

FM 3-19.15

CIVIL DISTURBANCE OPERATIONS



Headquarters, Department of the Army

April 2005

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Civil Disturbance Operations

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*This publication supersedes FM 19-15, 25 November 1985.

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Preface

Field Manual (FM) 3-19.15 addresses continental United States (CONUS) and outside continental United States (OCONUS) civil disturbance operations. Today, United States (US) forces are deployed on peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian assistance operations worldwide. During these operations, US forces are often faced with unruly and violent crowds intent on disrupting peace and the ability of US forces to maintain peace. Worldwide instability coupled with increasing US military participation in peacekeeping and related operations requires that US forces have access to the most current doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) necessary to quell riots and restore public order.

In addition to covering civil unrest doctrine for OCONUS operations, FM 3-19.15 addresses domestic unrest and the military role in providing assistance to civil authorities requesting it for civil disturbance operations. It provides the commander and his staff guidance for preparing and planning for such operations. The principles of civil disturbance operations, planning and training for such operations, and the TTP employed to control civil disturbances and neutralize special threats are discussed in this manual. It also addresses special planning and preparation that are needed to quell riots in confinement facilities are also discussed.

In the past, commanders were limited to the type of force they could apply to quell a riot. Riot batons, riot control agents, or lethal force were often used. Today, there is a wide array of nonlethal weapons (NLW) available to the commander that extends his use of force along the force continuum. This manual addresses the use of nonlethal (NL) and lethal forces when quelling a riot.

Appendix A complies with current Army directives, which state that the metric system will be incorporated into all new publications.

The proponent for this publication is HQ, TRADOC. Send comments and recommendations on Department of the Army (DA) Form 2028 (*Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms*) directly to Commandant, US Army Military Police School (USAMPS), ATTN: ATSJ-DD, 401 MANSCEN Loop, Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-8929.

Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns or pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

Chapter 1

Operational Threats of the Civil Disturbance Environment

As the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet communism in 1989, the Army was no longer concerned with containing the aggressive Soviet Union. The US Army began to transform because the battlefield on which it would fight had changed. Operations Just Cause, Joint Endeavor, Desert Shield, and Desert Storm have all been recognized as containing nontraditional battlefields. Following these operations, the Army was called upon to conduct peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian assistance operations. These operations required US forces to protect refugees and humanitarian workers and keep hostile factions separate to enforce peace.

GENERAL CAUSES FOR CIVIL UNREST

1-1. In these modern times, demonstrations, civil unrest, public disorder, and riots happen for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons are economic hardships, social injustices, ethnic differences (leading to oppression), objections to world organizations or certain governments, political grievances, and terrorist acts. An event can be triggered by a single cause or a combination of causes. For example, operations in the Balkans involving civil unrest and riots were the result of ethnic hatred, a lack of civil authority, food shortages, a revolution, and religious-based fighting factions.

1-2. Demonstrations may range from simple, nonviolent protests that address specific issues, to events that turn into full-scale riots. Gatherings in protest are recognized rights of any person or group, regardless of where US forces may be operating. This fundamental right is protected under the *Constitution of the US*. During peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations, US forces should never violate basic civil or human rights. Most protesters are law-abiding citizens who intend that their protests be nonviolent, but some protest planners insist that the event involve some kind of violence. Often, in the media, protesters can gain sympathy for their cause by prompting authorities to take physical action against them. Violence is often the result of demonstrators beginning to conduct unlawful or criminal acts and authorities (who are responsible for the safety and welfare of all) enforcing the laws of the municipality, state, or nation. The depth of violence is determined by the willingness of demonstrators to display and voice their opinions in support of their cause.

1-3. Commanders must be aware of the possibility that some individuals or groups within an organized demonstration may have the intent to cause disruption, incite violence, destroy property, and provoke the authorities. The tactical situation and actions of the crowd should dictate control and enforcement options. Agitators and criminal infiltrators within the crowd can

lead to the eruption of violence. Inciting a crowd to violence or a greater intensity of violence through the use of brutish enforcement tactics should be avoided. Publicity can be detrimental to authorities and beneficial to crowds because it can further their causes.

1-4. Community unrest results in urban conflicts that arise from highly emotional social and economic issues. Economically deprived inner city residents may feel that they are treated unjustly or ignored by people in power and authority. Tensions can build quickly in a community over a variety of issues, such as hunger, poor employment opportunities, inadequate community services, poor housing, and labor issues. Tension in these areas creates the potential for violence. When tensions are high, it takes a small (seemingly minor) incident, rumor, or act of injustice to ignite groups within a crowd to riot and act violently. This is particularly true if community relations with authorities are part of the problem.

1-5. Significant ethnic differences in a community can create an atmosphere of distrust, even hatred. Unrest among ethnic groups competing for jobs, living areas, and sparse essentials can cause an eruption of civil disorder and/or riots. As emotions run high, violence becomes likely.

1-6. Terrorist organizations may infiltrate groups within a demonstrating crowd. These terrorist groups may intend to embarrass their government or other governments. Terrorist infiltrators can be used to provoke crowds as a diversion, as part of a demonstration, or as cover for terrorist acts.

CROWD DEVELOPMENT

1-7. Crowds are a gathering of a multitude of individuals and small groups that have temporarily assembled in the same place. These small groups are usually comprised of friends, family members, or acquaintances that represent a group belief or cause. Individuals assume a sense of anonymity—they are viewed as just another face in the crowd. People in small groups are known only to companions in their group and to others in the gathering that have come from the same neighborhood or community. Commanders must consider how the individuals assembled and how they are interacting during the gathering process.

GATHERINGS

1-8. The assembly process of a gathering refers to the movement of people from different locations to a common location within a given period. This largely determines who participates. Creating a gathering from a crowd is a process with a beginning, middle, and end. As shown in *Figure 1-1* a crowd has an assembly process that leads to the gathering of the crowd, which is always followed by a dispersal process.

1-9. Gatherings are often assisted by the activities of individuals or groups with a specific agenda, such as yelling catchy slogans and cheers that everyone can easily pick up and join in on. Some groups are so well organized that they can prestage leaders to infiltrate a gathering. This creates unity,

even inciting newcomers to join their cause. The first phase of the gathering is the assembly process. It can occur in one of two ways—impromptu or organized.

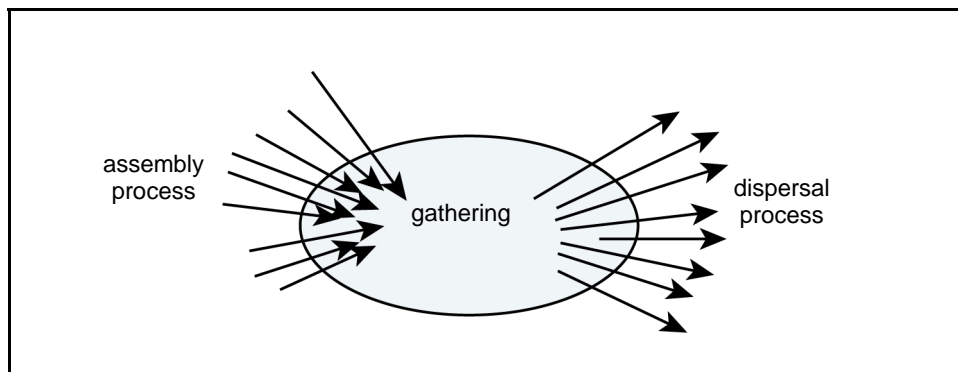


Figure 1-1. Crowd Building

IMPROMPTU GATHERINGS

1-10. Impromptu gatherings usually develop informally and are mostly done by word of mouth (one person to another or one group to another). Participants spread intelligence by telling one another when, where, and what is happening and inviting them to participate. An example of an impromptu gathering would be a gathering at a secured food distribution point after receiving information (by word of mouth) that a large truck carrying much-needed supplies and food is about to arrive. In this case, hunger would be the driving force causing the migration of people to the food distribution facility.

ORGANIZED GATHERINGS

1-11. Like an impromptu gathering, an organized gathering can also involve individuals and groups passing on information to one another. Passing intelligence of police activity and occurrences and on when and where events will take place helps organizers to prestage participants. Rarely is one represented group responsible for pulling together a gathering. Organized gatherings rely heavily on established groups that attract people to gather. Recent examples of these well-organized groups are anarchists, anti-globalization groups, and anti-free-enterprise groups. Groups representing extreme religious faiths and ethnic organizations have been common too. Some gatherings involve groups from rival, or even warring, factions.

1-12. Organized gathering processes rely more on centralized planning and organization. One or more of the groups offer organizers lists of individual names and groups, which they contact as potential participants. Modern technologies are available to these organizers through telephone banks, mailing lists, or e-mail addresses. In preparation for a long-term event, some

group organizers have the means to provide logistical support of transportation, food, and water to participants.

During the preelection period, Bosnian-Serbs (in a bid not to lose any of the territory they had won during the war) began to organize this fiercely contested city. Serbian mobs attacked US forces with bricks, rocks, metal bars, and firebombs. Organization for this altercation started days before, as many witnessed the prestaging of the items to be used in the attack. Wheelbarrows, 55-gallon metal drums, and other large containers were filled with the ammunition that would later be used to attack peacekeepers.

Brcko, Bosnia
September 1996

CROWD BUILDING

1-13. The second phase of the gathering process is the building of the crowd. Old concepts of crowds based on stereotypes are no longer true. Studies show that—

- Crowds are made of many entities, and all participants are not the same.
- Crowds are not made of isolated individuals but of a minority of individuals and a majority of small groups who may or may not be acquainted with each other.
- Groups and individuals in the crowd are not unanimous in their motivation.
- Groups and individuals in the crowd are usually not anonymous to each other, especially different groups gathered at the same place.
- Individuals within a crowd are not given to unique emotional displays; although known within a group, most individuals would not want to draw attention to themselves.
- Groups within a crowd will often act in unison in an attempt to achieve their agendas.
- Crowds are generally not unique or distinguished by violence or unlawful conduct.

DISPERSAL PROCESS OF A GATHERING

1-14. The last and final phase of any gathering of a crowd is the dispersal process. It involves the movement of people from the common location where they assembled to one or more alternate locations. The dispersal process ends the gathering of a crowd or at least begins its decline. The dispersal can occur on a routine, emergency, or coerced basis.

ROUTINE DISPERSAL

1-15. The routine dispersal may be specified in advance. It can also be included in the assembly instructions given by the organizers of an event.

EMERGENCY DISPERSAL

1-16. An emergency dispersal occurs when people evacuate an area in result of an unexpected crisis, such as a fire, explosion, bomb threat, or terrorist act. Individuals in such an emergency quickly recover from the initial shock. They keep their wits about them and improvise ways of extricating themselves and their companions from the dangerous situation. However, tragedies have occurred in some emergency dispersal situations. Therefore, it is important that forces on the scene are careful not to misinterpret what is occurring.

COERCION DISPERSAL

1-17. Coercion dispersal is caused by the use of force at some level. This is not necessarily the best way to force the dispersal of a crowd. The negotiated management of crowds is the preferred method and has proven to be highly successful in getting crowd organizers to police themselves, especially if the demonstration and/or protest leaders are available and willing to participate.

CROWD DYNAMICS

1-18. Understanding crowds and how individuals and groups form crowds through the gathering process is important because these issues apply to the dynamics of a crowd. Under most circumstances, gathered crowds are orderly and present little or no problems for authorities. Crowds consist of people who, although very motivated and passionate, are also subject to their own need for creature comforts. Rainy, cold, and nasty weather has a way of disheartening all but the few highly motivated and disciplined individuals. If problems exist, they usually fall into the following three categories:

- **Public disorder.** Public disorder is a basic breach of civic order. Individuals or small groups assembling have a tendency to disrupt the normal flow of things around them.
- **Public disturbance.** Public disturbance is designed to cause turmoil on top of the disruption. Individuals and groups assembling into a crowd begin chanting, yelling, singing, and voicing individual or collective opinions.
- **Riot.** A riot is a disturbance that turns violent. Assembled crowds become a mob that violently expresses itself by destroying property, assaulting others, and creating an extremely volatile environment.

1-19. Being part of a crowd of people has certain effects on different people. Each individual in a crowd is susceptible to behaving in a way that is contrary to their normal behavior. Some reasons for these behaviors are as follows:

- Crowds provide individuals with a sense of anonymity. With so many others, an individual realizes that he is just another face in the crowd, giving a sense of invulnerability.
- Crowd and individual behaviors are impersonal by nature. The “them-against-us” attitude affords those within the crowd the ability to freely (without hesitation or reservation) be verbally abusive, throw objects, or attack anyone who gets in the way.

- Crowds provide individuals with the idea that their moral responsibilities have shifted from themselves as a person to the crowd as a whole. Large numbers of people discourage individual behavior, and the urge to imitate others within the crowd is strong. Individuals look to others around them for cues of what to do next, disregarding their own background and training. Often, it is only the strong, well-disciplined person who can resist the prevailing behavior of a crowd.
- Crowd behavior influences the actions of both the disorderly individuals of the crowd and the authorities tasked to control them.

1-20. Individuals within a crowd are at times driven by deep-felt emotions. Emotional contagion is the most dramatic psychological factor of crowd dynamics. It provides the crowd with a temporary bond of psychological unity. Lasting long enough, this unity can push a simple organized crowd into a mob. Normal law and authority are rejected en masse under these conditions, increasing the potential for violence and panic to erupt.

1-21. Panic can erupt quickly, especially when crowds turn into mobs. Individuals within the mob can easily sense that their safety and well-being are at risk, putting them in a “fight-or-flight” mentality. Adding to the panic and confusion is the use of riot control agents (RCAs) by authorities in an attempt to gain control. Individuals in a mob, during the heat of confrontation, may attempt to leave and find that there are no escape routes and that roads are blocked. This can often lead to violent, physical attacks.

CROWD TYPES

1-22. Gaining an understanding of crowds and the dynamics that cause individuals or groups to join together in a crowd should be every leader’s responsibility. Active, expressive, acquisitive, and hostile are not acceptable terms used to describe a crowd. They are the motives inferred from the actions the crowd takes. No gathering of a crowd is persistently or exclusively active, expressive, acquisitive, or hostile. For the sake of description, crowds can be identified as casual, sighting, agitated, or mob-like.

CASUAL CROWDS

1-23. Casual crowds are identified as individuals or small groups with nothing in common to bind them together. If they have an agenda, it is their own. They arrive separately and leave separately. Casual crowds are made up of individuals or small groups occupying the same common place, such as a shopping mall where these individuals or small groups meet.

SIGHTING CROWDS

1-24. Sighting crowds are similar to casual crowds with one additional element—an event. People migrate as a crowd to sporting events, are attracted to fires and accidents, and attend music concerts. Individuals or small groups gather at these events for the same purpose. It is the event and/or one’s curiosity that compels a crowd to come together.

AGITATED CROWDS

1-25. Agitated crowds add responses that are based on the elements (people, space, and event). Individuals with strong emotional feelings within a crowd can quickly spread and infect the rest of the crowd. As more people within the crowd become emotionally involved, a sense of unity can develop, causing changes in the overall demeanor of the crowd. Yelling, screaming, crying, and profane name-calling are all associated with an agitated crowd.

MOB-LIKE CROWDS

1-26. Mobs have all the elements found in the first three types of crowds, with the addition of aggressive, physical, and sometimes violent actions. Under these conditions, individuals within a crowd will often say and do things they usually would not. Extreme acts of violence and property damage are often a part of mob activities. Mobs consist of (or involve) the elements of people and groups being mixed together and becoming fluid.

CROWD TACTICS

1-27. During a public disorder or disturbance, individuals and small groups within a crowd use any number of tactics to resist authority and disrupt and add turmoil in order to achieve their goals. These tactics can be unplanned or planned and violent or nonviolent. The more organized and purposeful a crowd becomes, the more likely a tactic will be used.

NONVIOLENT BEHAVIOR

1-28. As explained earlier in this chapter, most gatherings of individuals and small groups into a crowd do not involve violent behavior. A public disorder or disturbance usually involves some harmless name-calling, demonstrations to express views, corporate yelling and chanting, and even singing and dancing. In some instances, there may be property damage and the erection of makeshift barricades. All four types of crowds can be nonviolent, but mobs and agitated crowds have the greatest tendency to turn violent. Nonviolent actions of a crowd are disruptive because they are in direct conflict with what authorities want them to do, such as refusing to leave when directed, locking arms, and sitting in front of or around areas and buildings that the authorities are attempting to clear.

VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

1-29. A crowd that becomes a mob can be very violent and destructive. Although some nonviolent activities occur, violent crowds strike out physically at bystanders or others in the crowd, destroying both private and government property, setting fires, and employing bombs (in extreme cases). The only limitations for violent crowds are their own imaginations, the training of their leaders, and the materials readily available.

1-30. Violent crowds may erect barricades and physical barriers to impede the movement of authorities and prevent them from entering certain areas and/or buildings and to hide their activities. Common materials used for barricades

include vehicles, felled trees, furniture, felled light poles, fencing materials, or anything else on hand and readily available.

1-31. Setting fires and preventing firefighters access to the structure by blocking it is another violent crowd tactic. Often, fires are set to create confusion in authorities or as a diversion to another activity.

RIOTS

1-32. A riot is one or more groups or individuals who are part of a larger crowd that involves threats of violence against persons or property. In some cases, a crowd will continue to gather until it evolves into a riot.

1-33. Riots vary considerably in both targets and players. A communal riot, for instance, deals with deep-seated ethnic, religious, and language differences. Commodity riots involve an attack on property by acts of vandalism, looting, and arson. Protest riots, such as the riot around the World Trade Organization (WTO) Assembly in Seattle, Washington (30 November 1999), illustrated individuals and groups aggressively and sometimes violently acting out or voicing their opposition to the assembly. The Democratic Convention in Chicago, Illinois, in 1968 reflects a riot that directly targeted police and authority in general. Celebration riots occur across the US as a result of home team victories in sporting events, among other reasons. Celebrating crowds look to make the moment more memorable through raucous acts that demonstrate their joy or happiness, for example, the riots that took place in Chicago in 1992 as a result of the Chicago Bulls winning the National Basketball Association (NBA) Championship.

1-34. Commanders and leaders must be aware that highly organized groups of protesters and/or demonstrators have developed tactics to disrupt the control force. These crowd tactics were published in handbooks for communist organizers during the Cold War, and today the Internet contains sites that are devoted to sharing these tactics with the general public and various protest groups. Although these tactics are somewhat outdated, commanders and leaders must be aware of them and their potential consequences. Many of these groups, such as anarchists, often mock the tactics employed against large crowds; for example, they may identify the police as "Darth Vader Cops" when the control force response is in full riot control gear. Commanders must be aware that well-organized crowds may attempt to engage the control force, surround it, and overpower it by sheer numbers. To avoid this, commanders must do a detailed terrain analysis (intelligence preparation of the battlefield [IPB]) of the area to include all approach and exit routes in the area. The control force flanks have to be protected to avoid being enveloped by the mob. To avoid being enveloped, the on-site commander should keep the crowd at a comfortable distance from the control force formation, which is usually the lethal zone of his NL munitions. Establishing predetermined rally points for the control force is critical in the event that this type of tactic is used by the crowd.

TACTICS USED TO DEFEAT AUTHORITIES

1-35. Organized mobs will try to defeat the control force by employing several different types of tactics. These tactics include the following:

- Constructing barricades.
- Using Molotov cocktails, smoke grenades, rocks, and slingshots.
- Feinting and flanking actions.

BARRICADES

1-36. By constructing barricades, the rioters are trying to protect themselves from assault by the control force. If the control force does advance toward the barricade, rioters hope that the barricade will split the control force and leave it vulnerable to actions by the mob.

MOLOTOV COCKTAILS, SMOKE GRENADES, ROCKS, AND SLINGSHOTS

1-37. Angry mobs will often attempt to disrupt the control force by throwing rocks and other projectiles. As the situation deteriorates, the mob may escalate the violence by using a battery of slingshots that will pellet the control force with a barrage of projectiles ranging from small rocks to marbles. They may also use smoke grenades (homemade or store-bought) to mask their movements. Finally, Molotov cocktails are used against personnel, employed vehicles, and portions of the control force. The mob will attempt to gain a position above an armored vehicle to enable them to drop a Molotov cocktail into an open hatch.

FEINTING AND FLANKING ACTIONS

1-38. Organized mobs may attempt to disrupt the movement of the control force by feinting an assault. When the control force moves to blunt the assault, the mob will assault the exposed flanks in an attempt to split the control force and envelop a portion of it.

WEAPONS

1-39. Mobs will often use various types of weapons against authorities to achieve their agendas and goals. It is extremely important that leaders train soldiers to recognize possible threats of the various weapons used by crowds or mobs, enabling the soldiers to react with the appropriate minimum force.

VERBAL ABUSE

1-40. In almost every instance of a civil disturbance or riot, verbal abuse will be an aggressive tool. Obscene language, racial remarks, taunts, ridicules, and jeers should always be expected. It is apparent that the purpose for using verbal abuse is to anger, demoralize, and provoke a physical response. Undisciplined, untrained soldiers who face such an attack could cause the situation to escalate. Just one provoked action of a soldier could be interpreted as an act of brutality by the media.

PERCEIVED INNOCENT PEOPLE OR THE WEAK

1-41. Women, children, and the elderly have often been used as pawns in civil disturbance operations. On many occasions, the innocent and the weak are moved to the front of the crowd and used as a barrier. With the innocent and the weak directly facing authorities, aggressive and violence-prone individuals or groups behind them attempt to provoke authorities to react. Often, this tactic is to exploit the situation in the eyes of the media for propaganda value. Despite the perception of sometimes being weaker, women, children, and the elderly can be just as committed to the insurgency as those behind them.

BARRICADES

1-42. Barricades are made of anything large or heavy enough to impede or prevent the movement of authorities. Trees, vehicles, fires, and furniture are all examples of items used to erect a barricade.

THROWN OBJECTS

1-43. In many cases, a crowd will throw anything in their reach that can be picked or thrown. Rotten fruit and/or vegetables, rocks, bricks, bottles, sticks, and pieces of lumber are most often used because they are readily available. More sophisticated types of thrown objects are improvised bombs, such as petrol bombs or tennis balls with nails sticking out of them. Never discount that these individuals and groups could acquire hand-thrown explosives, such as sticks of dynamite or grenades.

VEHICLES AND OTHER OBJECTS

1-44. Vehicles and other objects can be placed on higher ground (atop a hill or in a building) to disrupt civil disturbance operations. For example, a vehicle or tire can be set on fire and rolled down a hill, carts or barrels filled with hazardous or flammable materials can be pushed down a hill, or burning furniture and petrol bombs can be thrown from two-story or higher buildings or toward a formation of soldiers.

FIRE

1-45. Rioters have set buildings, vehicles, and other structures on fire to block the advances of authorities and to create confusion and diversions. If property damage is the goal of a crowd, fire is an effective tool. A sniper, for example, may set a building on fire to divert attention or provide maximum target possibilities. Other tactics used, particularly in the Balkans, were to flood the lower floors or basements of structures with flammable liquids or gas and then ignite it in an opportune moment.

FIREARMS

1-46. Sniping or massing fire from within the crowd, in buildings, or other covered positions can (at times) be effective tools for terrorists using a crowd to cover their acts. Firearms are anything that fires a projectile toward a target of opportunity.

EXPLOSIVES

1-47. A bomber's imagination is the only limiting factor in the use of explosives. Explosives can be used as simple diversions to block the advances of formations or provide an escape for rioters. The worst use of explosives is to purposely kill, injure, or demoralize authorities that are protecting and assuring the safety of everyone.

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