



# EDITORIAL

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For many years, armies have been preparing for the wars of tomorrow, concentrating on cutting-edge technologies and futuristic battlegrounds. Yet the events in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip have reminded us about the salience of urban combat, a departure from the terrains of the Gulf War or Afghanistan or the ultra-futuristic scenarios we have envisioned.

The unprecedented pace of global urbanization is shaping not only our lifestyles but also the way we fight. Urban combat is not a passing trend but a historical and persistent reality that Western militaries must acknowledge, steering our initiatives to adapt and strengthen our military capabilities and preparedness. Notably, the Canadian military has not had substantial direct large-scale combat operations experience in urban warfare since the Second World War (1939–1945). The present and future of warfare is urban, and consequently there is a pressing need to re-learn how to fight in cities.

The developments in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip have underlined the prevalence of urban warfare and its challenges. These battlegrounds offer crucial lessons that must not be overlooked. As we witness the growing relevance and inevitability of urban warfare, we felt it was imperative to turn our attention to this crucial topic. Recognizing the intricacies of the subject, and due to the overwhelming response from members of the urban operations community who wished to contribute, we decided to dedicate two entire issues to the theme of urban warfare. This issue (21.1) marks the commencement of the two-part series, and we invite you to dig deep and extract relevant learnings. This issue also signifies a remarkable collaboration that brought together the *Canadian Army Journal* (CAJ) team and Major Jayson Geroux, a noted urban operations instructor, scholar and urban warfare historian. Lending his expertise, Major Geroux serves as the Guest Editor for the two urban warfare-themed issues of CAJ.

In the two issues, we have structured the informative and analytical articles according to the phases of military operations, beginning here with subjects that need to be addressed during the crucial planning and preparation phase for the conduct of urban warfare. In the initial article, Second Lieutenant Benjamin Phocas offers a detailed overview of the unique characteristics of urban warfare, explaining the challenges that militaries face when fighting in the concrete jungle. In the following

article, Captain Colin Papuschak argues that the urban battlefield is a complex adaptive system that requires military planners to go beyond the conventional “systems perspective of the operating environment” for effective, intelligent preparation. In the third article, Stuart Lyle analyzes the prospects for wargaming in addressing the limitations of physical training for urban combat.

Subsequently, Sahr Muhammedally delves deep into a crucial yet underexplored area of research, undertaking a thorough analysis of the urban operating environment through the lens of civilian harm mitigation. Exploring another aspect of civilian participation, the following article by Dr. Peter Dobias looks into the practice of using civilians as a counter-mobility capability and how NATO forces can potentially tackle that practice through the use of non-lethal capabilities.

Armed with a sound grasp of the fundamentals, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Louis DiMarco guides readers through the historical evolution of large-scale urban combat operations and their tactics, techniques and procedures. In the last feature article, Dr. Anthony King focuses on the Russo–Ukrainian War (2022–present) and offers valuable insights into the urbanized campaign. He delves into the reasons behind the surge in urban battles and compares observations from the ongoing war with arguments outlined in his book *Urban Warfare in the Twenty-First Century*. This issue concludes with three book reviews by Amos C. Fox, Warrant Officer Peter Vandoremalen and Major Jayson Geroux.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this issue and share in our anticipation of the second issue on the same theme. CAJ 21.2 will focus on a number of developments of military technologies tailored for the urban environment and feature historical case studies that will complement the importance of the above-mentioned articles.

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