



Global Megacities Are Giving Rise To The ‘Megacities Combat Unit’

Technocrats and the world elite are driving rural migration to smart cities, and the inevitable uprisings and conflicts will be put down by newly inspired ‘Megacities Combat Units’. □ TN Editor

Every year, more and more of the world’s population moves into cities. The number of megacities is growing exponentially. Both of these global patterns and their inevitable consequences for military operations are well documented. Yet we still do not have units that are even remotely prepared to operate in megacities. If we want to find success on the urban battlefields the US Army will inevitably find itself fighting on in the future, that needs to change.

Throughout history, military forces either sought to avoid or simply had no need to engage in urban combat. Most military doctrine, and the strategic theory it is built upon, encourages land forces to bypass, lay

siege to, or—if required—isolate and slowly clear cities from the outside in. The great armies of the world have historically fought *for cities* rather than *in cities*, a distinction with a significant difference. In cases where military forces had no choice but to operate within cities, the environment, almost without exception, proved very costly in both military and civilian casualties. Today, many armies have accepted that global population growth and urbanization trends will increasingly force military operations into crowded cities, and military forces must therefore be capable of conducting the full range of operations in large, dense urban areas. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley recently [remarked](#) that the Army “has been designed, manned, trained and equipped for the last 241 years to operate primarily in rural areas.” But that is about to change. Milley continued:

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.

But despite the clear recognition that armed forces will increasingly be required to fight in urban areas, no army has committed to train, organize, and equip forces specifically to operate in cities. It is time for the US Army to do just that.

A 2016 United Nations [report](#) estimated 54.5 percent of the world’s population lived in urban areas. By 2030, that percentage is projected to rise to 60 percent. As a result of this rural-to-urban migration, cities themselves are growing. In 2016, there were 512 cities with at least one million inhabitants globally. By 2030, a projected 662 cities will have at least one million residents. And the number of “megacities” in the world—those with ten million residents or more—is projected to grow from thirty-one to forty-one in the same period.

In 2014, the chief of staff of the Army’s Strategic Studies Group (SSG) chose megacities to be the organizing theme for its yearlong research projects. Concept teams looked at the unique characteristics and challenges of a megacity, future maneuver and mobility concepts, Army

force design considerations, personnel talent management, and other topics, assessing the requirements for operating in megacities. The conclusions of the SSG [research](#) are clear: megacities are unavoidable, they are potentially the most challenging environment the Army has ever faced, and the Army is unprepared to operate in them. The SSG also recommended that the Army, charged with the mandate of preparing forces for sustained operations on land, take the lead in training, organizing, and equipping forces for megacities.

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