

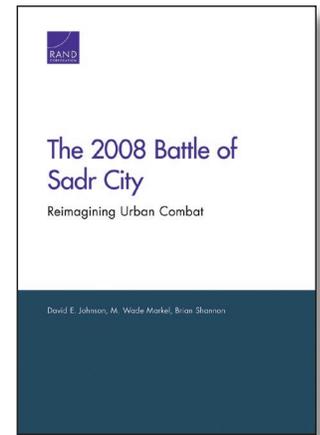


The 2008 Battle of Sadr City

Reimagining Urban Combat

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In 2008, U.S. and Iraqi forces defeated an uprising in Sadr City, a district of Baghdad with ~2.4 million residents. Coalition forces' success in this battle helped consolidate the Government of Iraq's authority, contributing significantly to the attainment of contemporary U.S. operational objectives in Iraq. U.S. forces' conduct of the battle illustrates a new paradigm for urban combat and indicates capabilities the Army will need in the future.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What was the full story of the Battle of Sadr City?
- What are its implications for the U.S. Army in terms of the conduct of future urban operations?



KEY FINDINGS

U.S. forces evolved a concept of operations for controlling an urban insurgency.

- The concept of operation involved isolating an area of operations with concrete T-walls, providing access control.
- Access control would ultimately enable U.S. forces to set the tempo of operations and methodically capture or kill insurgent leaders through targeted raids.

Conditions on the eve of battle favored U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies.

- Much of the overall insurgency had been neutralized.
- U.S. forces had trained appropriately prior to deployment.
- The active portion of the insurgency was weakened in key ways.
- The urban terrain allowed good use of U.S. technical advantages.

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After hard fighting early in the battle, each side retained advantages and disadvantages.

- U.S. forces seized key enemy rocket-launch sites early in the battle.
- However, insurgents still enjoyed considerable freedom of movement making allied forces vulnerable to attack from unsecured portions of Sadr City.

The allied construction of the wall along a key route changed the dynamics of the battle.

- Insurgents, their freedom of movement rapidly disappearing, were drawn into battle on disadvantageous terms.
- Allied forces continued and improved suppression of enemy rocket fires.
- The Iraqi Army enjoyed increasing success in conducting operations on its own.
- The leader of the uprising offered a cease-fire, though many individuals kept fighting.

U.S. commanders moved quickly to exploit the success of battle.

- U.S. forces launched an ambitious program of reconstruction intended to convince Sadr City's population to transfer its loyalties to the Government of Iraq.
- The last remaining insurgency fighters came under increasingly destructive attack.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protecting the population requires a balance between offensive, defensive, and stability operations.
- Persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; technical intelligence; and precision-strike capabilities enable the attacker to seize the initiative.
- Technical capabilities must enable decentralized decisionmaking 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 special operations forces 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.

