Preface

It was August 1993. After five years of military service in Europe, I was driving across the United States for a year-long research fellowship with a West Coast think tank. The focus of the year would be, I had been told, left pretty much to whatever security topic I thought might be of value to the US Army. West Texas gives one plenty of time to think. Operation Just Cause had taken place less than four years earlier; most of its operations had involved Panama's urban areas. The planet would soon pass the hallmark of half its human population living in such environments. My suggestion that investigating operations therein would be time well spent fell on deaf ears back in the nation's capital. Two months passed. The loss of two Blackhawk helicopters and 18 US soldiers' lives in Mogadishu, Somalia, caused reconsideration. Contemplation of urban undertakings became worthy.

So, it is nearly a generation later, after well over a thousand formal interviews and many less-formal discussions have granted me insights 10 lifetimes of personal experience could not provide, that I hope via this offering to repay the wisdom of those many people with whom I spoke. Men and women providing thoughts and sharing experiences did so from around the world. Iraq, Afghanistan, East Africa, Japan, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, much of Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and the United States are an incomplete list of countries whose individuals from virtually every walk of life cast light on these most complex of challenges. It very quickly became evident that consideration of military concerns alone was insufficient. It likewise was obvious that very different types of disasters—earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, flooding, war's devastation, terrorism, disease and others—offer lessons of value to them all. Equally evident: the exceptional phenomena that are megacities likewise provide perspectives applicable to urban areas of any size—and often to catastrophes in other environments

as well. The hope is that the following pages prove valuable to those whose responsibilities include preparing for, responding to or recovering from urban tragedy.

It has become popular among some to forecast the death or, at a minimum, the diminishment of cities. Pundits foreseeing their demise will find the detrimental effects of remote work, Covid-19 flight or increasing costs of urban living greatly exaggerated. Cities are here to stay. The twenty-first century is far more likely to prove prescient those declaring it the urban century than those ready to see tumbleweeds roaming Madison Avenue or Shibuya Crossing. Urban areas have proven—continue to prove—adept at evolving to serve their occupants' needs. It is therefore essential to be ever-ready to address the inevitable calamities to come.

I would like to individually thank each of those more than one thousand interviewed, hundreds of authors and many others who have given so much and continue to enhance our understanding of Earth's most influential environs. It is a desirable but impossible goal given the passage of years and imperfect memory. Please allow this too brief list to represent the far greater whole, including those I have surely overlooked and regret not naming. Many thanks to John, Bob, Lise, Clif, Bill, Ed, Dave, Jesse, Chris, Junichi, Jenny, Jim, Robert, Ken, Andrew, Bill, Pehr, Nick, JJ, Mohammed, Koji, Akiko, Mike, Rick, Aaron, Sheri, Ben, Randy, Gideon, Doug, Pam, Larry, Myron, Mike, Kevin, Cullen, Fred, Ernie, Drew, Suzanne, Gerry, Scott, Rick, Ted, Kazuaki, Jamie, Brian, Sherilyn, Kent, Gary, Ian, Allan, Peter, Todd, Paul, Jason, Steve, Simeon, Gretchen, Tetsu, Eric, Leonard, Dionne, Vinson, Don, Tristan, Lou, Claudia, Carl, Shane, Megan, Angus, Fenner, Ryoichi, Alex, Harrison, Pat, Lester, Kelly, Barbara, Noboru, Beth, Arthur, Joel, Tim, Henk, James, Donna, Shigeru, Brenton, Christine, Colin, Matt, Roger, Caleb, Greg, Alessandro, Patrice, Adam, Phyllis, Shannon, Nicole, Becky, Shoko, Sidney, Ann, Chua Jin, Geri, Tom, Dan, Marcus, Gene, Ernst, Joshua, Darren, Al, Will, Andy, Mark, Jaime, Duncan, Liu, Kei, Duane, Ross, Sid, Sean, Luc, Yuna, Jody, Harry, Hugh, Jeremy, Les, Horacio, Stephen, Tim, Chuck, Karl, Jonathan, Rodney, Singe, Joan, Nikki, Lisa, Irena, Clint, Ralph, Ingred, Phil, Liz, Ashleigh, Gina, Johnny, JB, Sandy, George, Howard, Carl, Stuart, Marilyn, Alain, Luke, Tony, Ron, David, Joe, Gordon, Keith, Julie, Rod, Martin, Lois, Erik, Susan, Lance, Rusty, Jay, Barak, Melissa, Mary, Ronald, Charles, Johan, Houston, Amy, Jeff, Frank, Nigel, Marygail, Terri, Gayle, Alison, Ralph, Marion and Michele. A particular nod to

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