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ARROYO CENTER

The 2008 Battle of Sadr City

Reimagining Urban Combat

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Prepared for the United States Army

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Summary

Background

In late March 2008 a key battle took place in Sadr City, a Shia area of Baghdad with an estimated 2.4 million residents. This battle solidified the authority of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and enabled him to extend government control to the whole of Baghdad. Thus, the battle helped create conditions in which U.S. forces could realize important contemporary operational objectives in Iraq. The U.S. and Iraqi security forces that fought the battle had as their objective the stopping of enemy activity, rather than clearing insurgents from Sadr City. Their methods and success provide lessons for how U.S. forces might reimagine the conduct of urban operations, particularly in large cities that will likely be a key challenge in the future.

This monograph adds to a small but growing body of literature on the Battle of Sadr City. The action did attract some journalistic attention, mostly because of the extensive use of unmanned drones and other high-technology assets. Indeed, *60 Minutes* aired a segment on the battle. Within U.S. military circles, such debate as has occurred has centered on the relative value of lethal force and reconstruction in counterinsurgency. In spite of the battle's importance, relatively little has been written about it.

RAND Arroyo Center's study was designed to provide a more complete description of the battle (based on primary-source material), to analyze its outcome, and to derive implications for the U.S. Army's future conduct of land operations. This monograph describes our findings.

Methodology

The Arroyo team used after-action reports, briefings, and other primary sources and secondary sources to research this monograph. Our most valuable sources, however, were interviews conducted between August 2009 and April 2011 with a broad range of participants from the units involved in the following phases: the pre-battle surge in the vicinity of Sadr City; the Battle of Sadr City; and the post-battle stabilization and

reconstruction efforts. These participants ranged from lieutenants to the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division. Our interviews were mostly with U.S. Army officers but also included a U.S. Air Force officer, a former Iraqi intelligence official, and U.S. government officials. These interviews provided critical information about not only what happened, but also *why* it happened.

Our understanding of the Sadrist militia comes from contemporary analyses by the International Crisis Group and other, similar organizations; from journalistic accounts; and from internal U.S. Army assessments. That said, this monograph largely reflects the perceptions of U.S. combatants and is naturally colored by their conscious and unconscious biases. To the extent that the research team could verify these accounts using other sources, we did so. Nonetheless, there is little in the way of objective data available on the battle and its aftermath. Within the time frame of this study, we could find little from the adversary's perspective.

Additionally, we consciously decided, in conjunction with our sponsor, to write this monograph at an unclassified level to enable its broad distribution. Unless otherwise noted, the information contained herein is derived from our interviews. Finally, note that some portions of this monograph draw heavily on an earlier paper on the topic published by the authors in 2011.[1]

Setting Conditions

The 2008 Battle of Sadr City took place nearly 15 months after the beginning of the U.S. "surge" in Iraq. President George W. Bush stated the mission of U.S. forces when he announced the surge in a January 10, 2007, speech: "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs."[2] The "Baghdad Security Plan" was a key element of the surge. Its purpose was announced by Major General Joseph Fil, Jr., commander of the Multi-National Division–Baghdad (MND-B), on February 16, 2007:

> This new plan involves three basic parts: clear, control and retain. The first objective within each of the security districts in the Iraqi capital is to clear out extremist elements neighborhood by neighborhood in an effort to protect the population. And after an area is cleared, we're moving to what we call the control operation. Together with our Iraqi counterparts, we'll maintain a full-time presence on the streets, and we'll do this by building and maintaining joint

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[1] That work is David E. Johnson, M. Wade Markel, and Brian Shannon, *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-335-A, 2011.

[2] President George W. Bush, quoted in Kimberly Kagan, "Enforcing the Law: The Baghdad Security Plan Begins," *The Weekly Standard,* February 10, 2007–March 5, 2007, p. 2.

> security stations throughout the city. This effort to reestablish the joint security stations is well under way. The number of stations in each district will be determined by the commanders on the ground who control that area. An area moves into the retain phase when the Iraqi security forces are fully responsible for the day-to-day security mission. At this point, coalition forces begin to move out of the neighborhood and into locations where they can respond to requests for assistance as needed. During these three phrases, efforts will be ongoing to stimulate local economies by creating employment opportunities, initiating reconstruction projects and improving the infrastructure. These efforts will be spearheaded by neighborhood advisory councils, district advisory councils and the government of Iraq.[3]

By March 2008, implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan had achieved several results that set conditions for the battle in Sadr City. First, al-Qaeda in Iraq had been badly hurt, and its ability to create mass-casualty events significantly reduced. This allowed coalition forces to turn their attention to other destabilizing elements, such as the movement led by and identified with Moqtada al-Sadr. Second, the plan had significantly strengthened the position of the government led by Prime Minister al-Maliki, enabling it to survive a rupture with the Sadrists. Indeed, al-Maliki was moving to confront the Sadrist militias in Basra, and preparations were well under way by March 2008. Third, coalition forces had largely contained the Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM), the Sadrists' armed militia, to Sadr City, a circumstance that would severely constrain JAM's capabilities in the coming battle.

Moving U.S. troops from their forward operating bases into smaller outposts throughout Baghdad was fundamental to the execution of the Baghdad Security Plan. Key components of the unfolding operations included:

- Directly confront insurgent elements in Baghdad, thereby leading to better local security, cooperation, and human intelligence.
- Use concrete barriers and checkpoints to
  - Limit the ability of insurgents to create mass-casualty events with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), particularly large, vehicle-borne IEDs.
  - Disrupt the enemy's ability to move freely and resupply its forces.
- Integrate special operations forces (SOF), conventional forces, and all means of intelligence to locate and kill or capture insurgent leaders.
- Improve the capability and capacity of Iraqi security forces, including the Iraqi Army and police.[4]

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[3] Major General Joseph Fil, Jr., quoted in Kagan, "Enforcing the Law," p. 3.

[4] Brigadier General Billy Don Farris II, interview with David E. Johnson, M. Wade Markel, and Brian Shannon, the Pentagon, March 18, 2010, and Billy Don Farris II, "Warfighter Observations During the Surge: 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, 'Task Force Falcon,'" briefing, c. 2008.

There was, however, one notable exception to the trend of decreasing levels of violence in Baghdad: Sadr City. The U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division, which by then was serving as MND-B and commanded by Major General Jeffery Hammond, had begun to isolate Sadr City to some degree. Within Sadr City's boundaries, however, the militantly anti-American JAM firmly controlled the population. Although SOF and conventional force raids against JAM leadership had resulted in the capture, death, or flight out of Iraq of much of the senior JAM leadership, the raids had also caused significant tension between the government of Iraq and JAM. Importantly, U.S. activity in Sadr City had largely ceased in October 2007 in the aftermath of an air strike that killed a number of Iraqi civilians. Prime Minister al-Maliki placed Sadr City off limits to U.S. ground operations. JAM's firm control of the population had already severely limited U.S. awareness of what was going on inside Sadr City. After October 2007, U.S. forces were largely blind when it came to the JAM stronghold.

It seems likely that the al-Maliki government's offensive against militias in Basra, especially JAM, precipitated JAM's own offensive in Baghdad. The al-Maliki government had been making obvious preparations for the Basra offensive since January 2008. Few U.S. officers seemed to believe that Prime Minister al-Maliki was serious about the attack, much less that it would begin as soon as March 25.

On March 23, 2008, a barrage of rockets fired from Sadr City began hitting targets in Baghdad, including the International Zone (aka the Green Zone), which houses Iraqi government offices and foreign embassies. The March 23 rocket fire appears to have been JAM's initial response to the movement of Iraqi forces into Basra. Between March 23 and March 25, JAM began to overrun Iraqi checkpoints in and around Sadr City. Other checkpoints were simply occupied by JAM fighters in collusion with their nominal adversaries in the Iraqi police.

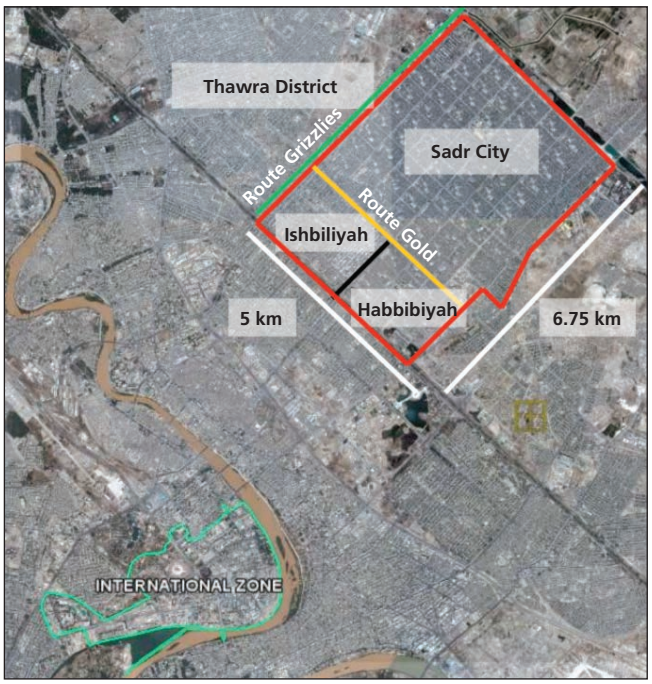
The scale of JAM's Sadr City offensive emerged slowly. JAM had fired rockets before. Indeed, it had launched several just a few days earlier, on March 21–22, 2008, according to a company commander in 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (1-2 SCR). Taking checkpoints and otherwise intimidating government forces was something JAM forces did more or less continuously. The March offensive's extent became apparent only over several days.

By March 25, however, it had become unmistakably clear that a major battle was now under way. That day, the government of Iraq launched its offensive in Basra. Al-Sadr therefore publicly ended a self-imposed cease-fire that had been in place since August 2007, and JAM forces throughout Baghdad attacked coalition and government targets with rocket and mortar fire. By the day's end, JAM had overrun about half of the Iraqi security force's checkpoints in and around Sadr City. It also stepped up rocket and mortar attacks against the International Zone. In response, Prime Minister al-Maliki directed coalition forces to stop the rocket attacks and defeat the criminal militias in Sadr City. The Battle of Sadr City was on.

The Area of Operations

The Battle of Sadr City was centered on the Baghdad district of Thawra, which contains the neighborhoods of Sadr City, Ishbiliyah, and Habbibiyah, shown in Figure S.1. The overall Sadr City area spans approximately 35 km^2, roughly half the size of Manhattan (59 km^2). At the time of the battle, Sadr City had, by U.S. military estimates, approximately 2.4 million residents. Figure S.1 also shows the location of the International Zone. From the Ishbiliyah and Habbibiyah neighborhoods below Route Gold (Al-Quds Street),[5] JAM forces were firing 107mm rockets and mortars into the International Zone. The Ishbiliyah neighborhood also contained the Jamiliyah Market, Baghdad's largest market east of the Tigris River. Protection money from merchants in this market supplied JAM with much of its resources. Coalition forces also had to combat and contain the Sadrist uprising in the adjacent areas east and north of Sadr City.

Figure S.1
The Baghdad International Zone and Sadr City



SOURCE: Provided to the authors by 1-2 SCR.
RAND *RR160-S.1*

[5] Throughout the text we refer to the same terrain feature, Al-Quds Street, both by its Iraqi name and by the name it took on U.S. graphic control measures: Route Gold.

Importantly, the International Zone was at the maximum range of the 107mm rockets and mortars that JAM was firing from its positions below Route Gold. Taking these firing points and pushing JAM above Route Gold would therefore significantly limit JAM's ability to conduct effective indirect-fire attacks against the International Zone.

Mission: Stop the Rockets and Defeat Criminal Militias in Sadr City

As noted earlier, on March 25, Prime Minister al-Maliki directed the Iraqi Army and coalition forces to stop the rocket attacks and defeat the criminal militias in Sadr City. The task fell to Colonel John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division (3-4 BCT), within whose area of operations Sadr City fell.

General Hammond focused on going after JAM leaders and keeping a lid on the rest of Baghdad. Within Sadr City, operations unfolded in four phases as MND-B responded to developments. During the first phase, U.S. forces seized control of rocket points of origin south of Route Gold while Iraqi forces attempted to secure the Ishbiliyah and Habbibiyah neighborhoods. Next, when it became clear that maneuver forces alone could not control JAM's infiltration without a barrier, U.S. forces isolated Ishbiliyah and Habbibiyah from the rest of Sadr City by building a 12-foot-tall wall along Route Gold. JAM more or less exhausted itself contesting the wall's construction. During these first two phases, 3-4 BCT and MND-B employed aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and strike assets to neutralize JAM's remaining rocket capability. In the third phase, MND-B exploited the success of its security operations by orchestrating an intensive reconstruction effort. In the final phase, Iraqi security forces, hardened by their earlier fight, occupied the remainder of Sadr City.

The Ground Fight in Sadr City: Armor Matters

The fight in Sadr City involved two phases: Operation Striker Denial (March 26–April 14) and Operation Gold Wall (April 15–May 15). In the first phase, 1-2 SCR attacked and seized JAM rocket-firing positions in Ishbiliyah and Habbibiyah while Task Force, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment (TF 1-68 CAB) quelled the Sadrist uprising in areas west and north of Sadr City proper.

When Operation Striker Denial began, U.S. forces immediately encountered JAM forces in prepared positions who were ready and willing to fight. According to U.S. commanders, however, these JAM forces were not able to fight particularly well. Nevertheless, resistance proved tougher than expected. Within a week, the 1-2 SCR lost six of its Stryker vehicles to IEDs and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). Colonel Hort decided to reinforce the fight with armor (M1 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley

Fighting Vehicles) and General Hammond surged five additional companies to the 3-4 BCT.

Armor proved important in the fight, providing firepower and an ability to withstand hits from IEDs and RPGs. Iraqi security forces joined the fight on April 5 and by April 6 had fought their way to positions near Route Gold. In that fight, conducted more or less independently from U.S. forces, the Iraqi security forces held their positions against incessant JAM attacks. They gained confidence that proved critical in subsequent phases of the battle.

Unfortunately, occupying key terrain below Route Gold did not confer control of those areas to U.S. and Iraqi forces. Unimpeded movement north of Route Gold allowed JAM to assemble and to attack U.S. and Iraqi forces at will. The warren of alleyways and small buildings provided routes for JAM fighters to infiltrate the area below Route Gold. Thus, to hold what they had taken, U.S. and Iraqi forces had to deny JAM its ability to attack at will south of Route Gold. Access to the area below Route Gold was vital to JAM, so it became key terrain for Colonel Hort. Operation Gold Wall, the effort to construct a wall along the length of Route Gold, was intended to deny JAM the ability to operate in the Jamiliyah Market area.

In the 30 days of Operation Gold Wall, Colonel Hort's soldiers emplaced some 3,000 12-foot-tall and 5-foot-wide reinforced concrete T-wall sections to create a 4.6-kilometer barrier. JAM fought hard to prevent the establishment of the wall. According to Colonel Hort, the wall in effect "became a magnet for every bad guy in Sadr City." As JAM fighters attacked to stop completion of the wall, the surrounding area became a killing ground. JAM had few good options. If the wall were completed, it would curtail JAM's access to the population and the market. JAM leaders depended on that access.

Operations Striker Denial and Gold Wall were tough fights, involving three U.S. battalions and Iraqi security forces in continuous operations for six weeks. During this period, Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles were heavily engaged, firing 818 120mm tank main-gun rounds and 12,091 25mm rounds against JAM fighters and to detonate IEDs. Additionally, U.S. forces had to constantly adapt to JAM tactics. For example, JAM snipers used .50 caliber sniper rifles to attempt to knock out the crane that lifted the T-wall sections into place. U.S. forces responded by employing organic U.S. Army and SOF snipers in a countersniper campaign.

As the battle wore on, JAM fighters showed up in ever-decreasing numbers as U.S. and Iraqi forces steadily wore them down. Complementing the conventional fight were efforts by other U.S. government agencies and SOF to hunt and keep the pressure on JAM leaders in Sadr City. Ultimately, six U.S. soldiers died in these operations. JAM lost an estimated 700 fighters, and much of its leadership fled Sadr City for Iran or Syria. On May 11, 2008, al-Sadr asked for another cease-fire.

The Counter-Rocket Fight

As ground maneuver elements fought to isolate Sadr City with the Gold Wall, Colonel Hort and General Hammond were working to stop JAM's indirect-fire attacks on the International Zone. By this point in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Multi-National Corps–Iraq (MNC-I) and MND-B were employing a broad range of U.S. ISR and strike resources in Baghdad.

Colonel Hort had resources directly allocated to him that were unprecedented for a brigade commander, including two U.S. Air Force MQ-1 Predator unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) armed with AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, two U.S. Army RQ-7B Shadow UASs, three aerial weapons teams (AWTs) (for a total of six AH-64 Apache attack helicopters), fixed-wing close air support, and the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System—all available 24 hours a day. What was different compared with past practice was the manner in which these resources were employed: Colonel Hort controlled the assets without having to go through intervening headquarters. Although most of these systems were used to engage JAM fighters or rockets, on occasion, large weapons (e.g., 500-pound guided bombs) were used to destroy buildings that were sheltering snipers. Although there were other fights going on in Iraq and Baghdad, Colonel Hort's fight in Sadr City was the main effort, and he had priority.

The brigade executed a plan, developed in collaboration with MND-B, in which the BCT was to focus on JAM fighter and rocket teams while the division continued key leader attacks that were of strategic importance to the government of Iraq, MND-B, and MNC-I. As was the case in other parts of the battle, the counter-rocket fight was a learning process.

In his tactical operations center (TOC), Colonel Hort received continuous feeds from U.S. Air Force Predators (both armed and unarmed) and U.S. Army Shadow UASs. He also received information from RAID sensors, counterfire radars, and other ISR assets.[6] His battle staff was able to integrate this information and communicate it to operational units down to the company level via a number of relatively new technologies. For example, they used persistent surveillance and dissemination system of systems (PSDS2) to integrate the various sensors. Additionally, Colonel Hort was able to communicate in a secure chat room–like environment via secure mIRC and to pass classified information via the SECRET Internet Protocol Router down to the company level.

All of these integrated sensors, communications systems, and strike assets gave 3-4 BCT the ability to find and kill JAM rocket teams and destroy other targets (e.g., mortars). Engagements happened in several ways. First, a radar or other sensor detected

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[6] See *Defense Industry Daily*, "The USA's RAID Program: Small Systems, Big Surveillance Time," August 24, 2011. The article notes: "The RAID [rapid aerostat initial deployment] program is a combination of cameras and surveillance equipment positioned on high towers and aerostats, in order to monitor a wide area around important locations and bases."

a rocket launch. A Shadow UAS was then vectored to the location of the launch and proceeded to follow the target. Finally, a Predator or Apache killed the target. Predators were particularly useful because JAM was expected to have SA-7 MANPADS (man-portable air-defense systems) and the UASs enabled attacks on JAM without putting Apache crews at risk. Second, skilled intelligence personnel in 3-4 BCT headquarters were tasked with watching the ISR feeds on large screens in the TOC. These individuals were "dedicated scouts" who watched the area under surveillance for enemy activity; when such activity was identified, the process of bringing assets to bear was begun. Third, ground maneuver forces who detected JAM activity initiated the acquisition and attack processes. What is important is that the brigade commander and his battle staff had these resources pushed down to them—without intervening levels of command and authority—and could execute mission command. Higher echelons resourced the fight and managed the deeper operations beyond the brigade.

Like the countersniper fight, the counter-rocket fight evolved over time. At first, rocket launch teams were attacked immediately after they had fired. However, the brigade battle staff soon developed "tactical patience," realizing that it was likely hitting only low-level operatives with vehicles and launch rails. Eventually, the staff adopted a best practice of using an ISR platform to "watch the rail" and follow it. When the operatives returned to a supply point or a command location to get additional rockets and instructions, the staff saw the opportunity to strike, hitting not only the operatives but higher elements of the network as well.

Exploitation

MND-B exploited its success in neutralizing JAM with stability operations to secure Ishbiliyah and Habbibiyah. These efforts were intensified after al-Sadr declared a cease-fire on May 12. Focused reconstruction efforts and information operations in those neighborhoods were intended to influence popular perceptions north of Route Gold as well. Even before fighting subsided completely, U.S. forces resumed applying relentless pressure against JAM's organization. As the reality of JAM's defeat became clearer, the area's inhabitants began providing a flood of reliable intelligence that greatly facilitated this effort.

As the battle subsided, two key realities became apparent to Iraqis living south of ("below") the wall along Route Gold. First, Iraqi Army and national police forces were in place and providing security. For residents, this harkened back to pre–Operation Iraqi Freedom days: Iraqis were now in charge, and not the coalition forces who would eventually leave Iraq. Second, as security was restored to the area below Route Gold, General Hammond, his subordinate commanders, and the reserve engineer brigade commander working for General Hammond, Brigadier General Jeffrey Talley, began an intense effort to improve conditions below the wall. Much of this was done by

enabling Iraqi small businesses, which gave Sadr City's population a stake in the new order. Thus, the population was able to see more permanent progress, and as conditions improved, the local citizenry became invested in maintaining their security and began providing intelligence to Iraqi and U.S. forces.

When, on May 12, Sadr declared a unilateral cease-fire, it is likely that he was simply putting the best face possible on the existing situation. His forces had suffered huge losses, and key leaders had either fled or been killed. The population was growing restive, not only because JAM was perceived as provoking confrontations that resulted in civilian casualties but also because of JAM's depredations. On May 20, unopposed elements of the Iraqi Army's 44th Brigade occupied the remainder of Sadr City.

Key Insights from the Fight

The defeat of JAM in Sadr City during the six weeks of high-intensity operations yields several insights that bear highlighting:

- Protecting the population requires a balance between offensive, defensive, and stability operations.
- Persistent ISR, technical intelligence, and precision-strike capabilities enable the attacker to seize the initiative.
- Technical capabilities must enable decentralized decision-making and small unit initiative.
- Isolating the enemy enables the counterinsurgent to seize the initiative.
- Ground maneuver remains indispensable for shaping the battle and achieving decision.
- Heavy armored forces have enduring utility in counterinsurgency and urban operations.
- Integrating SOF into conventional operations achieves synergy.
- Snipers remain an important enabler in urban operations.
- Enduring success depends on capable indigenous security forces.
- Urban counterinsurgency requires forces to transition rapidly between offensive, defensive, and stability operations.

Reimagining Urban Operations as Wide-Area Security Missions

Two general models for dealing with insurgent control of urban areas have become apparent in recent years. The first is the approach taken by the Russian Federation in the Chechen city of Grozny in December 1999–February 2000 and by U.S. forces in the Iraqi city of Fallujah in November 2004. Insurgents in these cities were viewed as

cancers that had to be excised. In both of these cases, the cities were essentially besieged and then stormed, a course of action made possible by their geographic isolation. Noncombatants were told to leave before military operations within the cities commenced. Anyone who remained was, in general, viewed as a combatant in what became a block-by-block clearing operation supported by massive amounts of firepower.

Not surprisingly, both cities suffered significant damage. Additionally, casualties among Russian and U.S. forces were high. Although reliable figures are difficult to ascertain, the Russian Federation suffered at least 600 dead (mostly in Grozny, it is assumed) and likely many more wounded in Chechnya between December and early January. In Fallujah, U.S. forces suffered 70 dead and more than 600 wounded. Thus, this model of urban warfare anticipates and accepts extensive collateral damage and relatively high numbers of friendly casualties.

The 2008 Battle of Sadr City offers a second model for wresting control of a city from insurgents: treating an urban area as a wide-area security mission. In Sadr City, unlike in Grozny and Fallujah, telling the civilians to leave what was about to become a high-intensity battlefield simply was not feasible. Sadr City had 2.4 million residents, and there was nowhere for them to go: Sadr City is part of the larger city of Baghdad and, unlike Grozny and Fallujah, is not geographically isolated. These conditions in Sadr City may be representative of the future challenges of urban operations, and they will likely worsen as urban areas around the globe become more densely populated. The objective was not to take and clear Sadr City but to create conditions that would make it both impossible for the insurgents to operate effectively and possible to restore security to the broader population.

Thus, in the Battle of Sadr City, the focus was on enemy fighters and their capabilities. U.S. forces deprived the enemy of the ability to affect events at the operational and strategic levels of war. JAM's control of Sadr City was a perennial problem, but what made its March 2008 offensive problematic was JAM's ability to strike the Green Zone with indirect fires (mainly via rockets). Attacks on the Green Zone threatened to derail the Basra offensive and thereby reveal that the al-Maliki government was fatally ineffective. However, 3-4 BCT took JAM's offensive capability away by employing determined ground maneuver, which combined infantry and armored vehicles, with support from pervasive ISR and precision-strike capabilities, which were provided by UASs, attack helicopters, artillery, and CAS. Without its indirect-fire capability, JAM could only react locally as coalition forces exploited human and technical intelligence to hunt down its remaining leaders under extremely one-sided conditions.

Finally, Sadr City demonstrates that one of the keys to fighting an urban adversary is to create a situation that will force the enemy to surrender the advantages of the city. This is the art of reimagining urban warfare, and it clearly has doctrinal, organizational, materiel, and training implications for both the U.S. Army and the joint force. In the case of the Battle of Sadr City, building the wall along Route Gold threatened to deny JAM access to key terrain and, as Colonel Hort related during an interview

with the authors, "agitated the enemy." Quite simply, JAM had to contest the wall or face isolation. In the words of one U.S. officer, the wall was the equivalent of a Roman siege engine about to breach a city's defenses. It created a situation that was intolerable to JAM, and JAM had to come out and fight. In so doing, the enemy attacked U.S. forces that now had the initiative and were in a position of enormous advantage. JAM lost, and the coalition victory in the Battle of Sadr City offers important lessons for the prosecution of future urban operations.