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## Abstract

History, why is it important. It has some practical value that is relevant generation after generation. Our understanding of urban warfare history is valuable to the United States military's current battlefield operations. The knowledge we seize about past "Combat in Cities" will give us a strategic advantage when projecting current and future missions. The tactics we employ must be compatible to our mission while engaged in an asymmetric environment. Commanders will play a critical role in developing tactical plans to counter the enemy on the battlefield. The implementation of an urbanization plan is more of a challenge today than any other time in modern history. The many challenges encountered during asymmetric warfare conducted on an urban battlefield require numerous changes in our institutional instruction and operational training requirements.

## Military Operations on Urbanize Terrain

To really understand how to fight in an urban area, one must know the make-up of the urban battle field. The fully understanding the complete make-up of urban warfare, I will tie it to two other components, offensive and defensive operations. We will discuss these two factors later. What must a commander consider when attacking or defending an area? What damages will result from their decision? Commander must utilize their best decision making skill when engaging an enemy in an urban area. The first decision is what constraints must be applied? The troops on the ground do not see the big picture and will always have doubt regarding their welfare. Soldiers are thinking about fighting and surviving. Second commander has to take into account the collateral damages that may result from their decision.

### *Characteristic of Urban Warfare*

Civilians on the battlefield can impede a commander's decisions. He must look out for the safety of civilians as well as their Soldiers. The loss of a non-combatant on the battlefield is the worst collateral damage for a commander. Damages sustained in battle can drain off resources and manpower from a unit. How do you handle a hostile population on the battlefield? The answer is with care. The problem for a commander is not to alienating the population and providing security for their Soldiers. The question is, who has the advantage and who has the disadvantage in an urban area? Factors such as cover, mobility and surveillance must be considered. On unknown territory, the defender has the advantage because they know the terrain.

The urban battlefield is different than open terrain. The advantage of the desert, tropical forest, or woodland is the terrain is recurring and doesn't change much. The urban battlefield presents different challenges. The combination of natural and man-made features expands the commander's study of the battlefield. These elements influence how a commander uses troops on

the battlefield. Avenues of approaches change drastically in an urban environment. Built-up areas are convergent and restrictive. Troops will have to use unconventional tactics, which MOUT training teaches. The ability to exploit cover and concealment will be valuable to troops. The urban battlefield is three dimensional, consisting of the streets, roof tops, and underground structures. These aspects of the battlefield must be considered by commanders. These dimensions require the commander to assume that the enemy is present everywhere.

The commander on the battlefield will be strictly tested when determining where to emplace weapons, establishing and maintaining communications, and more importantly, the isolation of troops. Weapons placement and target acquisition are inhibited by man-made features. This will affect the effectiveness of the weapon system. The target acquisition distance generally goes for 1200 meters in an open area to about 100 meters within built-up areas. These boundaries provoke close and volatile combat between conflicting forces. Communications will be greatly affected in built-up areas; signals may be inhibited by buildings.

Urban areas cause many small unit battles. This is due to the isolation and separation of Soldiers. They must rely more on initiative, expertise, and resilience. What come from this isolation are nonstop close combat, increased casualties, emotional strain, and substantial fatigue? The characteristics of urban warfare make it difficult to apply essential tactics and maintain control. The consolidated execution of military operations becomes decentralized during urban combat. This puts tension on individual Soldiers and small-unit leaders; the military will use MOUT training as a pillar for preparing offensive and defensive operations.

### *Offensive Operations*

The concept of fighting in an urban area has placed an emphasis on asymmetric warfare and how the US military will conduct offensive operation in this environment. The answer to this

question is complex in nature. The following quote is from Sun Tzu's book, *The Art of War*. It states, "If he (the enemy) is superior in strength, evade him. If their forces are united, separate them. Attack him where he is unprepared; appear where you are not expected (Giles, L. 2007)". The asymmetric warfare that the US military is currently engaged in has presented some unique challenges for troops. If you look at Sun Tzu quote, you will see that he understood knowing the characteristics of the battlefield is key to winning in battle. When US troops engage in offensive operations, the enemy will use their inferior tactics or operational strengths against Americans. These tactics are designed to weaken the American will to fight.

US troops negates these tactics employed by the enemy through offensive methods. We are training, using MOUT, to put troops in an aggressive posture. When offensives placements are conducted, the goal is to capitalize on strategic and tactical advantages to control or deny the enemy usage of the same advantages. The difficulties faced when planning offensive operations is how the enemy will defend against your aggressiveness.

Planning to attack should be considered a last resort for a commander. Offensive operations must be designed to meet the needs of the area engaged. A detailed analysis is needed prior to attacking a built-up area. Who makes the decision to attack is based on population. When populations are greater than 100,000 people the political and strategic consideration are made by political leaders. As the population decreases, so does the level of decision making.

The offensive battles in urban environments have six fundamental considerations. Visibility on the urban battlefield is reduced drastically. The Soldiers must contend with being limited to seeing only one block at a time. The effectiveness of high tech equipment is reduced because of visibility. Even aerial photos prove useless because of the inability to see within buildings. Overwhelming combat power becomes critical when mobility is restricted. The urban

area presents the same disadvantages for US troops and the enemy. Therefore, the commander must use the masses to gain an advantage.

Offensive operations are the most dangerous posture to assume in an urban area. This will force the attacker to use suppressive fire to deny the enemy an engagement advantage. The shock, overwhelm and destroy concept is vital to success when the momentum is on the offensive side. Commanders must avoid using deliberate attacks to break through a defensive line could be costly. When the momentum is gained, employ more fire power until the enemy is displaced (*GlobalSecurity* 2005).

When the enemy is in the defense, the offense has the advantage. The longer the battle persist, the need for logistics will emerge. The defenders need for combat service support (CSS) will leave an opening somewhere. This is when a rear attack may be appropriate for small unit operations. A key component of the offensive operations is the combat service support. The CSS elements help maintain the momentum gained through other operations. (*GlobalSecurity* 2005)

#### *Defensive Operations*

The other factor relevant to urban operations is defensive operations. Commanders must integrate man-made features into the planning scheme. Why must MOUT training address defensive operations? Commanders must be prepared to defend a built-up area. Structures are important to the units overall objectives. The control over avenues of approach is difficult but important. Although they are spread by buildings, avenues of approaches are important to every element on the battlefield. Commanders must add elements of the urban area into their plan as a combat multiplier. The ability to use a building as a battle position becomes an addition to mission planning. Denying the enemy key strategic and political sites provide the defender with a mental advantage.

The fundamental of defensive operations affects how units functions on the battlefield. Knowledge of the enemy will yield many advantages for the commander. Commanders must be able to visualize himself as the enemy. The ability to think like the enemy gives the commander the focus needed to establish a course of action. The defensive poster requires the commander to focus on where are the enemy located, their organization, direction traveled and what fighting power they possess.

The team concept helps a detail analysis of the battlefield become more productive. The combined arms element must match the terrain. Armor and mechanize infantry plays a critical role in open terrain. As the density of the terrain changes, their employment becomes increasingly important. How they are utilized with other elements in an urban environment is important in satisfying the combined arms concept during defensive operations. The defender must make the most of the battlefield. The defender can exercise the options available to him by the terrain. The ability to prep the battlefield, build-up and emplace obstacles, and select other positions gives the defender the advantage in urban combat.

### *Conclusion*

The US Military is currently engaged in an asymmetric war. This war has made the focus shift from a conventional to an educational mindset. The US military must be educated in the art of asymmetric warfare. This has led the military to focus more on military operations on urban terrain (MOUT). What we know about the urban battlefield will assist in our ability to conduct offensive and defensive operations. This new focus will serve will as a life saving for Soldiers conducting combat operations on the urban battlefield.

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