



Rangers of the US Army Special Operations Command's 75th Ranger Regiment demonstrate their capability to utilize a fast rope insertion extraction system (FRIES) to assault a threat-occupied staging vessel in May 2018. In scenario, the craft belongs to a great power-enabled violent extremist organization (VEO) preparing a high-profile attack (HPA) against government infrastructure in the surrounding dense urban, littoral environment.

Photo Credit: US Army 75th Ranger Regiment

"In the future, I can say with very high degrees of confidence, the American Army is probably going to be fighting in urban areas. We need to man, organize, train and equip the force for operations in urban areas, highly dense urban areas, and that's a different construct. We're not organized like that right now."

- General Mark Milley, 20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



Taking back the Infantry Decimeter: Improving US Army Close Quarters Battle
Part II of III
The National Center for Urban Operations
19 June 2020



SITREP

Part I of our series illustrated the tactical defeat in close quarters battle (CQB) of an Infantry quick reaction force (QRF) of the US 82nd Airborne Division by Donovian *Spetznaz* of the hyper-enabled and exquisitely-trained Omega Group. This undermatch was conveyed through the lens of the platoon sergeant, US Army Special Operations Command’s (USASOC) 75th Ranger Regiment veteran Sergeant First Class Charles Smith, who will reflect upon the definition, context, and existent issues of Infantry close quarters battle in Part II of our series, *Taking back the Infantry Decameter: Improving US Army Close Quarters Battle*. This article is written in partnership with the Army, not in criticism of it.



Smith felt like the memorial ceremony stretched on for hours. He still heard Gonzalez’ name echoing in his ears. “Private First Class Gonzalez. Private First Class Ramone Gonzalez. Private First Class Ramone Rodriguez Gonzalez.” That young American would never respond to roll call again. His Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major had tried to console him and the PL (platoon leader) afterwards: it wasn’t their fault, they claimed. They were outmatched: they’d fought valiantly.

He appreciated their intent. But it’d only made him angrier. Valor without effectiveness made for a handsome corpse. Plus, assigning fault was irrelevant. That was a game for bureaucrats and politicians. But it would happen: the inquiry was already underway. His command had attempted to take his platoon off the QRF rotation, claiming it needed time to “recover and reflect upon the incident.” Smith had adamantly opposed that option. Senior leaders fundamentally misunderstood that what his men needed now most was a way forward, a path to redemption. That path could only lead out into the unforgiving streets of Baku.

What was relevant was the desperate urgency for self-assessment that should be rippling through his formation like a pandemic, up to the Division and out to all his sister platoons. Did the Army see this fight coming? Because the Rangers did. Team BAF¹ was still hunting their last few terrorists when the Regimental Commander ordered the Ranger Battalions to start preparing for dense urban forcible entry operations in anticipation of great power conflict. Smith was packing his house for Bragg as 1st Battalion Command Teams stepped off for leader professional development (LPD) in New York City to work with the National Center for Urban Operations (NCUO) there in understanding the complexities inherent

¹ Team BAF, or Team Bagram Airfield, was the sole remaining Ranger strike force in Afghanistan.

to the mission. He'd wished he'd delayed his PCS (permanent change in station) a few days to go with. Maybe that trip would've helped him understand: what had changed about the geopolitics of the world and about the character of war since the GWOT started such that he now found himself fighting an irregular war against Donovan-enabled guerrillas in a capitol city of two million people? And why did his God-fearing young patriots on OBJ FENRIR perform so poorly?

UNCLASSIFIED // DIST A PUBLIC RELEASE

NCUO
National Center for Urban Operations

**Figure 1:
Urban Close Quarters Battle
Task Composition**



Collective Task: Enter and Clear a Confined Space during Urban Operations

Supporting tasks for **High Intensity Close Quarters Battle (HICQB)**:

Move: Conduct Movement as Part of a Fire Team in Urban Operations
 Shoot: Engage Threats using Carbine at Close Quarters (0-25m)
 Communicate: Utilize Visual and Verbal Communication Techniques
 Breach: Conduct a Mechanical Breach
 - Employ Fragmentation Grenades
 Exploit: Reorganize and Consolidate after Contact
 Survive: Conduct Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC)

Supplementary tasks for **Precision Close Quarters Combat (PCQB)**, building on HICQB:

Move: Conduct Subterranean & Confined Space Movement
 Shoot: Engage Threats using Carbine under Limited Visibility
 - Engage Threats using Pistol during Urban Operations
 Communicate: Employ Individual Communications Devices (FM; MANET; VOIP)
 - Employ Advanced Situational Awareness & Escalation of Force Tools (Verbal- Nonlethal-Lethal)
 Breach: Conduct Ballistic, Dynamic, & Thermal Breach
 - Employ Less-Lethal Grenades (Flash, Concussion, Nammo, Riot Control Agents)
 Exploit: Conduct Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE); Tactical Questioning (TQ) Procedures
 Survive: Employ Advanced Ranger First Responder (ARFR) Procedures

UNCLASSIFIED // DIST A PUBLIC RELEASE

Definition

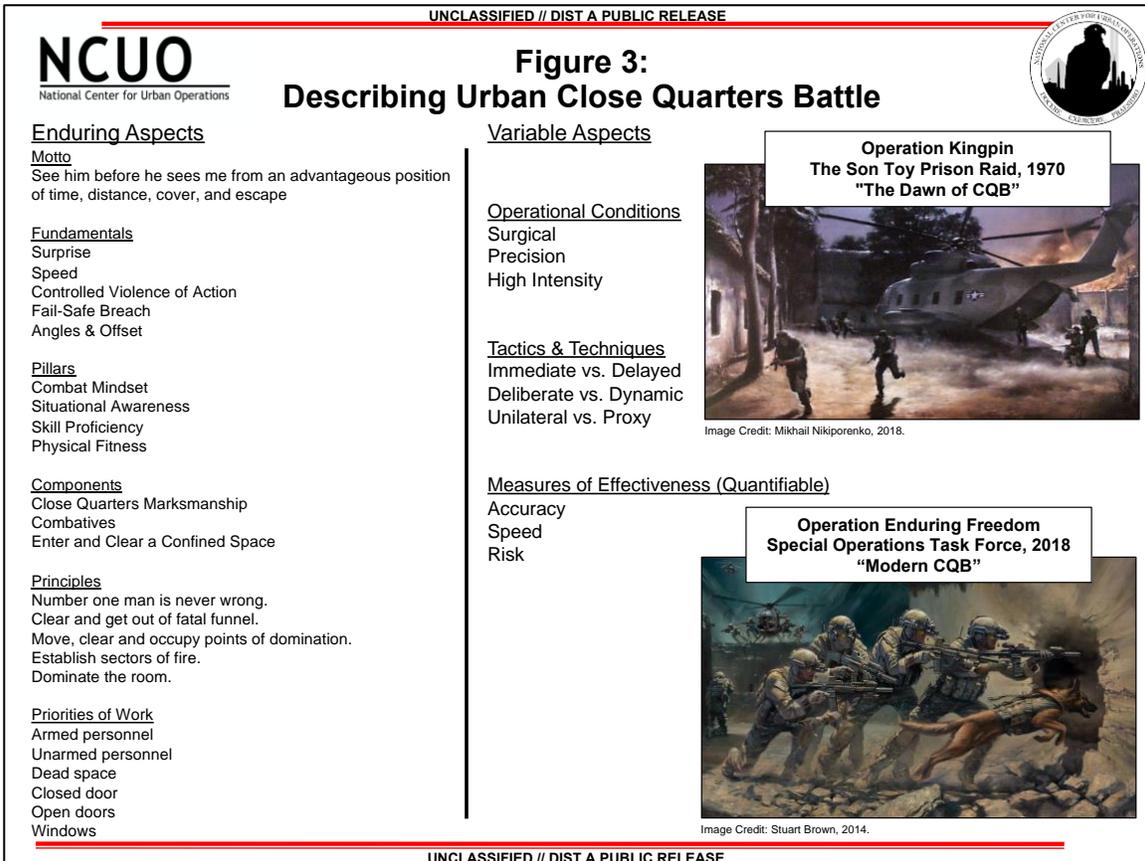
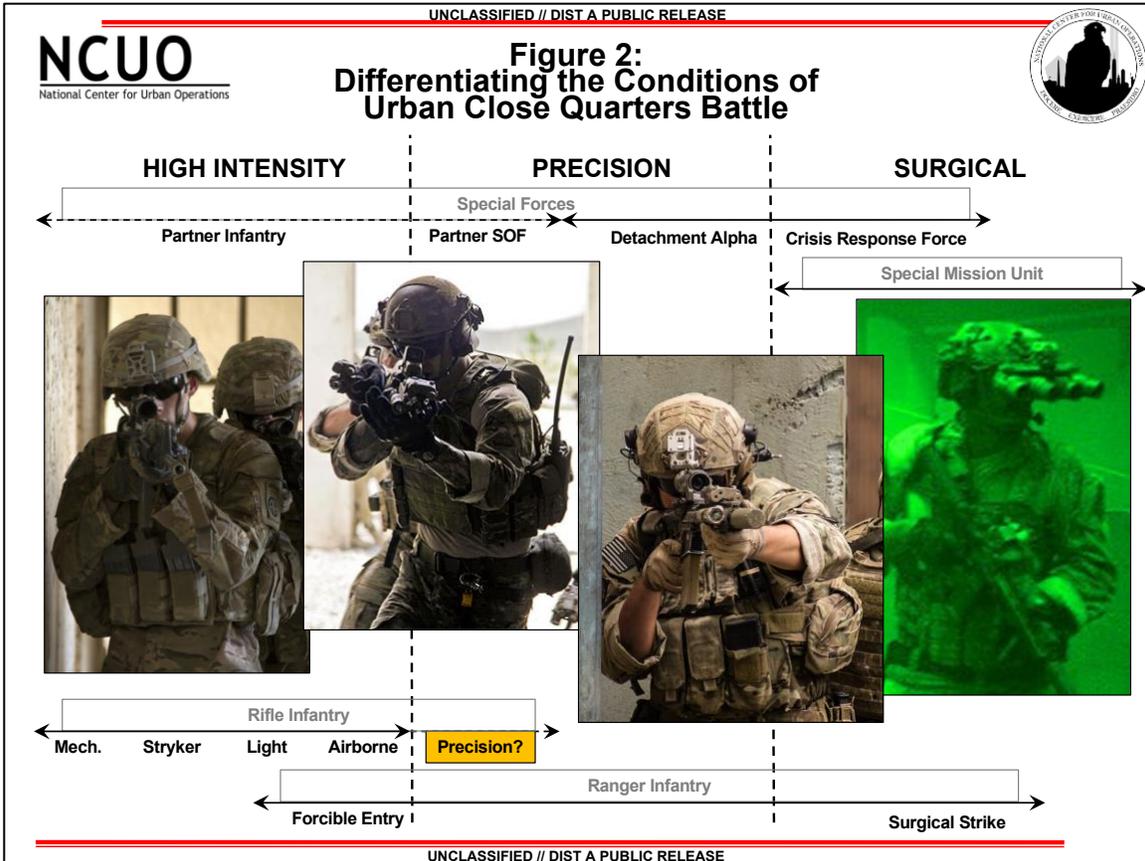
[TC 3-21.76 The Ranger Handbook \(2017\)](#) describes close quarters battle (CQB) as physical or direct fire contact with an enemy combatant at close range (within ten meters, or “decameter”), under urgent conditions (targets are only able to be engaged for a few seconds) amidst an environment of limited visibility, dense vegetation, or, most commonly, enclosed or subterranean structures. It is composed of collective task 071-326-0557, “Enter and clear a confined space” and the associated supporting tasks described by shoot, move, communicate, breach, exploit, survive across the human dimensions of physicality, cognition, and emotion (Figure 1). It is characterized by enduring fundamentals, principles, and priorities of work that do not change under operational conditions, but tactics, techniques, rules, and equipment associated therewith that do. Strategic context of the threat dictates whether CQB is conducted

under High Intensity, Precision, or Surgical operational conditions, execution of which is distinguished by differing measures of effectiveness (MOE) including Speed, Accuracy, and Risk (Figure 2).

Time available will dictate if a room needs to be cleared with Immediate or Delayed Entry procedures. Risk tolerance to mission, troops, and civilians determines whether a room needs to be cleared with Deliberate or Dynamic techniques; or by Proxies first, including but not limited to drones, robots, canines, or indigenous forces (Figure 3). Finally, leaders need to be discretionate when epitomizing “Lethality” as a measure of effectiveness- as the preservation of life in CQB is often more strategically important than the taking of it.



Photo Credit: US Army 75th Ranger Regiment



Context

Proficiency in close quarters battle is important to the Infantry. Foremost, the 39th Chief of Staff of the Army explicitly tasks the Infantry via [TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028](#) to “conduct multi-domain operations (MDO) in dense urban terrain at all echelons with tactics and capabilities that increase the accuracy, speed, and synchronization of lethal and nonlethal effects.”

Second, changing operational conditions guarantee an increase in the frequency of dense urban conflict and a change in the strategic risk calculus under which close quarters battle is conducted. Dr. Dave Kilcullen forecasted the gravity of the challenge in his 2013 seminal work, [Out of the Mountains](#). The population will “level off” at 9.3 billion by 2050; 75% of this population will live in cities; and 80% of these cities will be on coasts. These geographic trends will overlay with the United States overmatch in technologies like precision-guided effects to compel our enemies to wage asymmetric wars from within and beneath these population centers in hopes of evening the odds. As he predicted, the Coalition’s campaign against the Islamic State during [Operation Inherent Resolve](#) from 2014-2018 involved mostly urban warfare: control of the population in cities like Tikrit, Fallujah, and Mosul and their overlapping fields of economic, social, political, and militarily influence became strategically decisive. Concurrently, the scrutiny of the world’s 4.78 billion smart-phones creates a political expectation of zero US casualties in modern warfare, precipitating an [unsustainable overreliance on special operations forces](#) to conduct close quarters battle throughout the Global War on Terror (GWOT): a tendency whose limitations will be fully exposed by the outbreak of large-scale combat operations (LSCO) against peer forces.

Third, the effective execution of close quarters battle instills notable self-confidence in the unit conducting it and the leaders that observe that execution. Policymakers’ enduring faith in the close quarters battle proficiency of the US Army’s premier Special Operations Raid Force, the 75th Ranger Regiment, is partially attributable to its annual demonstration of this capability, such as the [one held at Fort Bragg in June 2019](#). Finally, CQB is an incubator for [decision-making development](#), in which all Soldiers can be assessed and trained to enhance cognitive performance under the most stressful conditions short of war.



Issues

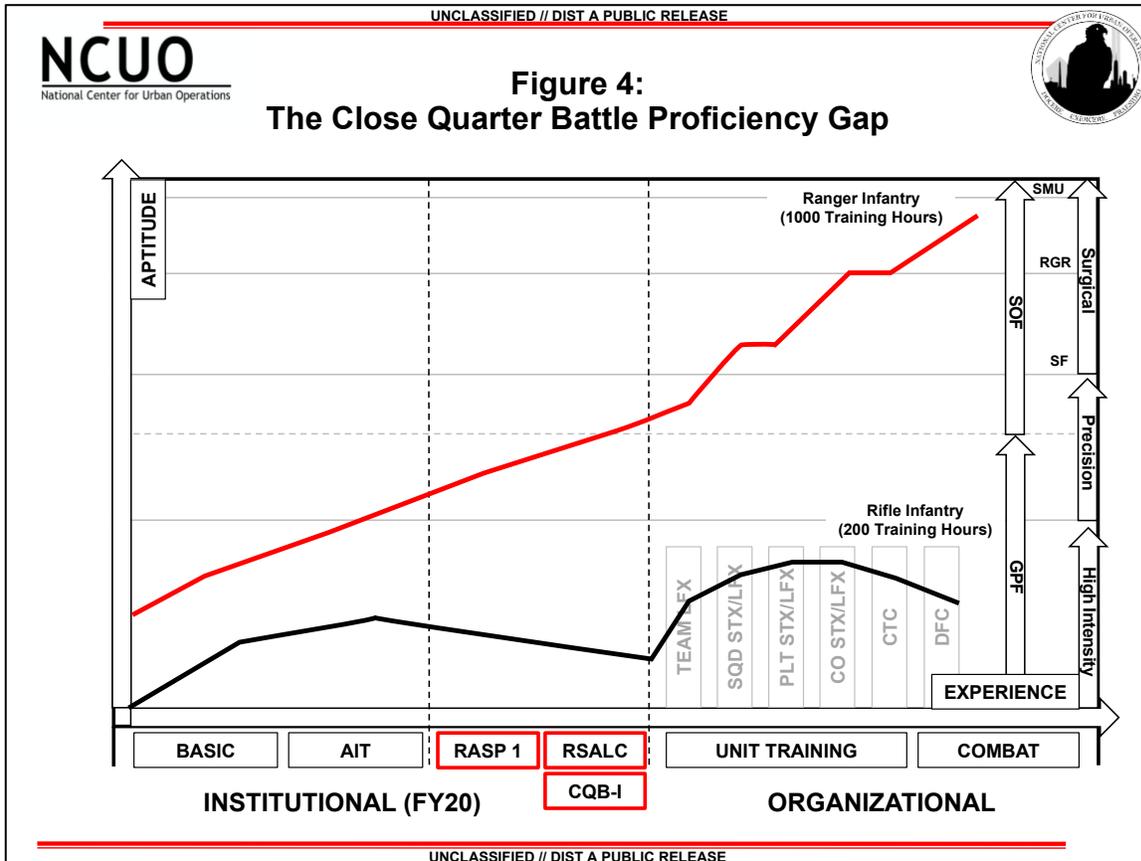
Contrary to [US Army senior trainers' attitudes](#) that “CQB is the easy part of urban operations,” veterans of the 75th Ranger Regiment argue that “close quarters battle is the task upon which effectiveness in all other threat-oriented urban operations is built.” Unfortunately, [research](#) suggests that current Infantry proficiency in CQB is inadequate to meet policy-makers’ risk expectations in modern urban combat, much less future dense urban combat. During [Operation Eagle Strike](#), the battle for Mosul in December 2017 and the largest combat maneuver in the world since the invasion of Iraq, conventional US infantry [were prohibited](#) from conducting close quarters battle- despite the frequency and savagery of such engagements between the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (ICTS) and the Islamic State (IS).

Quantifying these concerns across the general-purpose force (GPF) is challenging given a lack of codified measures of effectiveness for the task. Chapter 3 of [Training Circular \(TC\) 90-1 Training for Urban Operations \(2008\)](#) specifies only time expenditures as measures of performance (MOP) for close quarters battle, lacking any measures of effectiveness (MOE) relevant to accuracy, speed, or risk to assess Soldiers’ proficiency. Despite the absence of metrics, multiple qualitative issues exist across the force which can be illustrated via the Joint Capability Integration Development Systems (JCIDS) framework of **DOTMLPF-P**.

Doctrine for urban close quarters battle is inaccurate, antiquated, and inadequate. [Army Tactics Techniques and Procedures \(ATTP\) 3-06.11 Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain \(2011\)](#) describes close quarters battle in Chapter 7, Urban Combat Tasks. Among many shortcomings, the document fails to articulate the distinctive conditions under which one decides to clear with Dynamic or Deliberate tactics. It fails to discuss advanced maneuvers like the dual-threshold-offset “Min Force” or the “Ballistic-Breach and Shield” drill. It also neglects the emerging importance and techniques required to employ “tech” such as micro unmanned aerial / ground vehicles (mUAS/ mUGS), see-through-the-wall (STTW) technologies, and rolling / “snake” cameras such that every clearing option can be exhausted before putting a Soldier into the breach. In short, the chapter lacks the information necessary for our leaders to self-educate in the absence of a functional CQB course.

Organization of units leaves Soldiers unfamiliar with and [lacking access to critical enablers](#). Most infantry units are unproficient at basic mechanical breaching capability, possess no access to ballistic, thermal, or dynamic breaching academies, and have never worked with multi-purpose canines (MPC). **Training** is inhibited by Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA) Mission Essential Task Lists (METL) that [fail to incentivize training of the task](#). GPF Infantry companies are not required to conduct an attack into the conditions of an urban environment, thereby depriving subordinate units the forcing function to certify in multi-team,

multi-room close quarters battle. By contrast, the 75th Ranger Regiment [regularly conducts close quarters battle](#) in declared theatres of active combat (DTAC). It is afforded this responsibility because it prepares for it and [habitually demonstrates](#) to policymakers its capacity to do so. In preparation, the average Ranger rifleman conducts five times more institutional training (1000 hours) and up to nine times more organizational training (720 hours) in relevant urban combat tasks than his peer in the Infantry of similar rank and age (at 200 hours and 80 hours, respectively) (Figure 4).



Units lack access to **material** and tools to reduce risk to force, civilians, and infrastructure. Infantry units generally do not have access to adjustable slings, extended carbine handrails, or ergonomic tac-lights (much less CTS 7290M flashbang grenade, M54 riot control munitions, or semi-autonomous rotary wing attack drones (RWAD) like the [Kargu 2](#)) that will allow them to optimize their effects internal to a confined space and preserve maximum life.

The Army [lacks a functional school](#) to train and certify **leaders** and cadres in the effective execution of the task. Meanwhile, [the US Marine Corps](#), the British, and the Australian Infantry Schools each implemented Urban Operations Course curriculum in 2019. The **personnel** management system lacks an Army Skill Identifier (ASI) or Table of Organization and

Equipment (TOE) to cultivate personnel that possess mastery of this task. Master Gunner ASIs and badges are only recently authorized for [mounted weapon platforms](#) and small arms, but not for close quarters battle or assault breaching.

A [dearth](#) of **facilities** exist to support unit training for close quarters battle. One of the Army's premier light infantry installations only offers two certified "shoothouse" facilities to train approximately 576 squads of four brigades. The **policy** shaping the generation and maintenance of close combat forces is also lacking, as range control procedures hinder realistic training, poor cadre selection ruins course reputations, and [disproportional funding is spent](#) on mission occupational specialties (MOS) that bear a fraction of the casualty burden as the Infantry.



Smith closed the browser window as the LPD (leader professional development) by Colonel (Retired) Patrick Mahaney finished, settling back in the dilapidated desk chair of his dimly-lit CHU.² It was both shocking but relieving to learn that the US Army Infantry was uniformly unprepared for CQB in the dense urban environment. Mahaney was but one of many voices that'd be saying it for years. But as the Army had discovered the hard way in Niger, it required the sacrifice of a tactical element on the altar of convention to both unveil the deficiencies obscured therein and induce the changes required to fix them. He hated that men like Gonzalez and Jones had paid that price, but he prayed the institution would adapt to honor their memory.

²A colloquial term used to refer to the Containerized Housing Units lived in by deployed Soldiers on Forward Operating Bases (FOB).

The Authors

The authors are veteran leaders of the US Army 75th Ranger Regiment, Airborne, Stryker, Mechanized and Light Infantry formations. A few are listed below but this work is a credit to many others left unnamed.

Clay Puryear is an Operations Fellow with the National Center for Urban Operations. He is earning a Master of Security Studies Degree with concentration in Terrorism and Substate Violence from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. His experience includes nearly a decade leading Infantrymen in the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the National Training Center.



Lieutenant Colonel Chris De Ruyter is the Professor of Military Science at the University of Central Florida. He holds a Master's in Business Administration from Auburn University. His experience includes nearly two decades leading Infantrymen in the 75th Ranger Regiment, Asymmetric Warfare Group, 82nd Airborne Division, 2nd Infantry Division, and the US Army Infantry School.

Major Matt Buchanan is assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment. He recently completed his Master of Public Policy degree at Duke University through the Downing Scholarship Program. His experience includes twelve years leading Infantrymen in the 75th Ranger Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, and 25th Infantry Division.

Major Jeffery Dannemiller is earning a Master of Military Operational Art and Science Degree at the Air Command and Staff College. His experience includes over a decade leading Infantrymen in the 75th Ranger Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, and 25th Infantry Division.

The National Center for Urban Operations (NCUO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit team of experienced practitioners and public servants uniting the larger network of interest in order to generate material, educational, training, and conceptual solutions to the emerging problems associated with the asymmetric threats and complex characteristics of the dense urban environment.

The mention of other organizations in this article do not imply endorsement of the positions or views expressed within. This article does not represent the views of the United States Government. This piece was approved for publication by the 75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs Office on 10 March 2021.

The featured carbine silhouette is that of an HK416 A5 equipped with a Nightforce ATACR 1-8x24 optic, MAWL-C1+ illuminator, Surefire X300 V weaponlight, and Surefire SOCOM-Mini 2 silencer. It exemplifies the close quarters battle rifle configuration carried by the world's most elite assaulters. The image was assembled by the authors.





Figure 1: Urban Close Quarters Battle Task Composition

Collective Task: Enter and Clear a Confined Space during Urban Operations

Supporting tasks for High Intensity Close Quarters Battle (HICQB):

Move: Conduct Movement as Part of a Fire Team in Urban Operations

Shoot: Engage Threats using Carbine at Close Quarters (0-25m)

Communicate: Utilize Visual and Verbal Communication Techniques

Breach: Conduct a Mechanical Breach

- Employ Fragmentation Grenades

Exploit: Reorganize and Consolidate after Contact

Survive: Conduct Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC)

Supplementary tasks for Precision Close Quarters Combat (PCQB), building on HICQB:

Move: Conduct Subterranean & Confined Space Movement

Shoot: Engage Threats using Carbine under Limited Visibility

- Engage Threats using Pistol during Urban Operations

Communicate: Employ Individual Communications Devices (FM; MANET; VOIP)

- Employ Advanced Situational Awareness & Escalation of Force Tools (Verbal- Nonlethal-Lethal)

Breach: Conduct Ballistic, Dynamic, & Thermal Breach

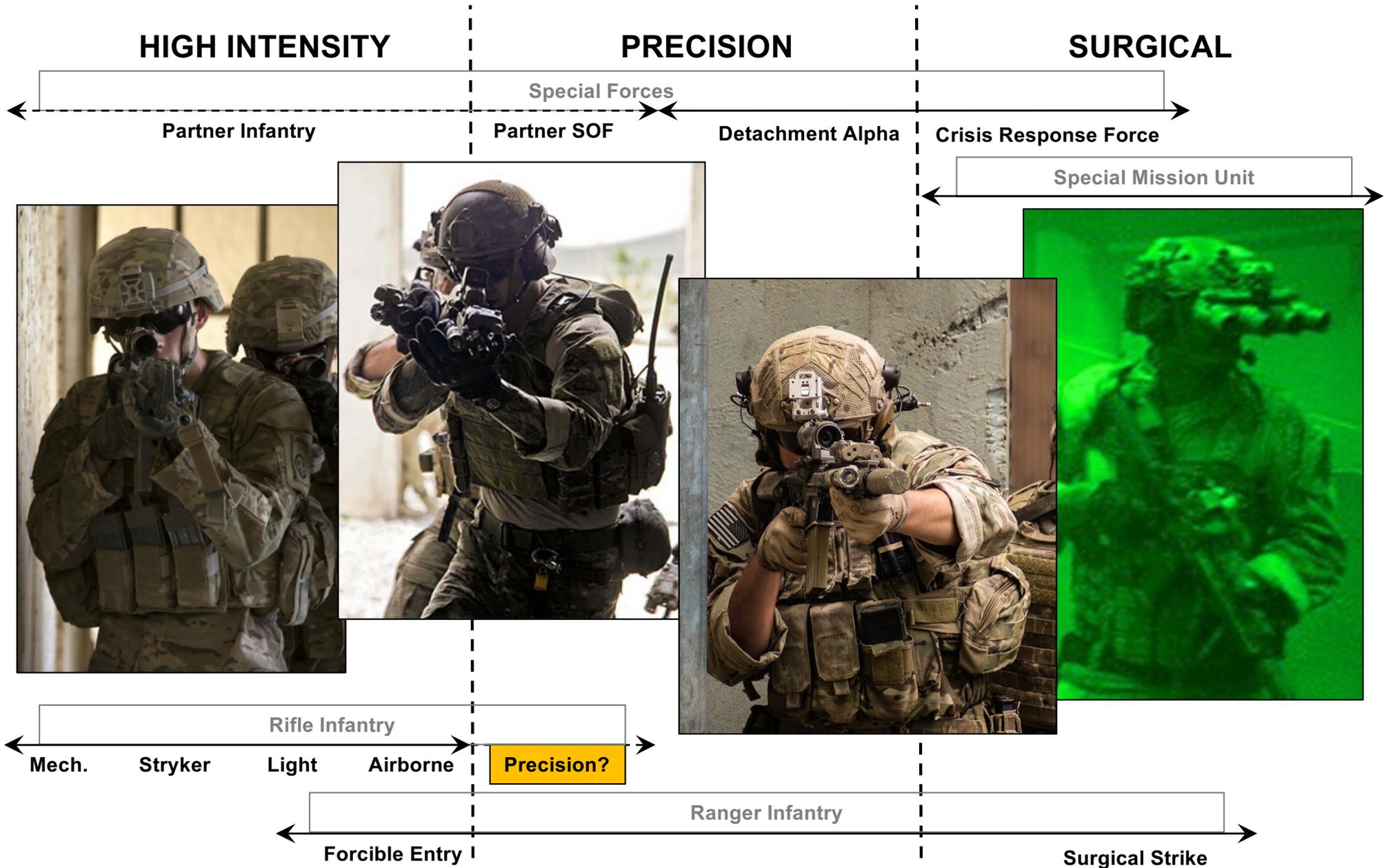
- Employ Less-Lethal Grenades (Flash, Concussion, Nammo, Riot Control Agents)

Exploit: Conduct Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE); Tactical Questioning (TQ) Procedures

Survive: Employ Advanced Ranger First Responder (ARFR) Procedures



Figure 2: Differentiating the Conditions of Urban Close Quarters Battle



NCUO

National Center for Urban Operations



Figure 3: Describing Urban Close Quarters Battle

Enduring Aspects

Motto

See him before he sees me from an advantageous position of time, distance, cover, and escape

Fundamentals

Surprise
Speed
Controlled Violence of Action
Fail-Safe Breach
Angles & Offset

Pillars

Combat Mindset
Situational Awareness
Skill Proficiency
Physical Fitness

Components

Close Quarters Marksmanship
Combatives
Enter and Clear a Confined Space

Principles

Number one man is never wrong.
Clear and get out of fatal funnel.
Move, clear and occupy points of domination.
Establish sectors of fire.
Dominate the room.

Priorities of Work

Armed personnel
Unarmed personnel
Dead space
Closed door
Open doors
Windows

Variable Aspects

Operational Conditions

Surgical
Precision
High Intensity

Tactics & Techniques

Immediate vs. Delayed
Deliberate vs. Dynamic
Unilateral vs. Proxy

Measures of Effectiveness (Quantifiable)

Accuracy
Speed
Risk

Operation Kingpin The Son Toy Prison Raid, 1970 "The Dawn of CQB"

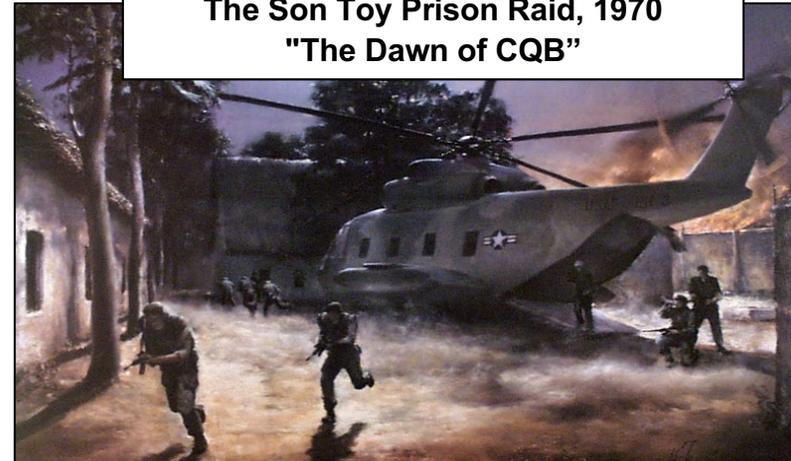


Image Credit: Mikhail Nikiporenko, 2018.

Operation Enduring Freedom Special Operations Task Force, 2018 "Modern CQB"

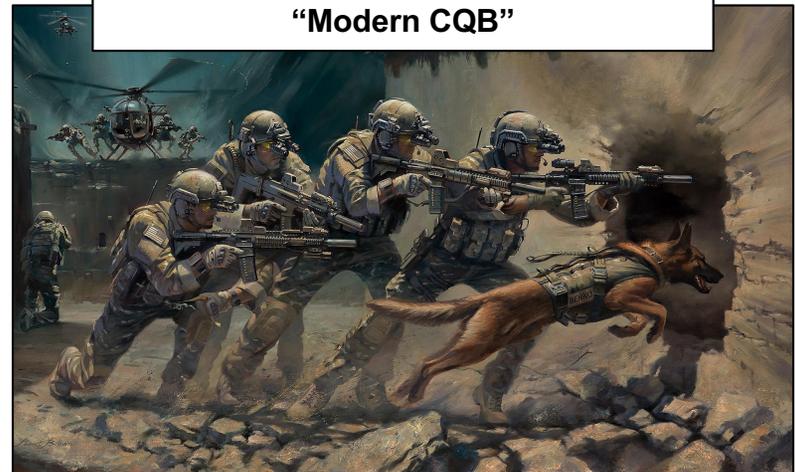


Image Credit: Stuart Brown, 2014.



Figure 4: The Close Quarter Battle Proficiency Gap

