



U.S. Army Soldiers with the U.S. Army Aviation Battalion-Japan conduct tactical flight operations in UH-60 Black Hawk Helicopters during a joint training exercise with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force at Camp Zama, Japan Jan. 9, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Raquel Birk)

Mission Command in Megacities

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In order to prepare for the future of international conflict, the U.S. must adapt its training and tactics. In 2014, the United Nations (U.N.) declared that more than half of the world's population now lives in megacities—defined by the U.N. as a city with over 10 million inhabitants—and that 60% will live in them by 2030 (Young, 2019). Conflicts in tomorrow's operational environments (OEs) require rapid small unit mobilization and decentralized command and may not be able to support Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) without excessive destruction and civil disruption. With the world population growing and migrating towards cities for employment and support, it's easy to imagine most future conflicts occurring within megacities (United Nations, 2020). In preparation for the future global environment, the U.S. Army must focus on *mission command*, *noncommissioned officer (NCO) education*, *joint operations*, and *embrace technology*.

Globalization

Globalization involves the integration of state governments through joint operations, economic partnerships, and communications. Throughout history, technological advancements have led to an increased amount of state interaction. Transnational corporations, international institutions, and regional cooperation have transcended national boundaries creating highly interdependent economic systems. Consequently, events in one part of the world significantly impact societies across the globe (Baylis et al., 2017).

Historically, conventional Army tactics alienate populations and disrupt economic activity. David Kilcullen, a former counterterrorism expert for the U.S. State Department, (2013) states, "threats in future cities will be without enemies and includes helping governments in law enforcement, border security, and coast guard efforts to prevail against the competitive control environment" (p. 263). Training the U.S. military to aid governments will require



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School participate in basic urban combat training during the tactical skills portion of the Special Forces Qualification Course at Camp Mackall, North Carolina April 28, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens)

the dispersion of forces throughout areas of concern, rather than in consolidated mass movements. Operations at the lowest-echelons will require mission command principles to combat new forms of conflict in dense urban environments. Also, stability tasks will be a focus so that OEs do not remain vulnerable (Department of the Army, 2014).

Megacity Obstacles

Overpopulation

A city's inability to support its population causes "toxic effects such as exclusion, disease, unemployment, social injustice, and ethnic dislocation" (Kilcullen, 2013, p. 45). Because of these issues, and the depletion of resources, tensions run high, rivalries develop, and the possibility of small conflicts, civil wars, and terrorism is much higher ("Causes and Consequences," n.d.; Thayer, 2009). These problems usually result in the affected population relocating to the periphery of the megacity, often referred to as "slums," where safety and security are difficult to maintain.

Slums

Merriam-Webster Online defines a slum as "a densely populated usually urban area marked by crowding, run-down housing, poverty, and social disorganization" ("Slum," n.d., para. 1). Slums in megacities present several challenges to governing entities. First, they do not possess the resources required to provide essential services to everyone within its boundaries. Second, they create an unmonitored haven for terrorist organizations, criminal networks, and human traffickers (Kilcullen, 2013).

The Pakistani attacks on Mumbai in 2008 highlighted the difficulties in effectively policing overpopulated cities and the rise of international terrorist attacks. During

this conflict, 10 armed militants attacked the port city of Mumbai with advanced weapons in five locations (Azad & Gupta, 2011). The militants took advantage of the overpopulated city by entering through its busy ports. Utilizing their training from Pakistani intelligence services, the radicals employed Google Earth and commercial GPS devices to elude Mumbai police for over 60 hours. Using the overcrowded city and under-monitored slums, the attackers killed 172 people and wounded 304 others (Kilcullen, 2013). To reduce the vulnerabilities of overpopulation and unpoliced slums, a joint effort is required from several nations and/or units to fulfill the necessary manpower and resources.

Solutions

Mission Command

Preparing the military for conflict below the threshold of all-out war includes training leaders to partner themselves with allied nations to combat violence in megacities. Future conflict may not involve mobilizing an entire division in a consolidated fight against a near-peer threat, but instead, involve strategic choices made at lower echelons with the commander's intent at the forefront of every decision. It will involve a trust in the mission command philosophy in order to execute the mission quickly and safely and prevent any escalation throughout the region.

The Department of the Army (2019) defines mission command as "command and control that empowers subordinate decision-making and decentralized execution appropriate to the situation" (p. 1-3). Fostering an environment of mission command starts with disseminating the mission's purpose. It is imperative leaders understand the commander's intent and end-state before initiating the mission. Unit-level leaders who understand the strategic goals are better able to make important decisions independently; allowing senior leadership to focus on big picture issues.



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 91st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team observe the newly redeveloped Military Operations in Urban Terrain site, Caltrop Mega City at Fort Hood, Texas, Aug. 9, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Hammond)

NCO Education

Dr. Russell Glenn, an intelligence and security planner with Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), emphasizes the need to understand military and civilian relationships to operate in megacities because every act reverberates throughout the community and extends worldwide (Lacadan, 2018). A solution to expanding NCOs' comprehension of past and present OEs would be to integrate more history coursework throughout every level of the NCO education system. Studying conflicts and battles of the past prepares NCOs for the future. There is much to be learned from the battles of World War II (large scale tactics), Vietnam (smaller scale tactics), and the War on Terrorism (small scale tactics). By learning from the successes and failures of the past, Soldiers will be better prepared to execute a decentralized command in any OE.

Joint Operations

Operating in a joint urban environment requires expanding training opportunities with local governments in regions of concern. Joint training teaches company-level leaders and below how to operate independently of command nodes and reinforces development of tactical operations center techniques. A culture of mission command and development of junior leadership means being comfortable with mobilizing lower echelons outside the continental U.S. to aid partner countries.

Training with foreign partners not only provides human resources to over-extended governments, but also gives training opportunities to junior Soldiers. A recent three-month joint engineering and medical exercise in Panama provided care for 7,200 patients and 315 eye and ear surgeries (Pawlyk, 2019). Other possibilities include U.S. military police integrating with local governments abroad to familiarize themselves with regional laws and customs, logisticians participating in port functions abroad to reinforce understanding of local networks, and engineers conducting infrastructure projects to increase operational

education and on-the-job training. The more joint training opportunities a Soldier can experience, the more they'll master their craft and be able to perform in any location under any conditions.

Technology

Embracing technology to train and facilitate military operations benefits echelons across the U.S. Army. Governments no longer hold a monopoly on access and use of technology. Engineering revolutions in the use of drones, robots, and synthetic training presents the military with new considerations in the organization and preparation of units. Staying relevant depends on modernizing military capabilities and diffusing technology to the lowest possible level.

Technology affords the ability to provide almost instant feedback to commanders. This gives greater autonomy to smaller units as they can track their own routes and enemy movements utilizing drones and robots (Frangoul, 2019). Technology remains an important factor in increasing the amount of flexibility while operating in the dense urban environment of a megacity. It will decrease population disruption, allow

speed of information and intelligence gathering, and even reduce battlefield casualties as technology replaces dangerous functions for which physical human presence is no longer necessary such as battlefield reconnaissance or convoy operations (McKay et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Achieving objectives in the complex environments of megacities depends on empowering leaders to operate independently of higher commands. Modern globalization presents new challenges to the future of military operations and increased risk of conflict below the threshold of war. Training units to operate independently and outside their cultural norms requires an emphasis on mission command, NCO education, joint operations, and technology. This will prepare today's Soldier for tomorrow's OE. ■



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 709th Military Police Battalion an 173rd Airborne Brigade speak with role-playing civilians as part of Exercise Saber Junction 20 in at Joint Multinational Readiness Center Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, Aug. 13, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. John Yountz)

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