

COMMANDER'S HATCH

Armor and MOUT

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When one imagines armored operations in urban terrain, one may envision World War II Metz, the Cold War Berlin Brigade or, in a more recent time, Mogadishu. Should the modern mounted warrior be concerned with fighting in an urban environment? All evidence suggests a resounding yes!

For years, the generally held attitude has been to avoid urban areas. The Armor Force that grew up in the Cold War with a focus on the European theater disdained the very notion of urban combat. That may well have been the correct attitude for that era and that place. Now, as the world and threats change, built-up areas are something we can no longer avoid or outright ignore. Operations in Panama, Somalia, and the Balkans show us that, rather than being a liability, armor provides an overwhelming capability to any force. The presence of Abrams tanks and Bradleys has made potential enemies think twice about their actions. When called for, armored forces were able to provide the necessary firepower and shock effect to defeat whatever force they were up against. All indications are that we will continue to operate in urban environments well into the future.

With one eye to our own heritage and history, the Armor Center is examining anew the role of armor in operations in urban terrain. We need to apply the benefits of Force XXI technologies to a study of this history and, in coordination with the Infantry School, refresh the Armor Force on operations in urban terrain.

I consider this a critical effort on everyone's part. Within our branch, many have been to the places named above. Dealing with confined areas, rules of engagement, and the physical movement of our units caused us to pause and think. With stabil-

ity operations like Task Force Eagle expected to be the norm, I want to review how armored forces will participate in them and the added benefit their presence brings. I also want to address how the Armor Center envisions training for such missions.

The presence of tanks and IFVs is a physical and psychological deterrent to anyone. Our Army has proved the value of the Abrams and Bradley in high intensity operations; thanks to a pervasive and real-time media presence, the rest of the world knows it as well. Our presence in a troubled area instantly overmatches any threatening force. The psychological impact of our armored vehicles is a significant deterrent to any threat, no matter what capabilities it may have. The acquisition and detection capabilities associated with armored platforms are unique. The distances and clarity are incomparably greater than other ground-based, protected systems. Firepower, and the ability to put a round on a pinpoint from a great distance, is an armored hallmark. All of these things in combination provide any force with tremendous capabilities.

There are drawbacks. Weight, blind spots, and overall size naturally require an armored commander to think through an operation very carefully. He must gauge where and how he will traverse the built-up area. He must consider ambush and the ability to react. He must consider maneuverability in confined areas and the radius of a turning turret. These considerations are very similar to those for a defile drill that many of us have practiced in Korea and Europe. Lastly, employment is never an isolated action. It takes place in combination with dismounted soldiers to cover the blind spots and to provide close-in protection, just as the

armored platform provides distant protection.

There have been few places in our Army where leaders could train in urban terrain conditions. We are changing that at Fort Knox. The Mounted Urban Combat Training Site (MUCTS), near completion on the north side of post, will provide the Total Army armored force the means to practice techniques and procedures between heavy and light forces in a built-up area. It is built specifically to withstand the pounding, maneuvering, and weight of armored vehicles.

The MUCTS will have 21 buildings and enough road network to support a maneuver force. The site will have the necessary fiber-optic and other digital links to allow for world-class after-action reviews and ties to the virtual and constructive world. It is built with some of the best special effects available to the Army today. Effects include burning buildings, destroyed bridges, and enough pyrotechnics to make you feel the pressure of urban combat. There is sufficient height to the buildings and underground construction to make any force concerned about the enemy from all directions.

Training will feature a dedicated OPFOR and observer-controller package designed to give a visiting unit a true workout. Prior to the unit's arrival, extensive coordination will take place to ensure that the unit arrives ready to train. Training Support Packages are being developed for the typical missions a unit will perform. For the near term, units training on the MUCTS will go through a reception and onward movement phase and then break into crew and squad training and leader and staff training. Leaders and staffs will develop courses of action using the MUCTS mock-up while squads

and crews draw equipment and train their respective missions in urban terrain. Once the courses of action have been determined and the leader and staff training completed, the unit will come together and exercise at the platoon level, followed by CO/TM exercises. In the far term, when upgrades to the CCTT database are complete, we will give units the opportunity to work through courses of action in a virtual model of the MUCTS. Additionally, the goal is for the unit to conduct BN/TF operations in a virtual, constructive and live environment simultaneously. With the planned improvements, units can practice several different types of operations and execute specified missions in the live environment at the MUCTS. Further, as the Wilcox Multi-Purpose Digital Range Complex and

Small Arms Qualification Training Ranges are renovated, units can live fire before they deploy and train at the MUCTS. Our goal is to prepare, train and execute mounted missions in the urban environment. In order to battle-focus the units, we will provide the terrain a unit may be required to fight on in the constructive and virtual environments and, with the capability of the MUCTS, we will tailor the scenarios the units must master to be successful and win.

In the future, as the Fort Benning MOUT study is completed, we will revamp some of our doctrine to include the technological benefits projected in the next few years. Expect to see Combined Arms and Cavalry manuals include sections on traversing built-up areas and

tactics and procedures for negotiating urban terrain. Also expect to see a greater emphasis on the combined arms nature of future deployments; every branch has a piece of Urban Operations.

There is no doubt that armor and mechanized units today face challenges in conducting operations in built-up areas. We are working very closely with the Infantry Center and the rest of the Army to revitalize the institutional look at MOUT. We must prepare soldiers to operate in this environment. As a force, we must orient our thinking to include urban terrain as an operational area. As a branch, we must lose the mindset that "Tankers don't do MOUT."

Forge the Thunderbolt!