

The manipulation of information is becoming more central to urban operations because of recent technological, political, and social developments. For example, the media is more capable of transmitting battlefield video footage to civilian populations. War is now waged on humanitarian grounds. The U.S. public expects new precision weapons to inflict fewer casualties on civilians. Because of developments such as these, the support of the civilian populations involved in the conflict is even more critical. Noncombatants can conceal the enemy, provide intelligence, and be killed in front of a camera; in effect, they seriously complicate both the tactical and strategic environments. Increasingly, the enemy's will to fight can be influenced by civil affairs, public affairs, PSYOP, management of the media, balanced ROE, and information operations in general.

Recent lessons from Panama, Somalia, and Chechnya provide a snapshot of how these information-related factors work:

- The presence of noncombatants significantly affected tactics, planning, ROE, and political-military strategy. Noncombatants were present in greater numbers, they played an active role in the fighting, they made ROE more restrictive, and they attracted the media.
- Balancing ROE proved to be difficult, especially in the high-intensity case. Constructing and managing flexible ROE so that they were neither restrictive nor permissive was critical. When improper ROE resulted in excessive civilian deaths and collateral damage, other MOUT elements such as the media and enemy IO could exploit the damage for their own interests. ROE also af-

fects tactics and prevented the use of armor, artillery, and airpower on occasion. As a result, MOUT tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) sometimes conformed more to a political logic than to a military logic (at least before excessive casualties begin to occur).

- All belligerents found the media a useful information tool for PSYOP, IO in general, civil affairs, and public affairs.
- PSYOP and civil affairs operations proved indispensable in influencing the will of the civilian populations involved. PSYOP were used to increase the number of noncombatants. PSYOP were conducted by combining daring military raids with media exposure.
- The failure of political leadership to communicate the national interests at stake in Somalia and Chechnya lowered the public's threshold for casualties. It was important to have clear objectives before using military force, to avoid mission creep, and have a clear exit strategy. The lack of political leadership also had a corrosive effect on morale in the Chechnya case.

At the same time, the more “traditional” elements of MOUT—airpower, combined arms, situational awareness, and technology—remain crucial to the outcome of urban battle. In most cases, defeating the will of the enemy is still best accomplished by killing the enemy. In the last decade, tanks, artillery, and infantry performed this basic role quite well (albeit under more restrictive political constraints), as they have done since World War II. Traditional factors did not, however, change in any fundamental way in the three urban operations looked at here.

Significant technological improvements in urban operations may be possible in the future. If improvements can be made in the areas of precision fire and C3I, then the use of military force in urban operations can evolve into a much more flexible option (even in the face of severe political constraints). For example, the discriminate application of force in urban operations could be improved with systems capable of selectively engaging individuals in a crowd. As some au-

thors note, there are ways to make urban operations more “precise.”¹ Nonlethal tactics and technology offer some promise for handling noncombatants.² On the C3I side, a better man-portable wireless radio might enable dismounted infantry to establish situational awareness between, and possibly inside, buildings.³ Air-to-ground joint communications could be better integrated.

Yet new weapons, equipment, and tactical adjustments are only part of the solution. What is needed, as this case analysis has hopefully shown, is a more comprehensive approach that recognizes the increasing significance of informational elements—the media, ROE, noncombatants, PSYOP, PA, and CA. More important, linkages between these factors—the political-military campaign plan—must target the will of the people. In this age of restricted warfare, the effort to subdue the will of the enemy requires a systems approach that combines information-related activities with the application of military force.

For example, an aggressive information campaign by the White House could help shape public (and congressional) opinion about what constitutes a vital interest and what does not. Resources could be directed toward perception management as well as precision weapons. Aggressive intelligence efforts to dig out proof of criminal or hostile actions by the enemy could help demonize them in the eye of the public. Public affairs activities could help raise the ceiling on how many casualties a public is willing to tolerate. Information operations targeted at the indigenous population in the theater can

¹See Major Charles Preysler, *Going Downtown: The Need for Precision MOUT*, Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1994, p. 38.

²For example, Rangers used harmless flash-bang grenades to disperse noncombatants from combatants so they could avoid killing unarmed people.

³One goal of DARPA’s Small Unit Operations program is to develop a mobile wireless communication system for widely dispersed tactical units. This equipment will be capable of supporting a tactical internet based on dismounted soldier and mounted vehicle nodes without having to rely on a fixed ground infrastructure, essentially a “communication on the move” capability. The most promising type of system would be a mobile mesh network of communication nodes that are able to buffer, store, and route packets of information. The main component would be the software radio—a packet switching, non-line-of-sight radio that uses software applications to perform some of the major communications functions that analog components do in current radios.

help win support and improve HUMINT. Nonlethal weapons, appropriate ROE, and PSYOP could help control noncombatants at the tactical level. All of these actions would complement the use of American military force and influence an enemy's will to fight.

Detailed recommendations for IO cells operating on future battlefields are outside the scope of this monograph. The intention here is to simply highlight the changing relevance of information-related activities in urban operations.

In future conflicts, it should be anticipated that some U.S. adversaries will recognize the growing importance of these information elements and leverage them as part of an asymmetric response to American firepower. War has always been waged in both the physical and the informational realm, but the political, technological, and social changes under way today make it imperative that we pay more attention to the latter.