

MILITARY CONTINGENCIES IN MEGACITIES AND SUB-MEGACITIES

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Urbanization is one of the most important megatrends of the 21st century. Consequently, the possibility of U.S. military involvement in a megacity or sub-megacity is an eventuality that cannot be ignored. After elucidating the nature of urbanization and developing a typology in terms of smart, fragile, and feral cities, we give consideration to the kinds of contingencies that the U.S. military, especially the Army, needs to think about and prepare for.

Six kinds of contingencies have since been identified: humanitarian disaster relief; military support for civilian authorities in a restoration of order; intervention—for whatever reason—in a strategic city (also termed a critical or alpha city); military involvement in a city in the context of counter-insurgency; use of military force in a city in an interstate conflict; and containment or quarantine of an urban pandemic. It is also argued that the appropriate focus—whether it should be on megacities or smaller but possibly more important cities—best can be dealt with by a focus on both. If the U.S. Army has the capacity to intervene militarily in a megacity, then it is likely it could do the same in a smaller city. Consequently, the authors of this monograph will focus on megacities and sub-megacities.

Whatever the contingency, understanding the city as a complex system or organism is critical and provides the basis for changes in intelligence, recruitment, training, equipment, operations, and tactics. In this monograph, we place emphasis on intelligence preparation for the battlefield in terms of 10 interconnected layers: the subterranean dimension, topography, cityscape, service infrastructure, inhabitants, networks, flows, governance, rhythms, and the cyber dimension. We follow this by a discussion of what

needs to be done to prepare for operations in megacities with the “concrete canyons” of modern business areas and the “sheet metal forests” found in massive slum areas. We consider equipment, personnel recruitment and training; the lessons that can be derived from past military experience as well as more recent law enforcement practices; and the need to work with (instead of against) the flows and rhythms of the city. Without such an approach, the results of military involvement in such a formidable environment would likely be disastrous; with it, the prospects for success would at least be enhanced.

The recommendations include the following:

- Megacities should become a distinct focus of analysis for intelligence. Cities have to be understood as a layered and interacting series of complex adaptive systems, outlined with a more refined intelligence of and for the battlefield. Operating in these cities requires an understanding of these systems and an ability to harness, rather than disrupt, their dynamics.
- The development of a repository of knowledge and understanding of cities is critical, and the U.S. Army should create both an Urban Analysis Center and a supporting network that provides a surge capability for crisis interventions.
- Greater interagency cooperation, which transcends military services and incorporates civilian departments and agencies (such as the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other Federal law enforcement agencies), is essential.
- U.S. forces will have to interact effectively with both the formal and informal mechanisms of governance within megacities and sub-megacities.

This may involve cooperating with non-traditional stakeholders, such as criminal elements or other alternative governance actors.

- Conducting operations in megacities, as well as other urban areas, will require highly trained, quality personnel. The armed services will have to increase incentives to draw talented individuals to serve. It will also be necessary to incorporate recruits and affiliates with broader skill sets, especially those required for urban management and urban law enforcement. These initiatives should be complemented by in-house training for professional soldiers to prepare them more effectively for the demands of operating in these complex urban environments.
- Governments should recognize that there are synergies—and important economies of scale—between the skill sets required for operating in dense urban areas and those appropriate for stabilization operations.
- Finally, this monograph proposes two broad checklist-based acronyms, **URBAN** and **SMART**, that encapsulate many of the arguments and themes articulated in the preceding analysis. To fight effectively in a dense urban environment, the U.S. Army will have to meet the following requirements and approaches:
 - Understanding the megacity battlefield;
 - Responding appropriately to the stringent demands of the urban battlefield;
 - Battle management that is accommodating to the city's rhythms, flows, and networks;
 - Alliances that go beyond government agencies and their usual partners; and,
 - Novel approaches that are essential to creating the smart urban soldier.

Moreover, within this urban approach, the smart soldier would exhibit the following qualities:

- Sophisticated understanding of the urban battlefield;

- Multimedia and social media awareness;
- Ability to act as intelligence collectors and receivers;
- Rapid responses both within the command system and in decentralized operation; and,
- Technological knowledge and expertise.

Ultimately, fighting smart in an urban environment is the only feasible approach. This monograph offers some preliminary considerations of what this might mean, but raises more questions than it answers. It is no more than an early—but hopefully useful—contribution to a debate that needs to be both broadened and refined. Only after such a debate will the United States be ready for future contingencies that are likely to be as challenging as they are inescapable.

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