our own military history, discuss some of the objectives of our enemy in the global war on terrorism (GWOT), and highlight unique aspects of the urban fight and our present doctrinal initiatives aimed at revising Field Manual 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain*. The revisions will better align the manual with FM 3.06, *Urban Operations*, and we will announce its publication in *Infantry Magazine* and will publish an article on the new manual in our branch magazine as well.

The U.S. Army's first major urban combat took place during the Mexican War at the Battle of Monterrey, in September 1846. The city was defended by a numerically superior force of Mexican infantry and cavalry. General Zachary Taylor's 6,200 men took advantage of cover and maneuver to defeat a force of over 7,000 regulars, cavalry, and militia. Avoiding street movement and deploying infantrymen on rooftops to cover one another, they systematically cleared the city house by house. Soldiers used time-fused artillery shells thrown through windows and placed against walls as breaching charges. The capture of Monterrey was due in large part to the agile, adaptive leaders and men under Taylor's command. His team succeeded because they understood the enemy, his tactics, and his objectives, just as we strive to understand the objectives of the enemies we face in the GWOT.

One objective of today's enemy is dominance of information

operations. He seeks to inflict and publicize politically unacceptable losses on U.S. and Coalition forces. He also misrepresents his own collateral damage to persons and facilities as having been caused by us.

Another of our enemy's goals is to offset our technological advantage by acquiring more sophisticated weapons, munitions, and equipment or by evolving ways to degrade our own capabilities. He does this to compel Coalition forces to either realign priorities or commit assets to meet the new threat. Another of his tactics is to attempt to step up the operating tempo. We saw this tactic during the Communists' 1968 Tet offensive across South Vietnam. The intended result of such a surge in military activity is to force an opponent to divide his forces to meet new threats, to draw against reserves of combat power and materiel, or to destroy morale. Today's enemy is resourceful, innovative, and ruthless, but we are inside his decision cycle anticipating many of his moves, and are inflicting serious losses on him. Today we commit considerable resources to urban stability and civil support operations as we understand, shape, engage, consolidate, and transition within the urban operational framework. We recognize that understanding the complexity of the urban landscape, its terrain, its society, and the infrastructure which sustains it and the need to operate over extended time have replaced the use of massed forces.

At the United States Army Infantry School (USAIS), we expose Soldiers and their leaders to new information drawn from products of the Center for Army Lessons Learned, from the shared experience of students coming out of theater, from the latest USAIS doctrinal publications, and from guest speakers with broad subject matter expertise. We must ensure that Soldiers and leaders go to war with the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures, and that our doctrinal literature is state of the art as well.

The Army is currently testing a process to facilitate the creation and sharing of knowledge via a wiki environment. This which will allow near real time, real world feedback from real lessons learned. I invite you to review the Army TTP wiki sites at https://wiki.kc.us.army.mil/wiki/Portal:Army_Doctrine.

We recognize that urban operations are tough and comprise many aspects in addition to combat, but today we are successfully engaged in full-spectrum operations in the urban setting, and we must capture and share what we have learned. We need your input, and I encourage you to share your thoughts and experiences through *Infantry*. Follow me!