



U.S. Army Soldiers, from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct urban training in a live fire shoot house on Fort Carson, Colo., Oct., 27, 2016. The training builds confidence and keeps the Soldiers combat skill levels at a high state of readiness. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Franklin)

Urban Master Training School

By Master Sgt. Eric Linn

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Imagine you are an infantry platoon sergeant who just conducted a rotary wing insertion tasked to contain and clear a series of buildings on your battalion's objective. Your battalion spent the last two weeks practicing air assault (AASLT) procedures, and you, your team leaders and squad leaders are all AASLT or pathfinder qualified. Your unit is trained in helicopter insertion and infiltration and can successfully execute this mission. After successful insertion, you have the necessary Soldiers, weapons, and equipment to accomplish this mission and your team is at the assault position.

All that remains is to receive the call from your mounted element stating they are in position and ready to execute. There is every confidence in their abilities as they have qualified master gunners (MG), the unit has successfully completed all gunnery tables, and they can provide safe and effective supporting fires when nec-

essary. The execution order is given and Soldiers take action. Squads begin to flow and stack on doors, yet you do not have the same sense of confidence you have had up to this point.

You watch the first team stack. They look unorganized and unsure of themselves. Not trusting that everyone is set, the team leader readjusts the stack, losing security on the door. Once the team breaches, they are moving so fast they are tripping over the furniture in the rooms. You now see where the weak point is. Your squads have only been to the shoot house once and it did not replicate what your Soldiers are seeing now. Bigger than that, who does the unit have to facilitate this training? AASLT was too easy. You were able to rely on the institutional training that your leaders had received, same as the mounted element relied on the MGs in their formations.

What have we done to prepare Soldiers to fight and

win on the ground in the urban environment? The Army lacks an institutional school that can train *urban master trainers* across the force to provide the expertise and training to fight and win at the battalion level in the next conflict. As the world's populations move to more urbanized settings, so must our training.

Currently, the Army has no standardized venue that teaches the most dangerous task every combat arms Soldier will encounter on the battlefield: urban combat. By no means does this statement marginalize the skills needed to execute airborne or AASLT operations, but rather to highlight the need for the same emphasis on urban training. As a leader preparing for operations in



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army

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How We Prepare

Airborne, AASLT, long range reconnaissance, and armored gunnery are but a few of the types of institutional training the Army prioritizes as high risk/inherently dangerous. This attitude exists despite these tasks rarely being executed in combat. There have been 15 combat jumps since WWII, and only a handful of “tank on tank” battles such as the battle of the 73 Easting, which was the last major tank battle fought on February 26th, 1991 (Military History Now, 2016; Winston, 2016). In contrast, the force has cleared thousands of rooms with minimal institutional emphasis on the standardization of the small unit tasks in a school house environment.

an urban environment, more specifically small unit tactics (SUT) in an urban environment, there is a handful of doctrine that can be referenced: *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-06 Urban operations* and 3-21.8 *Infantry platoon and squad*, as well as *Training Circular (TC) 90-1 Training for urban operations*. None of these references depict the level of detail needed to train Soldiers up to a proficient level, let alone a mastery of these skills. Although *TC 90-1* does lay out a training path for a progressive model from individual training to collective training in environments such as a shoot house, there is very little else in regards to a standard that can be replicated in order to consistently produce trained Soldiers. What the training path in *TC 90-1* lacks is measurable metrics to evaluate proficiency. This has created a gap in knowledge and skills desperately needed by small unit leaders in order to evaluate these tasks (Department of the Army, 2008b). For example, the Army has U.S. Army Ranger School and the master gunner courses that teach and provide military leaders an advanced understanding in each of these perspective tasks. An urban training course that follows a similar structure to master gunner courses or to U.S. Army Ranger School would provide the ability to bridge the knowledge gap for urban operations (Department of the Army, 2017a). In addition, an urban master training course would provide advanced qualifications as well as senior trainers to advise in unit training and certification.

The development of an urban training course would provide two major advantages to minimize risk to

force. First, commanders would have principal advisors versed in urban combat training and techniques that are transferable, standardizing urban combat training across the Army, similar to how U.S. Army Ranger School has provided guidance to Army-wide patrolling tactics.

Secondly, small unit leaders would have the institutional training to prepare them to effectively develop training and supervise its implementation and execution during combat operations akin to the training and evaluation standards used for airborne, AASLT, and MG operations.

How We Train

Unit training is a key component to success. Training cannot be successful without an institutional baseline to work from as well as an operational staff position to serve as the chief advisor to the commander. Even with the Army's prescribed training path, the standards are simple and do not challenge the Soldiers to the extent needed. To meet the Army standard to conduct live fire training in a shoot house, the Soldier has to engage an 8 in. by 18 in. target from 7-25m, placing 16 out of 20 rounds in the daytime, and 14 out of 20 at night, within the lethal zone (Department of the Army, 2008a). This is the only marksmanship qualification that a Soldier must pass to be deemed safe to conduct live fire in a shoot house and it's not stringent enough.

This is just one aspect of operations in an urban environment, but even the standard to qualify does not meet the level of proficiency truly needed. Marksmanship should be a continuous standard that must be addressed throughout the training path for close quarters combat (CQC). Though the engagements are short distance, they happen in the blink of an eye and the wrong choice or hesitation can lead to the death of a teammate or a non-combatant. Life and death in an urban environment is decided in fractions of seconds that only tough realistic training standards can replicate. The Army's current training requirements do not address the level of complexity that Soldiers will encounter on the battlefield. They do not truly reflect the sheer chaos that is SUT in an urban environment, from the clutter of furniture inside the room to the non-combatants that will inevitably be scattered throughout the cities and villages in which these operations will take place.

The Army's current approach does not address the mastery of the basics in an urban environment for training or within the professional development model. The current Army training model for CQC and urban operations does little more than ensure that Soldiers do not

commit fratricide while conducting live fire in a shoot house. The simple reflexive fire tables and scenarios within the shoot house lack realism, with no requirement for obstacles such as furniture or a continued qualification standard for marksmanship. The current entry-level programs of instruction do not address the training needed to succeed in a large scale urban environment, nor do any of the subsequent leader development plans. The Army's current NCO developmental path promotes milestone schoolings like the Basic Leader Course (BLC), Advanced Leader Course (ALC), Senior Leader Course (SLC) and the Sergeants Major Course (SMC) (Department of the Army, 2017c). Additionally, the Army recommends specialized schooling such as U.S. Army Ranger School, master gunner courses, Rappel Master Course, etc. (Department of the Army, 2017b). What is not addressed is the level of expertise that is needed to succeed across the current or future battlefield in urban combat.



11th Armored Cavalry Regiment Troopers defended the city of Razish, National Training Center, from assaulting elements of the Tennessee National Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, May 11, 2018. This phase of combat training challenged the Tennessee National Guard's ability to capture and retain an urban objective against a near-peer opponent. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Angel Heraldez)

Conclusion

The Army has grown in experience through the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), but has also provided a false sense of capabilities within our formations. We have convinced ourselves that the GWOT has helped enhance our capabilities within the urban environment. As the Army fought throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, we cleared countless city blocks, but not to the level that we will see in future conflicts involving dense urban terrain and subterranean operations. In a conflict where the Army fought through cities and villages on a daily basis, it was against an insurgency that leveraged its ability to be small and agile to fight then disappear within the local

populace. It was not against near-peer or professionally prepared armies with organized platoons, companies, and battalions that we will see in future conflicts. The next conflict is going to pose many different issues to the Army at large. At the root of all of this will be the unit on

the ground's ability to fight and win from house to house and room to room against a prepared military. The Army needs an institutional school that can train small unit *urban master trainers* across the force to provide the expertise and training to fight and win in an urban setting.

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