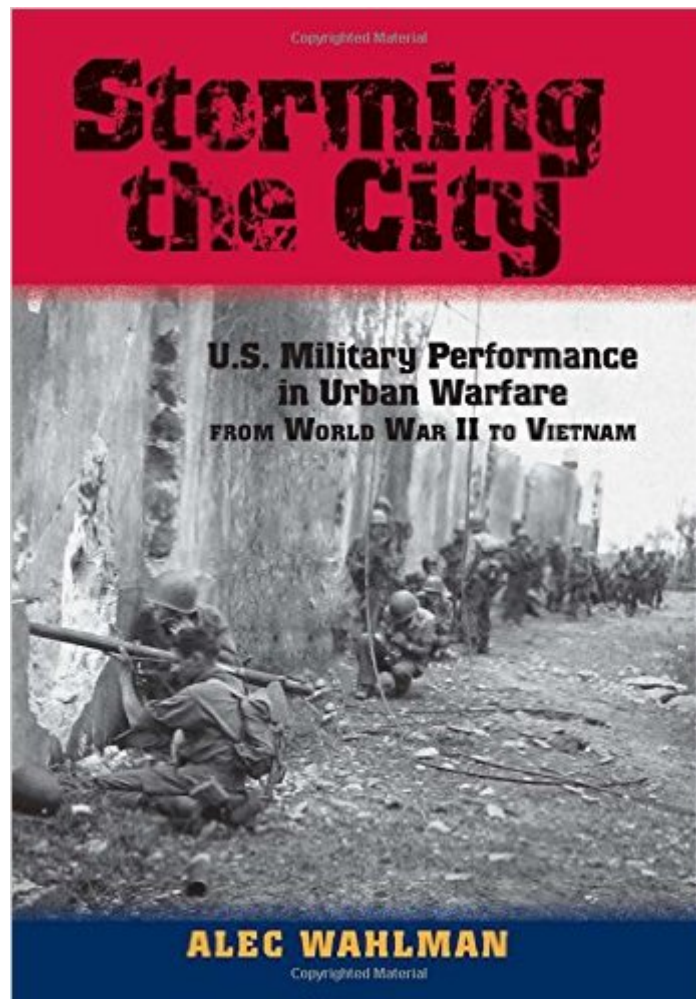


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Storming The City: U.S. Military Performance In Urban Warfare From World War II To Vietnam (American Military Studies)



Synopsis

History/Military Book Club Selection, 2015. In an increasingly urbanized world, urban terrain has become a greater factor in military operations. Simultaneously, advances in military technology have given military forces sharply increased capabilities. The conflict comes from how urban terrain can negate or degrade many of those increased capabilities. What happens when advanced weapons are used in a close-range urban fight with an abundance of cover? *Storming the City* explores these issues by analyzing the performance of the US Army and US Marine Corps in urban combat in four major urban battles of the mid-twentieth century (Aachen 1944, Manila 1945, Seoul 1950, and Hue 1968). Alec Wahlman assesses each battle using a similar framework of capability categories, and separate chapters address urban warfare in American military thought. In the four battles, across a wide range of conditions, American forces were ultimately successful in capturing each city because of two factors: transferable competence and battlefield adaptation. The preparations US forces made for warfare writ large proved generally applicable to urban warfare. Battlefield adaptation, a strong suit of American forces, filled in where those overall preparations for combat needed fine tuning. From World War II to Vietnam, however, there was a gradual reduction in tactical performance in the four battles.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Storming the City" is a study of US military performance in urban assault from World War II to Vietnam using studies of Aachen, Manila, Seoul, and Hue. The author finds lessons common to all

of these battles. Using a standard format for each battle, the author evaluates the US and enemy forces, command, control, and communications, intelligence and recon, firepower and survivability, mobility and counter-mobility, logistics, and the civilian population. Nineteenth century saw urban warfare mostly occurring against mobs, and the First World War saw little urban combat at all, so the pre-war US military put little emphasis on urban warfare doctrine. Despite this, the US military did well with urban combat in World War II thanks to both a doctrinal and a societal proclivity to adaptation. At Aachen, the best showing by the US military in urban combat, the US Army attacked and captured Aachen despite the being outnumbered by 3 to 1. The city was first surrounded, a vital prerequisite that would be neglected at Seoul and Hue. In the case of Manila, Japanese troops received orders to withdraw only after it was too late. Reading the book, I got the impression that in all the battles discussed, the lower ranks performed well, using creativity and improvisation to solve the unique problems while at Seoul and Hue, the higher ranks failed operationally by not encircling the cities. Notably, in both Aachen and Manila, American troops attacked from an unexpected direction. With increased urbanization and the desire by enemies to mitigate American strengths, the author discusses lessons and looks to the future.

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