TACTICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE GROZNY COMBAT EXPERIENCE

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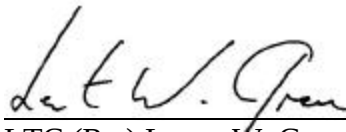
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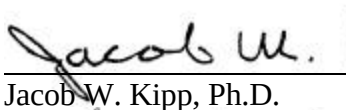
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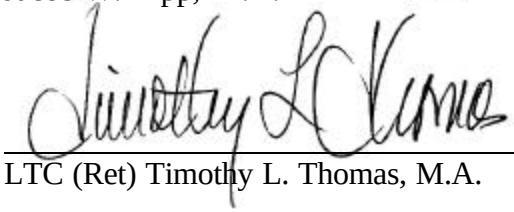
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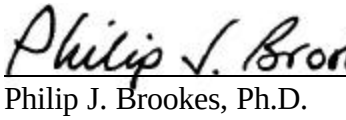
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ABSTRACT

TACTICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE GROZNY COMBAT EXPERIENCE, by MAJ Brett C. Jenkinson, 120 pages.

The Russian battles for Grozny, Chechnya provide relevant contemporary examples for the study of urban combat involving modern, conventional forces on one side and a guerrilla force on the other. The first and fourth battles for Grozny, a city of nearly a half million people, were the major Russian assaults to seize the city from the Chechens during the latter's struggle for secession from the Russian Federation. This thesis provides an explanation of the historical method used, a history of the Chechen-Russian relations leading to the battles, a description of the first and fourth battles, their lessons learned, and an analysis of the value of those lessons learned. This thesis provides a frame of reference for future urban combat and highlights valuable techniques to improve urban combat military theory.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thesis committee members assisted me in refining the content, controlling ideas, and appearance of this thesis throughout. Dr. Roger Spiller and LTC John Suprin helped me develop the controlling theme in Chapter 5. Otherwise, this thesis is entirely my own work except as noted.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Preface

From 31 December 1994 to 13 February 1995, some of the bloodiest street fighting took place since the Battle for Berlin, more than fifty years prior.[1] One of the belligerent forces had the advantage provided by its institutional knowledge of fighting the three largest urban battles in history, including Berlin, plus all the combat power and technological advantages of a modern army. Yet, an out-gunned, disorganized, irregular force brought the modern army to a halt as the modern army learned how urban combat tends to "even the odds." In the streets of Grozny, Chechnya, the Russian Army stumbled at the hands of a small but determined group of Chechen fighters.

This thesis, "Tactical Observations from the Grozny Experience," examines Russian and Chechen lessons learned from the first and fourth Battles for Grozny, December 1994--January 1995 and December 1999--February 2000, respectively. These two battles are unique since they provide contemporary examples of urban combat where a modern force attacked an irregular force in the same well-defended city. Although these battles have not been widely analyzed or incorporated into current US urban combat doctrine, the lessons learned from these battles assist in the development of US urban combat theory and doctrine.

Any army's first battle provides a military analyst the opportunity to judge whether training and preparation had an impact on the outcome of the battle.[2] Grozny I and Grozny IV are quite unique because they offer two battles between the same

belligerents, over the same terrain, during the same time of year, and with a relatively short amount of time between them. The first and fourth battles, as initial operations, permit the isolation of most all other variables that would normally cloud an analyst's conclusions about the impact of training and preparation. The conclusions contained in this thesis are valid and relevant points about the training and preparation for urban combat.

Urban combat concerns US Armed Forces for two reasons: 1) The world's population is increasingly urban[3] and 2) Most potential threats recognize US technological dominance in open terrain, as demonstrated during Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait and Iraq.[4]

As cities grow, it will be harder to avoid them, especially since their ports, airfields and infrastructure are often vital to operations.[5] Recognizing US technological dominance in open terrain and the fact the US has not conducted a large-scale urban battle since 1968, an enemy may try to negate US technological superiority by drawing US forces into an environment that minimizes the advantages of technology: the concrete canyons of the urban environment.

The US last fought in a large city more than thirty years ago in Hue, Vietnam. This is not to say that the US has had no experience in urban combat since then. US forces have most recently fought in cities during the invasion of Panama in 1989-1990 and while serving in Somalia in 1992-1993. In comparison to Grozny, fighting in Mogadishu, Somalia and in Panama City, Panama, was perhaps no less intense, but limited in scope. In both instances, US objectives were to destroy or isolate small, combat outposts to facilitate the capture of enemy leaders.[6] US objectives were not to

seize and systematically clear entire cities. In contrast, during the first and fourth battles for Grozny, Russian objectives were the systematic seizure of an entire city while Chechen fighters defended throughout. Fighting in Grozny was not confined to isolated strongpoints.

Using the Russian Army as a typical modern army and the Chechen fighters as a typical threat force, US Armed Forces can learn much from both sides: from the Russians--what could happen to unprepared US forces in urban combat; from the Chechens--what tactics enemy forces may use against the US in urban combat. The significance of the Grozny fights is that the Russian objective was to seize and systematically clear the city, an unfamiliar task to today's US forces. Thus, these battles provide valuable lessons that should shape urban combat theory. Theory, in turn, should be incorporated into new US Armed Forces urban combat doctrine.

Thesis Format

The primary question this thesis will investigate is, "What were the tactical lessons learned during the first and fourth battles for Grozny?" This question incorporates several secondary questions within the framework of the US Army's elements of combat power[7] (see definitions in Key Terms below):

1. What were the maneuver experiences that resulted in success or failure?
2. What were the firepower experiences that resulted in success or failure?
3. What were the experiences in protection that resulted in success or failure?
4. What were the leadership experiences that resulted in success or failure?
5. What were the informational experiences that resulted in success or failure?

Regardless of whether a specific tactic results in success or failure, if a tactic can be directly attributed to an element of combat power, this thesis lists the lesson learned. It views experiences from the Russian and the Chechen perspectives.

This thesis uncovers tactical lessons by dividing the thesis into five chapters. Chapter 1, defines the research question, explains the significance of the topic, organization of the thesis, definitions of key terms used throughout the thesis, limitations and delimitations of the thesis, and the research method used. Chapter 2 provides the historical facts in the form of orders of battle for the fights to lay the backdrop for Russian and Chechen lessons learned. Chapter 3 describes the conduct of the battles, while Chapter 4 provides the lessons learned. Chapter 5 provides the "so what" of the thesis to show its relevance today.

Key Terms

This thesis uses terminology and definitions common to the US Armed Forces. Because US doctrinal terminology regarding urban fighting is imprecise or inaccurate, this thesis refines terms for clarity when appropriate. The following terms provide a basic working knowledge of the urban combat lexicon:

Built-Up Area. "A concentration of structures, facilities, and people that forms the economic and cultural focus for the surrounding area."[8]

Close Quarters Combat (CQC). "Combative techniques that include advanced marksmanship, use of special purpose weapons, munitions, demolitions, and selective target engagement conducted by small, specially trained units against [enemy] to defeat a hostile force with a minimum of collateral damage."[9]

Combat Power. "The total means of destructive and/or disruptive force which a military unit/formation can apply against the opponent at a given time."[10] The US Army considers combat power to consist of five elements: maneuver, firepower, protection, leadership, and information.[11] (See definitions of each element).

Firepower. "The amount of fires that a position, unit, or weapons system can deliver. Fires are effects of lethal and nonlethal weapons."[12]

Information. "Facts, data, or instructions in any medium or form, or the meaning that a human assigns to data by means of the known conventions used in their representation."[13]

Joint Urban Operations (JUO). "All joint operations planned and conducted across the range of military operations on or against objectives on a topographical complex and its adjacent natural terrain where man-made construction and the density of noncombatants are the dominant features."[14]

Leadership. "Influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization."[15]

Maneuver. "The employment of forces, through movement combined with fire or fire potential, to achieve a position of advantage with respect to the enemy to accomplish the mission. [It] is the means by which commanders concentrate combat power to achieve surprise, shock, momentum and dominance."[16]

Operational Art. "The employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates to the joint

commander's strategy into operational design, and ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the key activities at all levels of war."[17]

Operations. "A series of tactical actions (battles, engagements, strikes) conducted by various combat forces of a single or several services, coordinated in time and place, to accomplish operational, and sometimes strategic objectives in an operational area."[18]

Protection. "The preservation of the fighting potential of a force so the commander can apply the maximum force at the decisive time and place."[19]

Strategy. "The art and science of developing and employing armed forces and other instruments of national power in a synchronized fashion to secure national or multinational objectives."[20]

Tactics. "The employment of units in combat, including the ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other, the terrain, and the enemy to translate potential combat power into victorious battles and engagements."[21] In the US Army, tactics refers to those actions conducted at the Corps and below. In the Russian Army, tactics refers to those actions conducted at the Division and below.[22]

Urban Operations (UO). A non-doctrinal term that refers to all actions across the operational continuum, from peace support operations to high-intensity combat, which are conducted in an urban or built-up area (see Joint Urban Operations.)

Limitations

The study of the battles for Grozny poses two significant problems: 1) There are few primary sources available in the United States, and 2) Many of the primary sources are not translated into English. Several Western or independent journalists witnessed the

first battle for Grozny and have provided eyewitness accounts. However, for reasons that will be discussed in chapter 3, journalists' accounts of fighting prior to the first battle for Grozny may not be wholly accurate as they generally reflect Chechen views or perspectives.[23] There are very few primary sources by Russian participants. Nonetheless, a military analysis of available sources provides valuable perspectives for US Forces.

Delimitations

The scope of this thesis is limited to the tactical actions (see Key Terms) during the first and fourth battles for Grozny. The purposes for this narrow scope are many. The Russian Army and Chechen forces fought these two battles under nearly identical physical conditions. Comparing the Russian and Chechen success and failures in successive battles over the same terrain, with the same army, the same enemy, in the same climate, provides an exceptional opportunity to analyze which tactics worked and which did not.

This thesis is limited to tactical lessons in order to reduce the probability of causal error. Analysis at the tactical level almost always provides a direct correlation between cause and effect, especially when two battles occur within a relatively short time and there no revolutionary technological advances between the two. Russian and Chechen successes or failures may be almost entirely attributed to the elements of combat power displayed in their tactics.

Research Method

This thesis analyzes the primary question using the historical method of analysis. The historical method consists of six steps. The first step is topic selection and refinement. Second is gathering all the relevant evidence to answer the research question. Third is recording the pertinent evidence. Fourth is the critical evaluation of all the evidence. Fifth is the arrangement of data into an understandable and meaningful pattern to answer the research question. Sixth is communicating the findings in a way that promotes full understanding of the subject.[24]

The thesis topic is researchable and supportable. The key works concerning the events leading to the Russo-Chechen Wars include Anatol Lieven's *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*; Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal's *Chechnya: The Permanent Crisis*; and Fred Cole's *The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire.* The key works that describe the conduct of the Russo-Chechen Wars include Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas' *The War in Chechnya*; the British Conflict Studies Research Centre's *The Second Chechen War*; and the various works by Dr. Jake Kipp and Lieutenant Colonels (retired) Les Grau and Tim Thomas of the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The analysts of the FMSO provide the most insightful and complete set of resources of those mentioned. Within urban combat working groups inside the Department of Defense, the FMSO is regarded as the single-most credible source in studies and analyses of the Grozny battles.[25] Within academic circles, Anatol Lieven's text is considered the best primary source on the Russo-Chechen Wars.[26]

Additional sources on the topic include: US Army War College publications, studies from the RAND Corporation, analysis on Russian Army operations in Chechnya from *Jane's Defense Weekly*, studies from the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, the *Armed Forces Journal International*, *US Marine Corps Gazette*, *Army* magazine, and various branch magazines of the US Army. Additionally, conference notes and slide presentations from the Combined Arms MOUT Task Force and the Joint MOUT Working Group's 1999 and 2000 Conferences detail lessons learned at the tactical level in the Grozny battles.

Significance of the Study

Several monographs and theses posit that there is a shortcoming in US urban combat training and readiness. There have also been several monographs and theses that posit that US urban combat doctrine is insufficient to fight the next urban fight. However, beyond identifying the problems, none have provided solutions to incorporate into urban combat theory and doctrine in order to correct doctrinal shortcomings. The US Army cannot wait for the next urban fight before it takes corrective action. While this thesis does not refute previous conclusions, it does serve as a single-source document of tactical lessons learned in urban combat from the first and fourth battles for Grozny. These lessons provide historical perspective for revising urban combat theory and doctrine.

This analysis is especially important to the US Army because it helps fill the doctrinal void in urban combat at the tactical level between the battalion and the corps or joint task force. The Army's FM 90-10-1, *An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-*

Up Areas and the US Marine Corps' MCWP 3-35.3, *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT)* focus on tactical actions by squads, platoons, companies, and battalions. US urban combat doctrine stops there. Neither manual pertains to urban combat by the larger, conventional units that will conduct the seizure of a large city.

Although the US Marines have conducted some operational level exercises in San Diego, San Francisco and Monterey, California, the largest urban combat training exercise the US Army has physically conducted was Brigade-level. At its premier Combat Training Centers (CTCs), the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana; the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California; or the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) at Hohenfels, Germany, the US Army trains only one brigade at a time. The two largest urban training areas at the JRTC and CMTC consist of only thirty-two buildings. The NTC has no urban areas at all but sometimes constructs small, Bedouin camps within objective areas. Computerized combat simulations do not attempt to replicate urban combat above squad-level. Thus, the US Army has no training base upon which to build urban combat theory or doctrine above brigade level.

No US Army doctrine exists for planning, coordinating, integrating, synchronizing, and executing a large-scale siege or capture of a city. The US Army has not rehearsed it and certainly is not prepared to execute it. Senior leaders do not have an appreciation for adequate force ratios, optimal task organization, the enormous shift in logistical concerns, increase in health concerns, or the specialized equipment that help make urban tactics successful. The tactical lessons from Grozny provide this requisite urban combat perspective.

Grozny represents the most recent seizure of a large city by a modern, conventional army. The lessons learned from Grozny will be invaluable in development of urban combat theory and doctrine. US Army doctrine must reach beyond the seizure of individual city blocks, traffic circles, bridges, or other key terrain within large cities. It must address the details of seizure of large cities. No doubt, US Army and Marine Corps have adequate doctrine and skills to enter and clear rooms, buildings, and individual city blocks. They are only prepared to seize key terrain and temporarily hold small sections of a city. Lessons from Grozny may help expand their capabilities and readiness.

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[1]Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), x.

[2]Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles: 1776-1965.* ed. Charles E. Heller and William A Stofft, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1986), ix.

[3]US Department of Defense, *Joint Urban Operations Handbook* (Fort Monroe, VA: Joint Warfighting Center, 2000), I-8.

[4]US Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Worldwide Threat in 2000: Global Realities of Our National Security.* Statement by George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, 2 February 2000; Internet, available from http://www.-odci.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/archives/2000/dic_speech_020200.html; accessed 31 March 2002.

[5]US Department of Defense, *Joint Urban Operations Handbook,* I-9.

[6]Ronald H Cole, *Operation JUST CAUSE: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama. February 1988-January 1990* (Fort Monroe, VA: Joint Warfighting Center, 1995), 14 and US Department of Defense, *Joint Military Operations Historical Collection* (Fort Monroe, VA: Joint Warfighting Center, 1997), VI-8.

[7]US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2001), 4-3.

[8]US Department of the Army, *FM 90-10-1, An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-Up Areas* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 1-1.

[9]US Department of the Army, *ST 31-20-6-1, Close Quarters Combat* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 1-6.

[10]US Department of Defense, *JP 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Fort Monroe, VA: Joint Warfighting Center, 2000), 87.

[11]US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, 4-3.

[12]US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, 4-6.

[13]US Department of Defense, *JP 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 223.

[14]US Department of Defense, *Joint Urban Operations Handbook*, GL-14.

[15]US Department of the Army, *FM 22-100, Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1999), 1-4.

[16]US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, 4-4.

[17]US Department of Defense, *JP 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 333-334.

[18]US Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations*, 2-3.

[19]Ibid., 4-8.

[20]Ibid., 2-3.

[21]Ibid., 2-5.

[22]Les Grau and Tim Thomas, Analysts, Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, interview by author, 3 May 2002.

[23]Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 119.

[24]Gray Wood. *Historian's Handbook (2nd Edition) – A Key to the Study and Writing of History*. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), 9.

[25]Major George Glaze, MOUT Officer in Charge at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, Louisiana, interview by author, 28 February 1999.

[26]Dr. Jacob Kipp, Director, Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, interview by author, 21 August 2001 and Dr. Bruce Menning, Office of the Directorate of Joint and Multinational Operations, US Army Command & General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, interview by author, 25 September 2001.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Creation of Chechen Nationalism

Fully understanding the Battles for Grozny requires basic knowledge of Russo-Chechen relations. For a detailed history of Russo-Chechen relations, see Anatol Lieven's *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*. By 1991, Chechnya had, perhaps, retained more of its ethnic homogeneity than any other Russian region. Some of its ethnic homogeneity may have stemmed from Chechnya's geographical positioning. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. North Caucasus Regional Map.[1]

A land-locked nation-state in the North Caucasus region, Chechnya is centered between the Black and Caspian Seas. It is bounded in the north, east and south by Dagestan, in the southwest by Georgia, in the west by Ingushetia, and in the northwest by Stavropol. Its southern border sits astride the center of the east-west running Caucasus Mountain range.

Unlike Chechnya's southern neighbors, the nearly impassible Caucasus Mountains saved Chechnya from invasion from the south and subsequent assimilation by the armies of the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and the Mongols throughout the Middle Ages. As a result, the Chechens have remained uniquely "indigenous to their area of settlement."[2] See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Chechnya Regional Relief Map.[3]

It was not until the mid-18th century that Russian Cossacks occupied northern Chechnya. Some historians believe the Chechen people requested Russian rule as a defense against the Ottoman Turks.[4] However, Chechnya has been subject to Russian expansionism. Russia originally had an interest in gaining access to the warm water ports of the Black Sea, uniting Georgia with Armenia, and opening trade routes to Iran and British India. Chechnya and the North Caucasus region lay in the way of those aims.[5]

A largely clan-based mountain people, the Chechens did not accept the Cossacks who ruled the lowlands.[6] The first recorded armed conflict between Russians and Chechens occurred in 1722, when Peter the Great's forces were prevented from entering Chechnya by way of Dagestan.[7] In the 1780s, militant leaders appeared among the Chechen clans [tieps]. One leader, a Sufi Muslim named Mansur Ushurma, promoted a revolt against Russia that was fueled by traditional clan values and the Islamic jihad (holy war). Mansur led this rebellion from 1780-1791.[8] The Russians captured Mansur in 1791 after a ten-year effort during a low-intensity, guerrilla war.[9]

From 1817 to 1854, the entire Caucasian region revolted against Russia although the Kingdom of Georgia voluntarily entered the Russian Empire, leaving Chechnya surrounded by Russian territory. In order to secure its lines of communication to and from Georgia, Russia began another offensive into Chechnya.[10]

During the early stages of this regional revolt, Russian forces commanded by Napoleonic war hero General Alexei Yermolov built fortresses as they pushed southward into the Caucasus region. It was during this time, from 1818 to 1819, that Russian forces built the fortress of Grozny, or Groznaya, meaning 'terrible' or 'menacing', on the site of

six leveled Chechen villages.[11] Yermolov's strategic purpose in building Grozny was to cut off Chechen movement from the mountains to the flatlands.[12] See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Russian Commander--General Alexei Yermolov.[13]

In the face of Yermolov's military successes, the Chechens embraced a second Sufi Muslim leader, Imam Shamil, from Dagestan. Shamil's leadership bolstered Chechnya's resistance from 1834 until 1859 when Shamil, like Mansur, was captured.[14] The Russians exiled Shamil to Russia and initiated an "ethnic cleansing" in the North

Caucasus. The Russian government initially deported, expelled, or executed more than 80,000 of Shamil's followers in Chechnya and Ingushetia. This was Russia's first demonstration of a recurring "divide and rule" policy.[15] Shamil's leadership, while earning Russian respect, also encouraged continued Islamic jihad and reinforced Chechen self-determination.[16] In its analysis of the situation, Russia failed to recognize the religious element of Shamil's resistance.[17] Shamil is shown in Figure 4, below.

Figure 4. Chechen Commander--Imam Shamil.[18]

By the late 19th century, Russian economic interests in Chechnya expanded due to Chechen crude oil production. In 1893, Russia drilled its first oil well in Chechnya. Less than ten years later, 14 percent of Russian crude oil originated in Chechnya.[19] With the Caucasian rebellion temporarily eliminated, Russia began to integrate Chechnya into

its economy. Russia conceded only a limited amount of Chechen autonomy in order to keep her interests safe.[20]

Russian strategic objectives shifted in 1917 as the Bolsheviks sought to unify the Caucasus region under the new communist system by exploiting tribal rivalries in Russian periphery states. While successful in Kazakhstan, this technique proved a difficult policy in Chechnya due to geographic isolation and isolation among its 135 largely independent clans.[21] Since Chechen nationalism was then nonexistent, the Bolsheviks used the Chechen common denomination, Sufi Islam, to attempt to unify the region.[22]

Between 1918 and 1920, the Bolsheviks entered into tenuous agreements they knew would not last but suited their short-term objective. Because most Chechen Muslim clans recalled Yermolov's "divide and rule" policy, clan leaders distrusted Bolshevik collaborators.[23] Despite mutual agreements, in 1920, the Red Army was forced to invade the newly proclaimed Chechen-Ingush state to put down a revolt led by Sheikh Gotsinskii and Shamil's grandson, Said Bek, and to absorb the region into the Soviet Union.[24]

After the revolt, Soviet Russia conceded white Cossack lands to the Chechens. This encouraged the Chechen-Ingush government to rejoin Soviet Russia, which it did in January 1921 as a member of the Mountain Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republics (ASSRs.)[25] From this pacification, Soviet Russia realized the importance of alliances. While providing Chechnya a semi-autonomous status, Joseph Stalin successfully kept the Chechens suppressed for nearly twenty years.[26] To do this, Stalin continued Yermolov's 1820s "divide and rule" policy, but used the new instruments of the Cheka and the

Communist Party.[27] To this end, Stalin's forces arrested and executed 14,000 Chechens between 1921 and 1937.[28]

In the winter of 1942-43, as Hitler's First Panzer Army invaded the North Caucasus region, many Chechens collaborated with Nazi Germany to join the mountain fighters of the Wermacht.[29] For Chechen crimes against the state, Soviet forces deported or executed nearly all ethnic Chechens in 1944. Over 60 percent of Chechnya's total population was deported to Kazakhstan while the remainder of the population, those of ethnic Russian (Cossack) or other North Caucasus origin, remained.[30] As with previous Russian and Soviet treatment of Chechnya, Stalin's actions strengthened Chechen spirit and adherence to clan traditions.[31]

Following Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev initiated a 'de-Stalinization' campaign and sought to pacify the North Caucasus region. A component of this campaign was to allow the surviving Chechens and other North Caucasus deportees to return to Chechnya after 1957.[32] As the deported Chechens returned home, the Russians gave each one a thousand rubles to help buy back the houses that Russians and Dagestanis had occupied in their absence. The Soviet government considered discussion of the deportation treason, punishable by imprisonment. In effect, the Soviet Union attempted to deny the event ever occurred.[33]

Having come to power in a coup deposing Khrushchev in November 1964, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev continued to exacerbate Russo-Chechen relations in the 1980s. From his service in with the Soviet Army in the Caucasus in 1943-44, Brezhnev developed a disdain for Chechens well before becoming President. Although Brezhnev acknowledged the deportation, he claimed it actually benefited the Chechen people by

providing them a "technical education." Further, he stated that he did not consider returning Chechens rehabilitated by any means but merely pardoned of their previous banditry and counter-revolutionary activities.[34]

As large numbers of ethnic Chechens returned, Chechnya's demographics changed drastically. Between 1959 and 1989, the ethnic Chechen population increased 251 percent and the average family grew to 5.1 people per household. Meanwhile, ethnic Russians had fewer children and began leaving Chechnya in large numbers. The Soviet Union perceived this demographic shift as a threat to stability in Chechnya.[35] The unintended consequence of Stalin's purges was an eventual Chechen population explosion. The demographic shift further strained Russo-Chechen ethnic tensions.[36]

Despite strained Russo-Chechen relations, economic motivators for retaining Chechnya were obvious to Moscow: The USSR needed the high quality Chechen oil, the supporting pipeline network, and ground lines of communication that cross Chechnya.[37] By the mid 1980s, however, the USSR was decaying from the inside.

To make internal matters worse, in the fall of 1979, the USSR intervened to save a pro-communist regime installed a year and a half earlier in Afghanistan. The results of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev's decision were a war in Afghanistan that would last more than nine years, kill 14,000 Russians, drain the already failing Russian economy, and ruin Soviet prestige worldwide. The war in Afghanistan severely weakened the power and legitimacy of the Soviet government.[38] Figure 5, below, depicts the extent of ethnic Chechen homogeneity by 1994.

Figure 5. Caucasus Ethnicity, 1994.[39]

Before the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Brezhnev continued to bully the rest of the world. He accidentally created an anti-Soviet alliance among the United States, Japan, China, and Western Europe. To counter this alliance, Brezhnev increased military spending. This military buildup bankrupted his nation. When Brezhnev died in 1982, he left a fiscal policy from which his successors, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, could not recover. When a 54-year-old member of the Soviet Politburo,

Mikhail Gorbachev, came to power in the Kremlin in 1985, Brezhnev's trend towards a growing military rapidly changed.[40]

For better or for worse, during six years in office, Gorbachev ended nearly a thousand years of absolute power in Russian government by allowing democratic elections and changing a Marxist-driven economy to one of a free market. Although it is still too soon to determine the success of Gorbachev's reforms, he did end a fifty-year Cold War, thus changing the world order. Success or failure, Gorbachev induced economic restructuring (*perestroika*), political reforms, and ideological openness (*glasnost*) in the face communist hard-liner resistance. He risked political failure and paid the price when he left office with little base of political support.[41]

During this period of Soviet transition to democracy, communist hard-liners had increased political pressure on Gorbachev in order to retain a communist government. In June 1991, according to Gorbachev's transition timeline, Russia held a democratic presidential election. Boris Yeltsin carried nearly 70 percent of that vote. Yeltsin, unlike Gorbachev, was not a moderate. Yeltsin pushed for more extensive reforms at a faster pace than Gorbachev wanted. Gorbachev was caught between communist hard-liners, who wanted to return to a Stalinist government, and Boris Yeltsin, who wanted to speed the democratic transition. The tensions reached a head on 19 August 1991 when hard-liner military leaders led a coup d' etat, apparently against Gorbachev in order to save the USSR from democracy.[42]

On 18 August 1991, The KGB Chief, Vladimir Kryuchkov, gave Gorbachev an ultimatum to support the coup or resign, likely by force. Gorbachev initially agreed, then, as he stated during testimony during an investigation later, he changed his mind.

Regardless, Gorbachev had knowledge of the coup. By the time that the columns of tanks rolled into Moscow, Russian President Boris Yeltsin had rallied thousands of Russian protesters. Faced with the decision to fire upon civilians, the military backed down on 21 August. Yeltsin secured his place in history when he stood on top of a Soviet tank and declared the coup illegal. Gorbachev resigned on 24 August 1991 and dissolved the Soviet Union.[43]

Under the new Russian leadership of Boris Yeltsin, Chechnya had even greater autonomy and more representation in the Russian Federation government. Yet, local Chechen politics split farther away from Russia. Chechen clan leaders gained power in the Chechen government through false claims of nationalism while corruption permeated nearly all Chechen local government in the late 1980s.[44]

By 1990, a true Chechen nationalism finally arose from religious rebirth, intense hatred of Russia, unemployment, corruption, and a warrior ethos. Further inspired by recent Georgian independence in April 1989, Chechnya was ripe for secession. With its valuable oil fields, overland transcaucasus trade routes and oil pipeline, Chechnya posed difficult questions for the economically weakened Russia. This situation set the conditions for the 1994-2000 Russo-Chechen wars.[45]

Birth of the Chechen Combat Force

> ". . . We will never submit to any man or any force. Freedom or death--for us that is the only choice. . . "[46]
>
> --stanza from the Chechen National Anthem

In the wake of Gorbachev's sweeping reforms, the unofficial Chechen National Assembly, predecessor to the Chechen Congress, held its first gathering on 25 November

1990. Within two days, the officially recognized Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic's Supreme Soviet, declared its independence from Russia. On 11 March 1991, the Supreme Soviet voted to boycott an upcoming all union referendum and subsequently chose not to participate in all subsequent referenda. Chechen separatism created a rift with historically loyal Ingushetia, leaving Chechnya as the lone non-Russian Federation player in the Caucasus.[47] During this critical time, Chechnya found a new leader.

Dzhokar Dudayev, an ethnic Chechen born during the 1944 deportations, had worked his way up to the Soviet general officer ranks during the decline of the Soviet Union. As a Soviet Air Force Major General, Dzhokar Dudayev commanded a nuclear bomber division stationed at the Tartu Air Base in Estonia from 1987-1990. (See Figure 6, next page.) During this time, Dudayev witnessed Estonia's successful struggle for independence. Some journalists claim he gained credibility among Estonians and fellow ethnic Chechens for refusing an order to attack secessionist forces in Estonia. Nonetheless, a year after Russia granted Estonian independence, Dudayev's division was transferred to Grozny, Chechnya. Having just witnessed the patterns of a successful secession in Estonia, Dudayev resigned his commission to gain political power in his Chechen homeland.[48]

In July 1991, Dudayev was elected Chairman of the Chechen Congress. On 27 October 1991, he was elected President of the semi-autonomous Chechen Republic.[49] Two months after becoming chairman of the Congress, Dudayev dissolved the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Council. Two weeks after that, the Supreme Council dissolved itself, validating the split between Ingushetia and Chechnya.[50]

Figure 6. Major General Dudayev, Soviet Air Force, 1990.[51]

In November 1991, less than a month after his election as president, Dudayev declared Chechen independence and started to construct a "power base" in the Chechen capital city, Grozny. Immediately thereafter, Dudayev secured Russian weapons caches.[52] Dudayev's followers gathered weapons by a variety of means: threats towards Russian soldiers, raids on Russian outposts, Russian weapons sales, and, occasionally securing weapons Russian soldiers left behind during their withdrawal.[53] Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared a state of emergency on 8 November 1991, but began Russian troop withdrawal three days later.[54]

Although Dudayev publicly championed independence, his true objectives remain clouded: it is unclear whether Dudayev was seeking an independent Chechnya or merely seeking power for power's sake. Figure 7, shows Dudayev declaring independence.

Figure 7. Dudayev declaring Independence, 1991.[55]

The reasons for Dudayev's political success in Chechnya may have stemmed from his respected background as a senior Soviet military officer coupled with the company he kept after his retirement in Chechnya. Dudayev maintained three powerful friends in Chechnya who later became instrumental in bringing him to power.

The first was Yaragi Mamadayev, a Chechen state manager who later became a mafia-linked businessman and probably provided much of his campaign funds. Second was Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, a member of the Chechen intelligentsia who also headed the Bart political party, providing Dudayev with an "in" to Chechen political circles. Third was Yusup Soslambekov, a convicted rapist who was an organizational genius, who mobilized the Chechens against Russia.[56]

In addition to his close, existing ties to representatives of the Chechen separatist movement, Dudayev's primary appeal to the Chechen people was that he had not become entwined in the clan and political infighting within the Chechen government. He was a suitable choice to unify contending party leaders and individual movements.[57]

After his election, Dudayev's National Guard forces quickly raided Soviet Army outposts. A key raid was on the Russian KGB building in Grozny. It supposedly took thirty-three of Dudayev's men only forty seconds to secure the building and an enormous weapons storage facility contained therein.[58] In early 1992, one Russian report claimed that Chechen fighters had seized up to 30 percent of Russian arms and equipment in Chechnya.[59]

Upon learning of the raid on the KGB building, the newly appointed head of the KGB, Victor Ivanenko, traveled to Grozny to mediate a peaceful return of the building and the weapons. His visit went badly as he told the Chechens, "This is not a democracy, it is banditry." He returned to Moscow to deliver a report on conditions in Chechnya. The Supreme Soviet in Moscow immediately issued an ultimatum to Chechnya to disarm within the next two days--Thursday, 10 October 1991.[60]

To the Chechens, combat was imminent. Dudayev issued a mobilization order to all males, ages fifteen to fifty-five, to which "several thousand" responded. Moscow, in turn, declared a state of emergency in Chechnya, issued a warrant for Dudayev's arrest, and, in Russian President Boris Yeltsin's absence, began planning offensive operations on 7 November 1991.[61] Curiously, on 7 November, there were actually two presidents in Moscow and the Russian Army did not yet exist. The army was still under Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev did not support the state of emergency and ordered the Soviet Army to remain neutral. At the last minute, Yeltsin sent the less well-armed troops of the Russian Interior Ministry into Grozny.[62]

The next night, 600 Russian Interior Ministry troops air landed at Khankala military airbase just outside Grozny. Within twenty-four hours, Chechen troops had

surrounded the Russian troops, put them onto busses, and escorted them out of Chechnya. Dudayev became a national hero. The Russian debacle confirmed Dudayev's legitimacy within Chechnya and provided him time to build his force and unite the Chechen people behind him.[63]

Between November 1991 and the fall of 1994, Dudayev worked to centralize his power and unify Chechnya. Except for one confrontation with Russian forces in late 1992, when Russian forces approached the Chechen border after a conflict in Ingushetia, Chechnya had no armed conflicts with external armed forces until the first battle for Grozny. During the 1992 border confrontation, no fires were exchanged and Russia and Chechnya mutually agreed to withdraw forces. Dudayev, however, signed no treaty and was still set on an independent Chechnya. Yet, Chechnya was a divided nation.[64]

Among several rival parties, two major camps of Chechen political thought existed prior to the 1994 Russian invasion: one wanted an independent Chechnya and one wanted to remain a part of the Russian Federation. Those who desired independence were primarily the clans from the southern mountain regions, from which Dudayev originated. Those who wished to remain members of the Russian Federation were primarily from the flatland clans. In May 1993, Dudayev issued a decree that prohibited pro-Russian activities. On 5 June 1993, Dudayev's National Guard enforced the decree, killing fifty people at a pro-Russian rally.[65]

In December 1993, the anti-Dudayev (flatland clans) united to organize the Provisional Soviet [council], an organization that mirrored the pro-Dudayev Chechen National Assembly. The council claimed to speak for Chechnya. During a July 1994 meeting of the Provisional Soviet, the unified anti-Dudayev camp voted to oust Dudayev

and elected a Russian oil magnate, Slambek Chadzhijev, as its leader. Further, the Provisional Soviet requested Russian help in reestablishing law and order for a safe and secure environment and some form of normalcy in Chechnya. On 27 July 2994, Moscow announced that Russia would support the Chechen request. Russian President Boris Yeltsin confirmed the announcement when he spoke publicly on 11 August 1994 about the possible use of force in Chechnya. The overt threat of war loomed in Chechnya.[66]

The end results of Chechen in-fighting from 1992 to 1994 were a formal split between Chechnya and Ingushetia, a Chechen declaration of independence that Russia did not officially recognize, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya, and the clear division of national goals between the two remaining Chechen political camps. Pro-Dudayev's supporters wanted independence while the anti-Dudayev clans wanted Russian support to maintain a Chechen republic under Russian control. For its part, Russia wanted to eliminate Dudayev's threat to Russian territorial integrity. Loss of this territory would dilute the power of the Russian central government and mean the loss of mineral rights and economic lines of communication. Chechnya was Russia's sole source of aviation fuel by this time. While Russia was quite willing to cede a "wide" autonomy to protect her interests, Dudayev would have nothing less than complete autonomy.[67]

By early winter 1994, Dudayev's forces were well armed to fight for autonomy.[68] They had obtained "40-50 T-62 and T-72 tanks, 620-650 grenade launchers, 20-25 "Grad" multiple launch rocket launchers, 30-35 armored personnel carriers and scout vehicles, 30 122mm howitzers, 40-50 BMP infantry fighting vehicles, and some 200,000 hand grenades." The Chechens were highly motivated, very familiar with the urban

environment of Grozny, and well organized into small, mobile fighting units.[69] Like Dudayev, many of those who would fight in Grozny had served in the Soviet armed forces. Thus, many were familiar with Russian weapons, spoke the language, knew the tactics, and knew many of the Russian commanders. Those who fought for Dudayev were also volunteers. Hence, they were motivated, unified by a common cause, and ready for a fight. As Chechens, they valued and embodied a warrior ethos.[70]

The number of these highly motivated combatants is unknown. Russia estimated that the number of Chechen combatants in Grozny was 15,000.[71] Most common sources believe there were "no more than 3,000 armed fighters in the field at any one time."[72] The latter estimates do not include the numbers of noncombatants who certainly aided the overall Chechen effort.

Grozny 0--The Secret War

Despite Dudayev's increasing military strength, the Russian Federal Counterintelligence Service (FSK), formerly a part of the KGB, and the Russian Army General Staff's Intelligence Command, the GRU, believed that Dudayev's forces were not prepared to defend against a large, organized force. The FSK also believed that Dudayev did not influence areas outside Grozny proper. Their assessment was that a relatively small combat force could be crush the Dudayev regime.[73]

President Yeltsin's advisors furthered the FSK's assessment. Yeltsin's advisors convinced him that there was enough pro-Russian support in Chechnya to overthrow Dudayev if Yeltsin would provide a small amount of military equipment to the supporters. In October 1994, President Yeltsin ordered Pavel Grachev, the Minister of

Defense (MoD), to prepare contingency plans for a coup de main against the Chechen President. Grachev assigned this mission to General Lieutenant (Gen Lt) Anatoly Kvashnin, then Deputy Commander to the Russian Operations Command. Gen Lt Kvashnin directed that the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD) staff would supplement the mission with troops and equipment.[74]

Since the NCMD was short of troops and equipment, they secretly recruited soldiers from regular Russian Army units for this special operation. The FSK placed soldiers on leave and promised handsome pay incentives if they joined. Recruiting was relatively easy since the Russian government was three months or more in arrears to pay its soldiers and since the FSK sold the mission to be relatively simple and safe. By November 1994, the NCMD had massed more than 150 armored vehicles, 20 howitzers, 40 helicopters and 2,500 infantrymen.[75]

The NCMD planned that the assault group would move on roads from its staging base in Mozdok, North Ossetia to Grozny, with tanks in the lead, supported by dismounted infantry and helicopters. Once in the city's center, the group would surround the Presidential Palace, vital government buildings, the television station and newspaper print plant. The NCMD staff believed that these action would be sufficient to topple Dudayev.[76]

On 26 November 1994, pro-Russian Chechens supported by Russian Army troops and equipment moved in column into Grozny. The dismounted infantry, traveling in busses, trucks and cars, ended up far behind the assaulting armored vehicle. The helicopters also failed to meet in Grozny at the appointed time. Opposition units first made contact with the Chechens at about 7 a.m. By 9 a.m., the armored columns neared

their objectives when the Chechens destroyed two tanks and captured three others. Nonetheless, the opposition forces surrounded their assigned objectives, secured an already vacant Presidential Palace and declared mission success.[77]

President Dudayev's intelligence staff informed him of the pending attack the night prior, on 25 November. Dudayev had displaced from the palace well before the opposition forces arrived. President Dudayev did not intend to fight the overwhelming opposition in the open country. He allowed them to enter Grozny where his forces could isolate and destroy the opposition's armored columns. The city's construction enhanced Dudayev's plan. Since outlying buildings in Grozny were mostly single-story, Dudayev realized he could gain positional advantage over the attackers by establishing anti-armor (AT) ambushes along roads, using the taller buildings in the city's center for firing positions. At 11 a.m., Chechens destroyed two tanks and captured three more. Chechen snipers killed tank crews as they attempted to escape burning vehicles.[78]

Fighting continued for another seven hours as Chechen fighters surrounded halted opposition units to take up ambush positions. The Chechens destroyed armored vehicles from upper floors and basements using Rocket Propelled Grenades and Molotov cocktails. Snipers took positions on middle floors and killed fleeing opposition soldiers. The Chechen heavy resistance stunned the opposition soldiers. Opposition commanders gave the participating soldiers no idea that they would have to fight for Grozny. Commanders gave no instructions beyond the mission to surround objective buildings. Opposition soldiers were told to stop and wait for further instructions once they reached their objectives.[79]

By 2 p.m., the Chechen fighters forced the opposition forces out of Grozny. President Dudayev returned to the Presidential Palace to announce that Chechen fighters repulsed Russian aggression against the Republic. Both forces had approximately the same amount of combat equipment in the fight. Compared to the opposition's forces, Dudayev had slightly fewer tanks, artillery and mortars. Yet, the Chechens destroyed or captured 49 armored vehicles, shot down five aircraft and killed or captured more than 500 opposition fighters, including a Russian major.[80]

The secret Russian plot to overthrow Dudayev failed. Pavel Grachev, the Russian MoD, refuted accusations that the Russians were involved in the assault. Grachev claimed he would have never conducted such a mission with tanks and artillery. For him, the use of tanks and artillery in urban terrain was "the height of unprofessionalism." He claimed that one paratroop regiment and several hours would be adequate to secure the Chechen Presidential Palace.[81]

The cost of the Russian incursion had political implications. Despite Grachev's adamant denials, Russian involvement in the attempted coup was apparent. Dudayev displayed his Russian prisoners on television and vowed to execute them if Russia refused to admit to participation in the action.[82] Pro-Russian sentiment in Grozny was all but gone and Chechen opposition dissipated away from Dudayev's power base in Grozny.

Assessment of Invading Russian Forces

Faced with the political embarrassment of the failed secret mission and the reality of Chechen secession, Boris Yeltsin had little choice but to order Russian Federation

troops into Chechnya on 29 November 1994. By that time, Russia had invested an estimated 400 billion rubles (1 billion USD) trying to maintain Chechen stability. With the introduction of troops, they estimated the cost would be 3.5 trillion rubles by the end of the mission.[83] However, loss of Chechnya meant economic disaster from devaluation of the Russian ruble as a result of losses of tax revenue, the cost of building a new pipeline and rail system around Chechnya and the loss of the high grade Chechen oil supply. Further, if Chechnya seceded, Russia feared it would also lose the entire trans-Caucasus. Finally, Russia feared that Chechnya would set a dangerous precedent of ethnic isolationism, possibly resulting in further Christian-Muslim conflict.[84]

Apart from monetary concerns, a Russian invasion into Chechnya carried legal and ethical concerns. Given the 1991 declaration of a state of emergency in Chechnya, Russian Interior Ministry (MVD) troop deployments into Chechnya were within the bounds of international and criminal law.[85] Although legal, some Russians felt the use of MVD troops within Russian borders was not ethically right because Chechnya was not a military emergency, but a political emergency. Further, Defense Ministry forces should be used only in a state of war.[86] This concern later permeated up and down the Russian Army ranks. Upon their commitment, most Russian officers did not believe in the cause.[87]

Russian assessments of Chechnya did nothing to prepare Russian soldiers for urban warfare. Most Russians assumed that the Chechens would capitulate when the Russian Army occupied Grozny and "parked its tanks and BMPs in the middle of the town," just as the Czechs capitulated in 1968 when the Soviets entered Prague.[88] Senior Russian leaders should have known better. However, they did not. A retired Russian

Army Major reported that two unnamed colonels of the Russian General Staff visited the Russian Historic Archives in November 1994 requesting to learn more about the armed conflict in the North Caucasus. While encouraging that top military leaders had an interest in military history and current affairs, researching the topic in the final days prior to the largest Russian military operation since Afghanistan could have little effect on the execution of the operation.[89]

While this event points to their cultural and historic ignorance, senior officers were well aware of the massive arms stores departing Russian units left behind, sold, or that the Chechens after the 1992 Russian Army withdrawal from Chechnya. Nonetheless, Pavel Grachev, Russian Minister of Defense, publicly stated he could seize Grozny with one or two airborne regiments in a matter of hours.[90] In Grachev's defense, the fight he had envisioned was not the one Russian troops were forced to fight. Because he grossly underestimated Chechen resolve and failed to account for the implications of the failed "black operation," Grachev envisioned a coup de main in Grozny. He never intended to conduct a siege of the city.[91]

Although Russian tactical and operational shortcomings have been exposed in numerous reports, the Russian Army's morale was of primary concern in 1994. What used to be one of the premier armies in the world had become an army that was in poor health, had little education, and lacked moral character. Almost one-third of conscripts were prior criminals. The soldiers had insufficient logistic support in garrison and were poorly trained. Suicide was rampant.[92] There was a "widespread desire not to fight."[93]

The Russian Army had other shortfalls besides its lack of will. Most were at the tactical level. The Russian Army had not conducted a single divisional training exercise

between 1992 and December 1994; over a third of its helicopters could not fly; the force was woefully under strength.[94]

One Russian army officer admitted that not only had the assault units not conducted major training exercises, but many of the younger recruits had never fired their rifles. Some "were only three or four months in the army" and "didn't know how to use [their] own weapon[s]." Almost none of the soldiers had even fired their weapons on a firing range since 1992.[95] Not only were Russian soldiers untrained on personal weapons, they were also untrained on their more advanced equipment, such as night vision equipment, armored vehicles, and other weaponry.[96]

Many of the platoon leaders went from the Russian military academies "straight to combat." Most of the officers and nearly all the soldiers had "no training in urban combat." Although the Russian Command and Staff College conducted "two or three classes in urban fighting" during the course of tactics instruction, one officer admitted, "We didn't pay any attention to this." Nor did the Russian Army conduct urban combat field training. Just as in other funding-constrained armies, when funding became tight, specialized training was first to be cancelled.[97] Because urban combat requires far more than the traditional, open-terrain fighting skills in order to be successful, these liabilities spelled almost certain failure. The Russian Army of 1994 was not ready for the urban fight it was about to enter.[98]

Had the Russian Army conducted specialized urban combat training, the outcome may not have been much better because the Russian military still embraced traditional Soviet assumptions. The Soviets anticipated combat in central and Western Europe and expected that their enemies would leave cities undefended rather than destroy them in

prolonged urban combat. That meant that if the cities were defended, the Soviets would isolate and bypass them or assault and seize them from march formation with tanks leading and dismounted infantry in support. In either case, prolonged, urban combat was not intended. Therefore, regardless of funding, this line of thinking may have left Russian troops poorly prepared for an urban fight.[99]

On 29 November 1994, President Boris Yeltsin issued Chechnya an ultimatum to cease-fire, lay down its arms, disband armed organizations and release all Russian hostages within forty-eight hours. Less than twenty-four hours later, Yeltsin issued Presidential Decree Number 2137S giving Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev the authority to form, in effect, a joint and interagency task force to disarm and disband armed formations in Chechnya. By the end of the day on 30 November 1994, Grachev had already initiated his air campaign.[100]

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[88]Igor Gorgan, Major, Russian Federation Spetsnaz Officer, interview by author, 15 March 2002.

[89]Aleksandr Belkin, Major (retired), Russian Federation Army Officer. "War in Chechnya: The Impact On Civil-Military Relations In Russia." Available from http://www.mis.nps.navy.mil/nsa/bel.html; Internet; accessed 24 February 2002.

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[91]Thomas, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[92]Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 5.

[93]Blank and Tilford, *Russia's Invasion of Chechnya: A Preliminary Assessment*, 9.

[94]Thomas, *The Caucasus Conflict and Russian Security*, 26.

[95]Gorgan, Interview, 15 March 2002.

[96]Olga Oliker. *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*. (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), x.

[97]Gorgan, Interview, 15 March 2002.

[98]Timothy L. Thomas. *The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya: The Battle for Grozny, 1-26 January 1995 (Part I).* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1996), 415.

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CHAPTER 3

THE BATTLES FOR GROZNY

Grozny I

> The usual problem for armies fighting against 'primitive' or guerrilla enemies--from the Romans to the US Rangers--is to get the enemy to stand and fight. . .the victory of the 'civilized' and 'modern' side can never be taken for granted.[1]
>
> --Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*

Russian President Yeltsin's decree authorized a joint and interagency task force under his Minister of Defense, Pavel Grachev. The decree gave Grachev, a co-equal among the Russian Ministers, operational command and control of the Minister of Interior Affairs (MVD) armed forces, the Border Guards and Federal Counterintelligence Service (FSK) troops, and all other government agencies, organizations, and officials operating in the Chechen Republic.[2] This 40,000-man combined force was the largest Russian combat organization since the war in Afghanistan.[3]

An attempt to establish unity of command over this ad hoc organization, the decree essentially created a joint and interagency organization under control of the military. While the combination of MoD and MVD troops caused legal difficulties, it also caused conflicts between the ministries. To unify combat operations on the ground, Grachev intended to use the existing command structure of the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD). Although intended for this purpose, the NCMD staff was not experienced at coordinating such a joint and interagency effort.[4] Nor did the NCMD staff have the infrastructure to support reception of additional units to the command.[5]

By organization, the NCMD's major command was the 58th Combined Arms Army (CAA). Within the 58th CAA, there was two corps: the 8th Army Corps and the 57th Army Corps. However, the Russian 8th and 57th Corps had been gutted in an effort to save money. Each corps consisted of only one Motorized Rifle Division (MRD).[6] With the addition of other ministries forces as subordinate commands, the organization for combat would have looked something like the diagram shown in Figure 8.

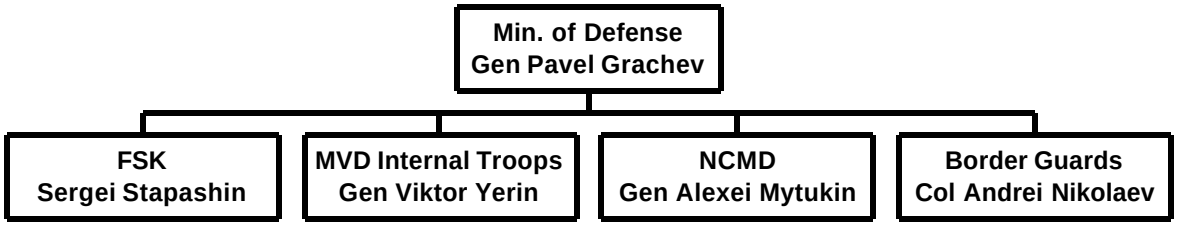


Figure 8. Russian command structure in accordance with Yeltsin's decree.

The Russian National Security Council plan to invade Chechnya involved a four-phase operation. Phase one was the isolation phase. MVD and Border Guard troops would surround Chechnya while the Russian Air Force would gain air superiority. Within Chechnya, the Defense Ministry (MoD) troops would advance on three major axes of approach. One axis led from the North West out of the Russian military base in Mozdok, North Ossetia, also the command post for the NCMD Commander and staff. A second axis came from the West from Vladikavkaz, the capital city of North Ossetia. The third axis came from the East out of Kizlyar, Dagestan. See Figure 9. This phase was to last three days.[7] Phase I was intended as a show of force to cause Dudayev to negotiate as much as it was intended to preposition troops to seize Grozny.[8]

Should negotiations fail, Phase two was to secure Grozny by occupying key objectives such as the presidential palace and other government buildings, television and radio stations, and other key targets. Phase two was planned to last only four days. There was no intention to seize the entirety of Grozny within the NCMD's plan. Planners intended that mere occupation of key terrain would sufficiently secure Grozny and, again, force peace talks with Dudayev.[9] Nonetheless, it seemed sufficiently clear to the NCMD planners what the outcome of such negotiations would be.[10]

Figure 9. Phase I-Concept of operations in Chechnya, 1994.[11]

Phase three consisted of clearing the remaining lowland areas in order to push Dudayev's forces into the southern Caucasus Mountains while stay-behind forces would establish a pro-Russian government in secured areas. This phase was to last five to ten days.[12]

Phase four would eliminate any pockets of resistance in the Caucasus Mountains in southern Chechnya. From lessons during the Soviet-Afghan Conflict, the Russian National Security Council knew this phase could be very long. The length of the operation up to the start of phase four was intended to last less than three weeks.[13]

Although the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) provided the bulk of the ground troops, Colonel General (Col Gen) Aleksey Mityukin, the NCMD commander, was presumably the ground tactical commander when Grachev initially committed forces into Chechnya.[14] Grachev consolidated troops from the MoD, MVD, Border Guards, FSK, a host of special purpose units from each of the ministries, and other attached paratroop regiments into three army groupings: East, West and North. Although these tactical groupings consisted of Russian Army, MVD and FSK units, they were commanded by Army officers and will therefore be referred to as "Army Groups." Each Army Group presumably replaced the Corps Headquarters of the 57th and 8th Army Corps within the 58th CAA. The Russian organization for combat is shown in Figure 10, on the next page.

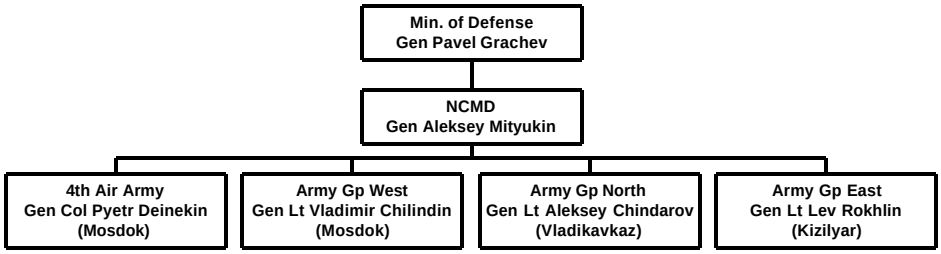


Figure 10. Russian organization for combat in Chechnya, Phase I, 1994.

The Western Army Group, staged in Vladivostok, North Ossetia, was commanded by General Lieutenant (Gen Lt) Aleksey Chindarov. It consisted mostly of the 19th Motorized Rifle Division (MRD), 76th Paratroop Division (PD), and the 106th PD.

Staged in Mozdok, North Ossetia and commanded by Gen Lt Vladimir Chilindin, the Northern Army Group consisted mostly of the 81st Motorized Rifle Regiment (MRR), the 131st Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade (IMBr) and the 255th MRR. Army Group North would later split into a North and Northeast grouping prior to securing Grozny.

Gen Lt Lev Rokhlin commanded the Eastern Army Group, staged in Kizlyar, Dagestan. It consisted mostly of the 129th MRR, and the 104th PD, composed of the 1st Para Battalion of the 98th VDD and an attached tank battalion.[15] It is unclear where each Army Group's subordinate units stopped along the three axes into Chechnya to establish the planned "outer ring" isolation of Chechnya.

While Russian organization for combat is relatively difficult to discern due to its ad hoc nature, the Chechen organization is well beyond a "wire-diagram" description. Ignoring chains of command, various sources calculate Chechen manpower ranging from

2,000 to 6,000 men. Four main characteristics of wars in Chechnya cause this difficulty.[16]

First, the variance is due largely to the nature of guerrilla warfare in Chechnya; wherein Chechen fighters would respond to immediate threats then put aside their arms to return to their daily business when the fighting stopped. Second, beyond the scope of this thesis, there were numerous anti-Dudayev factions or political parties that, although attempting to subvert Dudayev's power base, willingly drew arms to fight the Russian Army. Third, since war against the Russians was officially an Islamic Jihad, an unknown number of pro-Chechen fighters entered Chechnya to defend against Russian invasion.[17] Some of these fighters allegedly came from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Sudan, Ukraine, Lithuania, India, Pakistan, Iraq, and even some mercenaries from Russia. Chechnya maintained ties with most Sunni Islam nations.[18] Fourth, Russian force estimates of the Chechens were grossly overestimated.[19] Figure 11 shows Dudayev's organization.

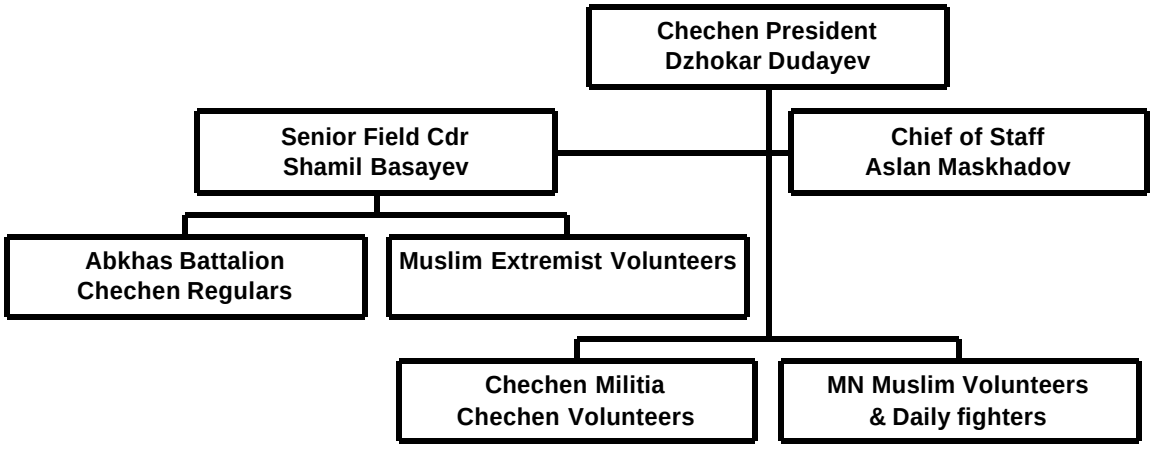


Figure 11. Chechen organization for combat, 1994.

Despite this confusion, the clearest representation of Dudayev's command is shown on the previous page. This diagram is more representative of Dudayev's military hardware than his actual command and control arrangements.

With loyal supporters, Dudayev boldly refused Yeltsin's 29 November 1994 disarmament ultimatum. Russian air campaign planners had previously targeted Chechen airfields, major roads, a tank motor park, and a Chechen television broadcast tower inside Grozny as the air campaign began in earnest on the same day as Dudayev's refusal of Yeltsin's ultimatum. The Russian Air Force established air supremacy within two days, destroying Chechnya's few combat aircraft on the ground.[20] While tactically and operationally successful, the air action had a telling effect on the outcome of the war. In the near term, while eliminating the Chechen air threat, the bombings also reinforced the already stubborn nature of the Chechen fighter and destroyed any lingering Russian support that may have existed in Chechnya. Chechen fighters refused to capitulate by moving south into the Caucasus Mountains, as the air campaign plan had intended.[21] Other tenets of campaign planning were lacking as well, such as the information campaign.

Prior to the war in Chechnya, the Russian Army had little experience with handling independent media and was not previously concerned with public opinions about their operations. They made few attempts to control and influence media on the battlefield. To give some credit, however, the NCMD staff did have a press center in Mozdok, North Ossetia for the duration of the operation. Media were required to check in at the press center, but all were denied access to the front. Press people, being persevering, got in taxi cabs, for which Chechens paid,[22] and rode to Grozny where they

were stopped by Russian soldiers at various checkpoints on the outskirts of the city and warned of the dangers of entering. Russian soldiers made no attempt to control the press at the front, while Chechen fighters willingly took them in and spread the Chechen side for the world to see and read. Russia lost the information war before the first bullet snapped through the air.[23] Senior Russian Army representatives in Mozdok made matters worse for the Russian Army by claiming mission success before the assault on Grozny began.[24]

By 1 December 1994, Russian bombing apparently destroyed as many civilian targets as military since the Russian Air Force exercised little target discrimination. The indiscriminate bombing killed many ethnic Russians living in Chechnya. The survivors questioned what their government was doing. Ethnic Russians, on the receiving end of these strikes, began to shift their loyalties toward the Chechen people.[25]

Two major events indicated that the Russian Air Force was conducting indiscriminate bombing. First, the air force bombed Shali and Urus Marten, both hubs of anti-Dudayev support that would have assisted Russian forces. Second, damage in Grozny was extensive away from obvious military targets. Since upwards of 30 percent of Grozny's 490,000 people were ethnic Russian, extensive collateral damage indicated the Russians had either little concern for its own supporters or little ability to control the execution of the air campaign.[26] In either case, the net effect was a disregard for its own people.

At 7 a.m. on 11 December 1994, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev launched his 38,000 troops toward Chechnya, planning that they would have Grozny isolated by 2 p.m. that same day.[27] Protesting civilians slowed and eventually halted

Russian armored columns moving along roads within hours of moving from staging bases in Dagestan and North Ossetia. Afraid, untrained, uninformed and unsure of what to do, some Russian soldiers panicked. Grachev's ground operations timeline began slipping and the NCMD, as a whole, went "off plan."

General Lieutenant Chindarov's Army Group West, moving eastward towards Chechnya through Ingushetia, inadvertently crushed several protesting civilians along their axis.[28] As the protest against Army Group East evolved into a fight, Chechens destroyed sixty-eight Russian combat vehicles.[29] In an ensuing small arms firefight, Army Group West killed five and wounded fifteen other Ingush while suffering one killed and fourteen wounded.[30]

Gen Lt Lev Rokhlin's Army Group East, moving from Kizlyar, Dagestan, faired no better. Dagestani protesters stopped his column before it reached the Chechen border. There, too, Russian soldiers panicked as Dagestani men climbed onto Russian vehicles, disarmed several soldiers, and took fifty-nine of them prisoner, one among them a Russian Colonel.[31] Rokhlin's column did not move any further. Only Army Group North under Gen Lt Chilindin got close to Grozny. Chilindin's forces came within twenty-five kilometers of Grozny before protesters halted them in the village of Dolinsky.[32] The element of surprise was lost as word of the Russian offensive spread quickly. Originally intended to last three days, Phase I stopped for four straight days, until 15 December 1994 and was not complete until 26 December 1994. A three-day plan took two weeks to execute.[33] For his failure to close on Grozny, Gen Lt Chilindin was relieved of command. Figure 12, below, depicts the Russian organization for combat in Phase II.

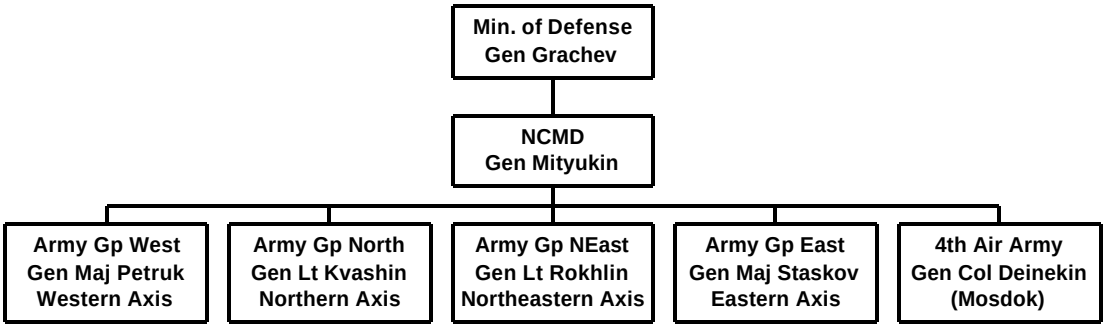


Figure 12. Phase II--Organization for combat in Grozny, 1994.

Realizing the implications of Russian loss of initiative and surprise, Grachev's planners knew Grozny would be much more difficult. Their plan to seize Grozny followed four axes. Nesting concepts from the NCMD's operational plan, there was to be an "open door" through which Chechen refugees could escape south and out of the capital. Grozny was to be secured from four axes: west, north, northeast, and east. Storm detachments would be organized from the three major axes' forces within the operational plan. Due to the amount of combat power that had been assigned to Grachev, President Yeltsin had little fear the plan would fail when Grachev personally briefed the plan on the same day Russian forces closed on Grozny. After a meeting with the Russian Security Council, President Yeltsin ordered Defense Minister Pavel Grachev to storm Grozny immediately.[34] Figure 13, below, depicts the Russian concept of operation for the assault on Grozny.

Figure 13. Phase II--Russian Concept of operations in Grozny, 1994.

The sum total of combat power Grachev had to direct at seizing Grozny was 38,000 soldiers manning 230 tanks, 353 Infantry Fighting Vehicles, and 388 tube and rocket artillery pieces. Attack helicopters and fixed wing close air support from the NCMD's 4th Air Army would support the ground assault force.[35] This force was further augmented with two heliborne Spetsnaz groups for landing in southern Grozny. Their task was to disrupt the Chechen rear areas.[36]

There are two concepts for the defense of Grozny: the Russian perception and the Chechen accounts. First, the Russians based their perception of the Chechen defense upon a pattern analysis derived from subunit commanders' contact reports.[37] Thus, the

Russians believed that the period between the first reports of a Russian ground offensive and their closure on Grozny had not been lost on the Chechens. They believe the Chechens used this time to finish preparation of an intricate defense in Grozny, a defense they had begun as early as October 1994.[38] Russian perception of the Chechen concept of operations was that the defense was basically a two-phased operation. Chechens intended to avoid decisive combat in open terrain and force a decisive fight inside Grozny, where much of the Russian combat power and technological advantages could be negated.[39]

The first Chechen defensive phase, to be fought a few kilometers outside Grozny, would weaken and delay attacking Russian forces moving in march formation. To accomplish this, the Chechens used point ambushes on trail elements of march units, specifically the less-trained MVD troops. The second Chechen phase was the decisive one: the defense of Grozny.

The Russians believed this defense was one of concentric defensive belts or circles around the city center. At the innermost portion of the circle, Dudayev's Chief of Staff, Aslan Maskhadov, controlled defensive preparations from the basement of the Presidential Palace. Defending Maskhadov's command post (CP), Dudayev's senior field commander, Shamil Basayev, commanded his Abkhas Battalion in a strongpoint defense, along with several reinforcing detachments of Muslim volunteers from various regions, in an approximate circle 1-1.5 kilometers from Maskhadov's CP.[40] Basayev's defense alone consisted of approximately 2,000 of Chechnya's Army manning thirty-four tanks, several GRAD multiple launch rocket systems and tube artillery pieces. This is the rough equivalent combat power of a US light infantry brigade with an attached tank

battalion. Each tank was dug in to hull defilade, often within a building, with fields of fire down the lengths of Grozny's city streets.[41]

Volunteers occupied the next outer concentric defensive belt about a kilometer beyond the first. This defensive belt spanned along the Staropromyslovski highway, at bridges across the Sunzha River, through the Minutka district, along Saichanov Street, and in the area of the Lenin-Seripov Refinery. It was organized and commanded somewhat independently and controlled using hand-held Motorola radios and existing Russian tactical radios. Volunteers also manned the outermost concentric belt that was 1-3 kilometers beyond the second along the Grozny-Mozdok and Dolinsk-Katajama-Tashkala highways and throughout the connecting suburbs of Neftkiansk, Chankala, Staraja Sunzha, and Chernorechje.[42]

The basic unit of maneuver was approximately squad-sized, or 8-10 men, typically armed with 1-2 anti-tank weapons (RPG), a light machine gun (RPK), 1-2 Sniper Rifles (SVD), and the remainder with Kalashnikov assault rifles (AK-47).[43] Depending upon their intended purpose, reconnaissance, assault, etc., some of these units, especially the volunteers who fought only during daytime, were only 5-7 men strong.[44] The interior units, the Chechen regulars, were organized into a platoon-sized unit of 20-30 men. These were further organized into company-sized units of 80-100 men each. Two tanks and 60 RPGs would be found within each company-sized unit. Although this organization follows typical modern army organization, unlike the Russian Army, the smallest unit could and did maneuver independently. Knowing the Russians would come to Grozny in overwhelming numbers, Dudayev intentionally directed a mobile, defense in depth.[45] Figure 14 depicts the Russian perception of this defense.

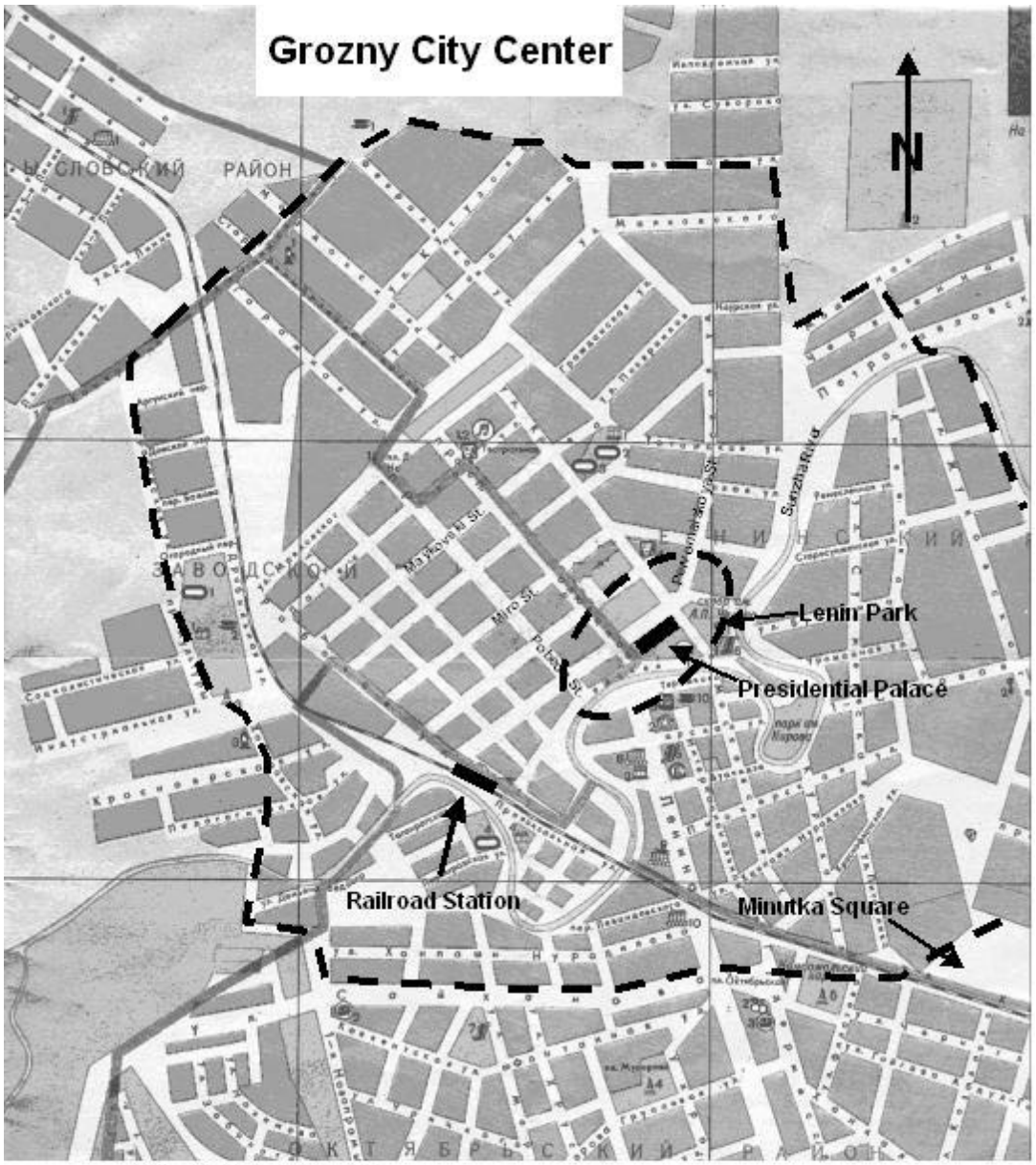


Figure 14. Russian understanding of Chechen defenses.

Upon personally seeing the Russian Army's disposition around Grozny on 22 December 1994, Pavel Grachev determined that complete isolation of Grozny would take much more time - time the Chechen s would not allow him. Additionally, dissatisfied at the progress of the operation, Grachev relieved almost all of the NCMD staff, including the NCMD Commander, Gen Mityukin and Army Group North Commander, Gen Lt Chilindin. Grachev appointed Gen Col Edvard Vorobjov as NCMD Commander and Gen Lt Rokhlin as Army Group North Commander. Vorobjov refused the command.[46] Twelve days later, Grachev would also replace the Army Group West Commander, Gen Lt V. Petruk, with Gen Lt Ivan Babichev.[47] The shuffling of its senior leaders did nothing for the confidence of Russian subordinate units.

On 25 December 1994, the day prior to Yeltsin's order, the NCMD staff completed its plan to assault Grozny. On 28 December 1994, just two days after Yeltsin's order, with two new senior commanders and little preparation, the Russian ground assault on a well-defended Grozny commenced as forces entered the industrial suburbs ten kilometers northeast of the Presidential Palace.[48] Five days was, in no way, sufficient to allow dissemination of a plan from an operational-level staff, let alone enough time to complete subordinate plans, rehearsals and the like.

Much like the campaign plan into Chechnya, the plan to enter Grozny followed three general axes, although the plan briefed as "four directions." Attacks on all axes were to occur simultaneously. The Northern and Northeastern Army Groups were to follow axes along Juznaga, Mayakovski, Krasnoznamenskaya, and Miro Streets on the western portion of their axis and along the Sunzha River on the Eastern portion of the axis. Their task was to block (isolate) along the northern edge of the city, then conduct a

forward passage of lines with trailing MVD and FSK troops to secure the Presidential Palace.[49]

The Western Army Group would follow two routes within their axis: one route along the railroad tracks leading into Grozny from the northwest and one route along Papovic Street. The Western Army Group task was to secure the railroad station then orient northward to isolate the Presidential Palace from the South.[50]

Leading the Eastern Army Group, paratroop units were to isolate the Zavodskaya and Katayama Districts of Grozny while the remainder of the Eastern Army Group was to assault along the Gudermes-Grozny railroad tracks, then along Lenin Prospect Street to the Sunzha River. The Eastern Army Group tasks were to seize the bridges across the river, effect link up with the Western Army Group to complete the isolation of the Presidential Palace from the South and East.[51]

From 28-30 December, NCMD troops successfully closed the remaining 10-15 kilometers through the suburbs and outlying areas of Grozny proper. Anticipating continued success, on 30 December, Grachev prematurely announced in a press conference in Mozdok that the first stage of the assault was complete and the MVD would conduct its planned forward passage of lines. After his announcement, Grachev and the MVD Minister, Viktor Yerin, returned to Moscow. Grachev did not give Gen Lt Anatoly Kvashnin and the NCMD staff the final order to assault Grozny until 31 December, while Grachev was celebrating his birthday.[52]

Grachev's instructions were to forego isolating Grozny and storm it in a coup de main. This was a drastic change to the NCMD's original maneuver plan. Rather than passing the MVD troops through the Russian Army, the Russian Army would assault

Grozny unprotected and secure planned objectives without the assistance of the MVD troops. Rokhlin's Army Group North was the main attack. To help him accomplish his task, the NCMD staff, applying lessons learned from the war in Afghanistan, weighted his effort with two batteries of ZSU-23-4 self-propelled air defense vehicles. The ZSU-23-4 performed well in Afghanistan due to the guns' ability to elevate and depress in order to engage the anticipated high and low angle targets.[53]

Thus, Army Group North's task changed from isolating the area north of Grozny's center and seizing the Presidential Palace to securing the railroad station and to establishing a bridgehead to pass units from Army Group West. Again, this is not a change that is easily accomplished from the march without adequate planning and rehearsal. Army Group West would then secure the city's center, east of the Sunzha River.[54]

As air and artillery attacks on Grozny intensified on the morning of 31 December 1994, Rokhlin's Army Group North moved southward, led by the 131st IMBr. The only notable contact occurred when the 131st IMBr Reconnaissance Company made contact with a small Chechen combat outpost at 9 a.m. The main body of the regiment bypassed the outpost by shifting the direction of attack west one block, onto Mayakovski Street. By 1 p.m., the column reached the rail station with tanks in the lead and infantry mounted atop fighting vehicles. They apparently secured the railroad station with little contact. The move may have caught the Chechens by surprise.[55]

The operation appeared to be going as planned. Army Group West Commander, Gen Lt Petruk, and Army Group East Commander, Gen Lt Nikolai Staskov, both reported to Gen Anatoly Kvashnin that their units were enroute and on schedule.[56] Although the

131st IMBr achieved surprise, such was not the case for the trailing 81st MRR. The 81st MRR was in contact from the moment it neared the city. Automatic grenade launcher and mortar fire peppered the tanks and BMPs as they crossed the Sunzha River Bridge north of the city. Once into Grozny, the 81st moved unimpeded until 1 p.m. when a well-prepared Chechen unit ambushed the column along Gospitalnaya Street, within three or four blocks of the Presidential Palace.[57] Chechens quickly destroyed the lead and trail vehicles with RPGs and began attritting vehicles in between. Chechen snipers killed infantrymen as they exited burning vehicles. Those who stayed were killed while they huddled in the dubious safety of their vehicles.[58]

Despite reports to the contrary, Army Group East, commanded by Gen Lt Nikolai Staskov, was having its own problems. Staskov assaulted Grozny with the 129th MRR, a tank battalion of 20-25 tanks, a special purpose paratroop detachment that consisted only of two BRDMs and a troop transport truck, a platoon of 122mm tube artillery, and two platoons of self propelled anti-aircraft guns. Staskov would have added the 104th Paratroop Division, but its commander refused to fight. Nonetheless, the remnants of Staskov's unit entered the outskirts of Grozny at 11 a.m. on 31 December along the Gudermes-Grozny railroad tracks per the original NCMD plan. Stavkov's column immediately came under intense Chechen automatic grenade launcher and machine gun fire causing the lead vehicle drivers to panic and turn north. By mid-afternoon, lost and confused, the column unknowingly turned east and again came under heavy fire. The unit found an open area a couple of kilometers outside the Chechens' outermost defenses and stayed there the rest of the night, where the it was constantly harassed by Chechen fire.[59]

Gen Lt Petruk's Western Army Group shared the same fate as Staskov. Lead regiments from the Army Group's 19th MRD came under fire before entering Grozny proper. Chechen fighters fixed the 19th MRD's lead units.[60]

Meanwhile, at 3 p.m., in the city's center, the Chechens had mounted a counter-offensive against the 131st IMBr, which was, by that time, in defensive positions oriented north of the rail station. During the first hour of fighting, Chechen fighters destroyed thirteen tanks and BMPs and wounded, among others, the Brigade Commander, Colonel Ivan Savin, in both legs. Towards dusk, isolated, surrounded by enemy, with ammunition running low and casualties mounting, Col Savin realized that Army Groups East and West were not coming. Therefore, he ordered his Deputy Brigade Commander, Col Andriyevski, to organize a breach through and rescue. Andriyevski had been left in charge of a blocking position north of the city early that morning.[61]

Around midnight, the 19th MRD from the Western Army Group had overcome the Chechens west of Grozny and penetrated to within 300 meters of the Presidential Palace, just five blocks north of Col Savin and his isolated 131st IMBr. Nonetheless, Chechen fighters eventually repulsed the 19th MRD, forcing it north into Lenin Park and leaving it in no position to rescue the 131st IMBr.[62]

By dawn on 1 January 1995, Andriyevski was able to organize a 40-vehicle rescue force. By 6a.m., the rescue element began its move south into the city. The rescue column eventually approached the rail station on Mayakovski Street, as the 131st IMBr's main body had the previous day. Around 11a.m., as the column turned east towards the rail station, Chechens destroyed the lead vehicle, which was in sight of the rail station. Andriyevski ordered the main body of the column to turn east onto

Robachaya Street, running parallel one block north of the rail station. As the formation attempted to go south at the rail station, Chechens destroyed another vehicle, again forcing the convoy northward. Just three blocks north of the rail station, Chechens ambushed and destroyed all but two tanks, which survived the ambush. Scared for his life, one of the two vehicle drivers missed a turn and rolled his vehicle into the icy Sunzha River. Only two soldiers from that vehicle survived.[63]

Staskov's Eastern Army Group continued to defend east of town until sometime between 9 and 10 a.m. when Russian Su-25 fighter jets bombed the friendly unit, destroying five additional vehicles and forcing the group to displace farther east at 2 p.m., when it reached the Chankala Airport, ten kilometers east of Grozny. The 129th MRR figured its losses at 150 dead.[64]

By 3 p.m., seeing the desperation of his Northern Army Group, Gen Lt Rokhlin authorized Savin and the 131st to withdraw toward Lenin Park, some six blocks north. Twenty minutes later, the 106th and 76th Paratroop Divisions mounted a second rescue attempt that was unable to reach the rail station. Hopeless, Savin decided to take his remaining survivors and withdraw north. Without maps, Savin and his survivors moved out on foot.[65] When the group became lost, they wound up too near the Presidential Palace, where the Chechen were waiting. To a man, every one of the survivors was either killed or captured. Almost the entire Brigade Staff and Colonel Savin were killed. In all, the 131st suffered 1,000 dead, 74 captured, 20 of 26 tanks destroyed, 102 of 120 BMPs destroyed, and 6 of 6 ZSU 23-4s destroyed.[66] Savin was found with a bullet hole in his forehead later that month.[67] Figure 15 depicts the Russian situation on 31 December 1994.

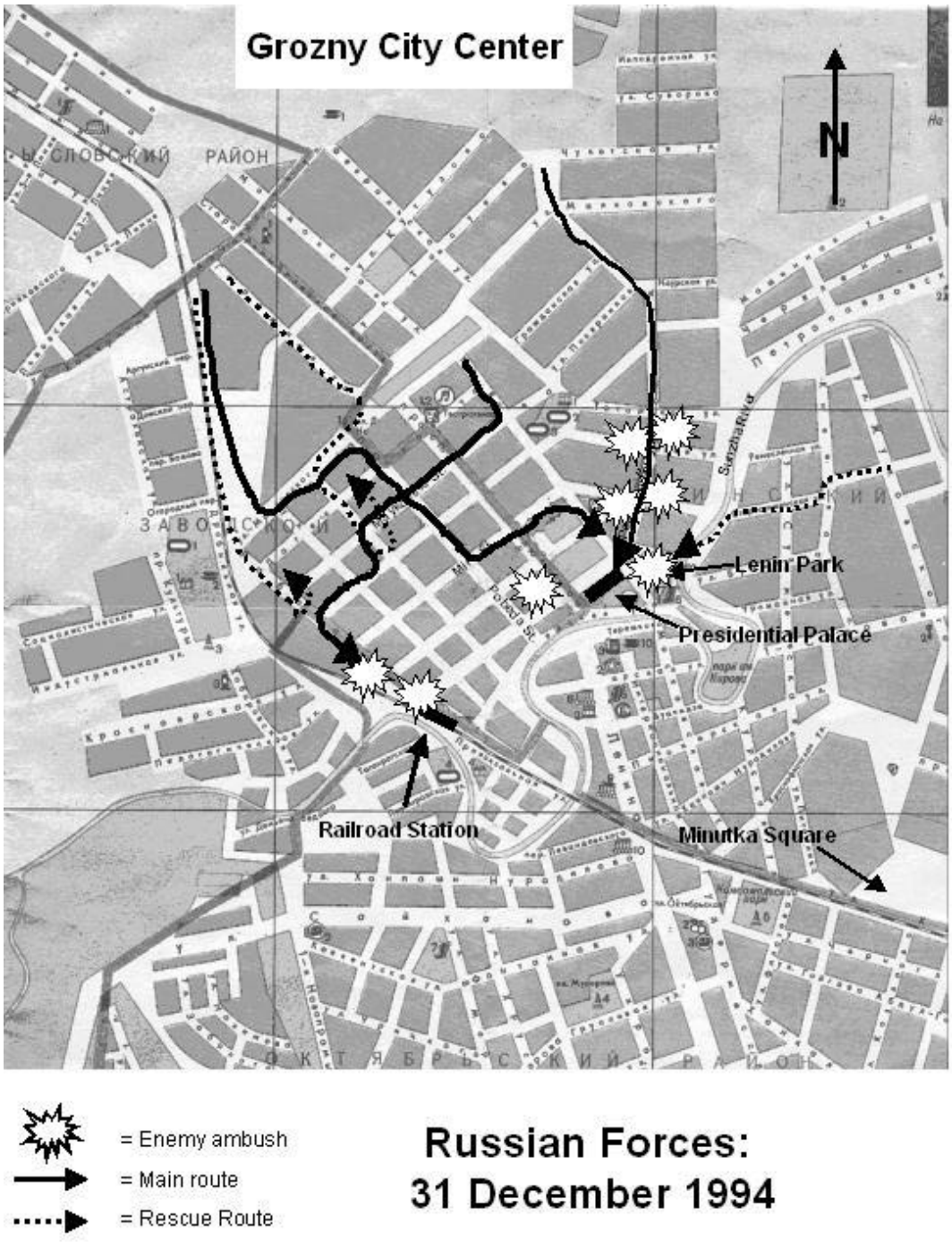
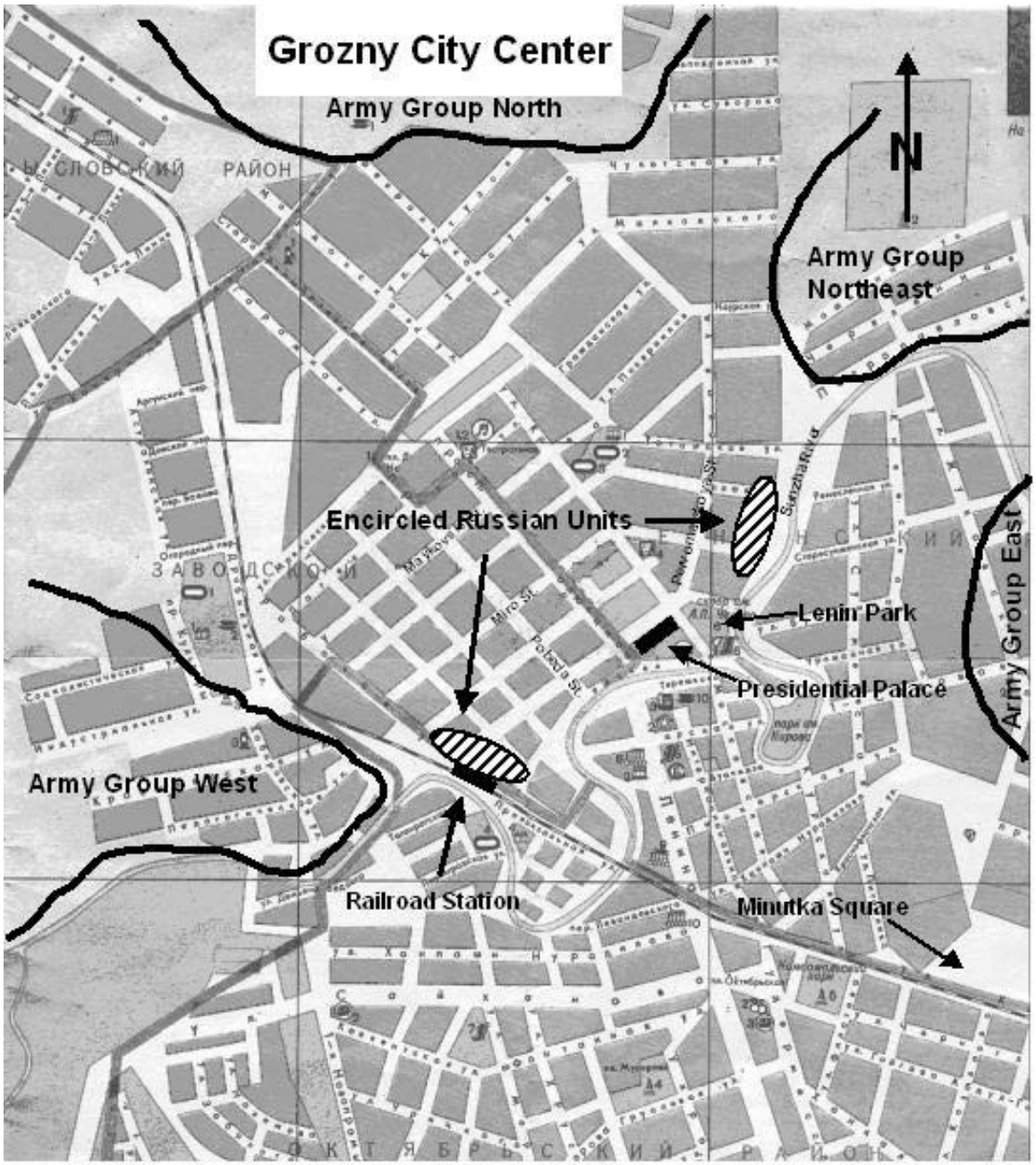


Figure 15. Russian situation--31 December 1994.

By sundown on New Year's Day of 1995, the Chechens handed the Russian Army a staggering defeat ending the first part of the battle for Grozny. The Russian Army suffered more than 1,000 soldiers killed, 84 soldiers captured and over 200 armored vehicles destroyed. The commanding generals of Army Groups East and West would be accused of cowardice. Four commanding generals would be relieved of their commands and numerous senior commanders were killed or captured during the fight.[68] The two Spetsnaz groups inserted in the south of the city eventually surrendered to the Chechens after surviving several days without food.[69] Regardless, on 2 January 1995, Gen Grachev announced to the press that the Army would need only five or six days to rid Grozny of its remaining Chechen formations and to collect their weapons.[70]

The Russian tactical commanders focused on rescuing their encircled units at the railroad station and central marketplace. By 3 January 1995, the Russians changed their tactics. They divided the city into sectors, assigning a small unit of four to six men to each. Each group consisted of a commander, a radio operator, a marksman, a grenadier, and a couple riflemen. Operating as smaller units, the Russians used tanks and artillery in support of the dismounted infantry.[71] As the Northern and Northeaster Army Groups consolidated into one under the command of Gen Lt Lev Rokhlin, the NCMD staff decided that they would have to seize Grozny in by section, one building at a time. On 4 and 5 January, the Eastern Army Group moved north to make contact with Rokhlin's Northern Group. The attack renewed once the Eastern and Northern Army Groups joined.[72] Figure 16 depicts the Russian situation on 4-5 January 1995.



Russian Forces: 4-5 January 1995

Figure 16. Russian situation--4-5 January 1995.

On 5 and 6 January, all three Army Groups attempted to block the Chechen defenders in the city's center. Meanwhile, the NCMD staff committed more forces and supplies to the fight for Grozny. From 9-18 January 1995, seven battalions of Russian Naval Infantry joined the fight. These units brought ninety tons of ammunition with them. The large numbers of soldiers, equipment and ammunition that entered Chechnya on short notice were a Russian logistical feat.[73]

During a mutual cease-fire from 10-12 January, the Russians and Chechens exchanged prisoners and casualties, while Russian planners prepared for continued hostilities. The Eastern Army Group, commanded by Gen Lt Popov, would Grozny from the south and southeast to finally cut off Chechen lines of communication while the previous assault plan continued without interruption. On 14 January, with the help of close air support, Rokhlin's Northern Army Group broke through to the Presidential Palace. After four days of bombing, tank and artillery fires on into the building, the Chechen General Staff displaced to the Grozny suburbs on 18 January. Russian forces secured the abandoned palace the next day. With the palace in Russian hands, President Yeltsin declared the mission in Chechnya successful and ordered Gen Anatoly Kulikov, head of the Russian MVD Armed Forces, to take charge of operations in Chechnya.[74]

Yeltsin made the announcement while the Chechens controlled the western, southern, and eastern districts of Grozny, including key crossing sites on the Sunzha River. The Chechens had only lost the northern one-third of the city and the area around the railroad station. The Chechens also had 3,500 fighters, ten armored vehicles, five Grad rocket artillery pieces and five or six tube artillery pieces. Gen Lt Babichev's

Western Army Group had not yet cut the Chechens southern supply lines. The city was hardly under Russian control at the time President Yeltsin made his statement.

The situation had changed though. Gen Lt Rokhlin's Northern Army Group was near the city's center and moving inward daily. He established his headquarters along with those of the intelligence battalion and special-purpose units in the basements of destroyed buildings. Close contact with intelligence and special-purpose units provided Rokhlin up-to-date enemy information. Better intelligence helped the Russians force a Chechen withdrawal to the southern part of the city, where Shamil Basayev still commanded more than 1,600 fighters equipped with several tanks and Grad rocket launchers.

The Naval Infantry that had arrived in Grozny by 18 January suffered their first losses when they battled for crossing sites on the Sunzha River. Each day, casualties during this phase of the fight averaged from 60-100 men. Russian medical units calculated that Gen Lt Rokhlin's Army Group had 1,000 men killed in action and 5,000 wounded during the last thee weeks of fighting in Grozny. Many of these men were lost during Rokhlin's attack on the Presidential Palace, which Chechen snipers occupied after the departure of General Maskhadov's displacement south.

President Dudayev rallied the Chechen fighters after the NCMD staff announced that Grozny had been secured. The intensity of battles increased, especially in the southern portion of the city, at the Minutka Square, and in the areas around the Sunzha River bridges. The Russian repulsed the counterattacks and continued to reinforce their positions. The Russians massed so much combat might by the end of January that the Chechens realized that they would lose Grozny sooner or later. On 3 February 1995, the

Russians penetrated Chechen defenses in the southern part of the city, cutting the Chechen lines of communication. By 9 February, the Chechen commander, Aslan Maskhadov, announced he was retreating from Grozny. President Dudayev proclaimed that the loss of Grozny meant that he would have to take the war into Russia.[75]

The first battle for Grozny concluded on 13 February 1995 after changes in tactics and operational approaches. The Russian Army finally captured Grozny in a block-by-block fight and passed its control to Gen Lt Anatoly Kulikov's MVD troops for tenuous administration.

Grozny II and III

In March 1996, the Chechens conducted a reconnaissance in force into Grozny. Although the Chechens failed to capture the city, it is considered the second battle for Grozny.[76] The war changed as a Russian missile attack killed Dzokhar Dudayev on 22 April 1996.[77]

On 6 August 1996, the Chechens waged a third battle for Grozny to regain control of Grozny. By 18 August 1996, the Chechens effectively regained control of the city and forced the Russians to the negotiating table. The Khasavyurt Agreement of August 1996 ended the third battle for Grozny and the first Russo-Chechen War. The agreement did not resolve the Russo-Chechen conflict, but merely postponed an official Russian decision on the status of Chechnya until 31 December 2001.[78]

By the end of October 1996, the Russians had redeployed its forces out of Chechnya. With Russian troops out, Aslan Maskhadov, previously Dudayev's Chief of

Staff, was elected President of Chechnya in January 1997. In November 1997, Shamil Basayev, Dudayev's senior field commander, was named the Chechen Prime Minister. During that time, Chechnya became increasingly lawless, often exporting terrorism beyond the North Caucasus and into Russia.[79] Basayev did not or could not control the lawlessness.[80] On 19 July 1998, Basayev resigned his post as Prime Minister and was later appointed as Deputy Commander of the Chechen Armed Forces.[81]

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation had done little to build effective international policy. The unwanted possibility of Chechnya leaving the Russian Federation in 2001 encouraged Russia to ignore building a working political relationship with Aslan Maskhadov, the new Chechen President. Moscow's intended outcome of this omission was to prevent Maskhadov's legitimacy. The unintended consequence of this failure weakened Maskhadov's legitimacy within Chechnya and increased Chechen lawlessness.[82] Throughout 1997 and 1998, abductions and raids increased in Chechnya, Dagestan, and in the Stavropol region of southern Russia. In March 1999, Russians presumed that Chechen warlords kidnapped a Russian Minister of Internal Affairs envoy to Chechnya, General Gennady Shpigun.[83]

On 7-8 August 1999, the Deputy Commander of Chechen Armed Forces, Shamil Basayev, and a Jordanian field commander named Khattab led a 200-500-man Chechen and foreign Islamic force east into neighboring Dagestan with the apparent aim of seizing several villages to establish Islamic order over the Russian-administered state. Russian MVD troops in Dagestan attempted to defend against Basayev's assault, but, after five days, called for help from the Russian MoD. The Russian MoD troops expelled the Chechens from Dagestan. However, a series of events in September 1998, in particular

the bombing of Russian apartment buildings in Moscow, set the stage for a Russian offensive into Chechnya.[84]

By 1999, the Russian people also had enough of Chechnya's terror program. One poll showed 73 percent of Russians supported a Russian offensive into Chechnya to stop the violence. Politically, the combination of four events encouraged another Russian military intervention in Chechnya: 1) the possibility of Chechnya leaving the Russian Federation in accordance with the Khasavyurt Agreement; 2) the desire to ensure Yeltsin's party had a winning campaign to keep a fellow party member in office after the 2000 election; 3) Chechnya's intervention into Dagestan in August 1999; and 4) the bombing of a Moscow shopping mall and apartment building.[85] The stage was set for the fourth battle for Grozny. With the backing of the Russian populace, the Russian Army's conduct of the fourth battle for Grozny would not look like the first.[86]

Grozny IV

Russian "power ministers" did not wait for the Chechen border incursion to begin preemptive planning and preparation. As early as March of 1999, the month Chechen terrorists kidnapped the Russian MVD envoy to Chechnya, Russia began a 93,000-troop build-up along Chechnya's northern border within the Stavropol region of Russia. Simultaneously, the MoD staff began planning a counter-terrorist campaign. The operational plan consisted of three phases: 1) block to isolate Chechnya's borders and occupy areas to contain Chechen guerrillas, 2) Destroy Chechen strong points and key

Chechen facilities using air strikes, and 3) establish an alternative power structure to challenge the legitimacy of Chechnya's current government.[87]

Beginning in March, to improve joint and interagency coordination, Col Gen Kazantsev, the NCMD Commander, conducted interagency exercises with the MVD, border troops and others for such an operation.[88] The largest of these exercises was conducted in July, to improve coordination and synchronization between government agencies. Another operational exercise incorporated missions such as hostage rescue, response to a natural disaster, urban defense, building clearance, and counter-terrorist actions. The NCJG initially deployed 15,000 troops of all services and agencies from Dagestan to North Ossetia.[89]

Another development occurred during the inter-war years that would improve the quality of individual replacements. Originally intended to prevent soldiers with less than twelve months on active duty from serving in a war zone, an order was issued to ensure that no "green" troops were sent to fight in the Second Chechen War. The twelve-months' restriction was unsupportable and was reduced to six months. Nonetheless, the quality of individual replacements for alerted units improved. Other steps to improve soldier quality were: additional training for soldiers just out of basic training to give them some advanced individual skills; in-country training; and development of permanent readiness units, which are kept up to strength and ready for immediate deployment. While not all of these initiatives were completely successful, they were certainly improvements to previous manning and deployment programs.[90]

The operational command and control structure also improved. At the onset of operations against the Chechen incursion into Dagestan, an MVD officer served as

Commander of the North Caucasus Joint Grouping (NCJG) of Russian Forces, a joint (and interagency) command. Once the operation expanded westward into Chechnya, Yeltsin realized the mission exceeded the MVD's capability to control it. Yeltsin decided the MoD should take overall command. The MoD, Marshal Sergeyev, appointed Gen Lt Troshev, then Commander of OGV East, to command the NCJG. Like the First Chechen War, the NCJG had three subordinate operational groupings: East, West, and North. A Southern Operational Grouping was added in December 1999 as operations in Chechnya pushed south into the Caucasus Mountains.[91]

The commanders or subordinate operational groupings (OGV) within the NCJG were as follows: OGV West--Gen Lt Shamanov, OGV North (later renamed OGV Grozny)--Gen Lt Bulgakov, OGV East--Gen Maj Popov, and OGV South--Gen Maj Ashurov. Unlike Russian organization for the First Chechen War, reference to the OGV direction was not indicative of a narrow axis within which the group would attack. The direction merely indicated the direction from which the group came. Once in Chechnya, each group operated independently within sectors throughout Chechnya, much like a US infantry battalion would create sectors within which to search and attack. Grozny was later divided into sectors for this purpose. OGV North (OGV Grozny) would be the only operational group to operate inside the city.[92] See Figure 17 for a graphic depiction of the NCJG's operational structure.

The OGV task organization offered much improved flexibility. The command structure worked relatively smoothly. OGVs West and North were able to begin training for operations in Chechnya while, from 29 August--3 September 1999, in response to Basayev's border incursion in Dagestan, OGV East was conducting counter-terrorist

raids against Dagestani Wahhabi insurgents, while pushing the Chechens west into Chechnya. By 21 September, Popov's OGV East had regained control of Dagestan and had prevented the Chechens, blocked in the east, from reentering Dagestan.[93] To set the conditions for ground operations, Russia initiated its air and long-range fires campaign on 23 September by attacking the Grozny airport, air defense radars, oil refineries, fuel storage sites, and power installations.[94] Due to the imminent Russian ground offensive, Grozny's population dropped to less than 50,000 people.

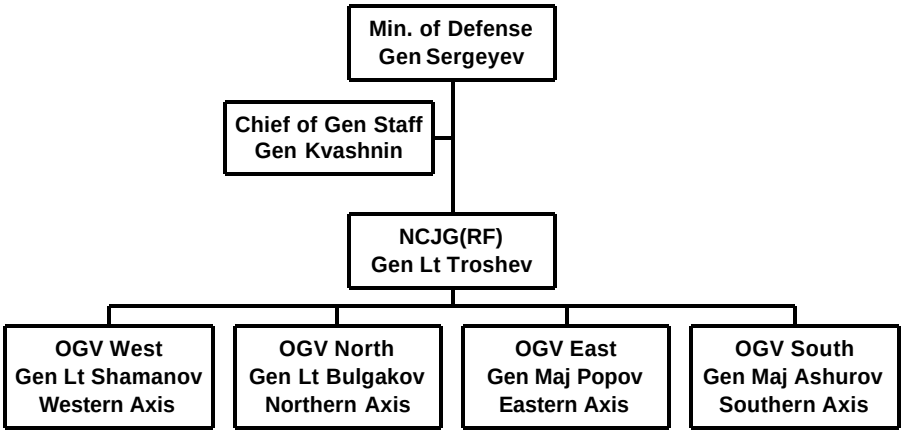


Figure 17. Russian organization for combat, Grozny IV, 1999.

Within the OGVs, joint and interagency groupings performed different, yet mutually supporting, tasks. Taskings were assigned based on the subordinates' capabilities. For example, an army unit may isolate a village in order to allow naval infantry (marines) to clear the village, and then conduct a transfer of authority to the MVD troops. Such was not the case in the First Chechen War, where the same task was often assigned to different services or agencies, regardless of its capability to perform the task. During the First Chechen War, MVD troops were originally designated to secure

key terrain within Grozny, although the NCMD staff knew that MVD troops were not adept at high intensity combat, were incapable of calling for and adjusting artillery fires, or controlling Close Air Support.[95]

The NCJG also decentralized control of much of its artillery, air support and engineers, assigning them to subordinate OGV commands. To help control close air support, forward air controllers were assigned down to companies. To assist in controlling artillery, fire observers were also assigned to companies. Other forces, such as sappers, air defense artillery, and cannon artillery were typically not attached below brigade or regimental level but were sometimes placed under the control of company commanders.[96] The limiting factor as to where supporting units could be assigned was the ability of the command to employ them wisely and not squander precious assets. Attachments were not made below company level.

With forward observers attached to maneuver companies, Bulgakov's OGV North, moving south towards the Terek River, used indirect fires more effectively. Artillery fires were timelier and accuracy improved. Artillery dominated the battlefield. Historically, the Russians have always believed in mass quantities of artillery. Although marginally employed in the First Chechen War, artillery was widely used in the second. Missions such as the fire block, fire sweep, defensive box barrage and fire sector found their way back into Russian Army lexicon.

Although not new, these missions were new to most company grade officers and junior NCOs. The officers and NCOs who controlled artillery in the Second Chechen War had entered the Russian Army after the Russo-Afghan War, when these techniques were perfected.[97] The skill with which Russian units employed artillery encouraged them

not to assault headlong into stiff resistance. When a maneuver force started to become decisively engaged, it would back off and use artillery until there was no organized resistance. While this technique expended large amounts of expensive artillery rounds, it saved lives.[98]

One of the most effective Russian task organizations was modeled after the Chechen fighters' "storm detachment." It was tested and perfected in the smaller villages surrounding Grozny. Based on the infantry company or battalion, the storm detachment was an assault element specifically designed for urban combat. Six infantry squads of 3-5 men each would serve as a forward security element to find and fix the enemy or to breach or bypass his obstacles. This element moved with all-around security in a rectangular formation with two sappers, one with a mine detector, and the other with explosives. Behind the lead element, the command group moved with 3-4 snipers providing all-around security, and was flanked with a squad of infantry on the left and right. The main body of the detachment moved with two tanks in column, followed by a combat engineer vehicle for breaching and was flanked by a BTR squad on both sides. Anti-tank (AT) gunners armed with RPGs encircled the entire main body. To protect the AT gunners, six infantry squads protected the main body's flanks and rear.[99]

New tactics and task organization proved their worth in Dagestan when the OGV East, commanded by Gen Lt Popov, employed them against the Chechen and Islamic insurgents. On 30 September 1999, the NCJG's OGV West, North, and East entered Chechnya and began to seal it off from the outside. By 3 October 1999, the Russian tightened the encirclement to 5-30 kilometers inside the Chechen border. In the north, the Russian perimeter included the entire northern one-third of the country, north of the

Terek River. On 15 October, OGV East seized dominating terrain within artillery range of Grozny. Russian artillery attacked downtown Grozny with ten SS-21 and SCUD-B missiles on 22 October.[100] By 29 October, Popov's OGVs East and OGV West, under Gen Lt Shamanov, had cleared and secured the villages surrounding Grozny and closed all roads leading in or out of Chechnya. OGV North, renamed OGV Grozny, established blocking positions outside Grozny to encircle the Chechen combatants.[101]

In October 1999, concurrent with its move to Grozny, the NCJG initiated its information campaign, an element that was wholly absent during the '94-'96 war. Some of the first aircraft and missile strikes destroyed Chechen communications infrastructure in order to disrupt the Chechen effort. In another somewhat draconian information warfare effort, Russian leaders negotiated directly with village elders prior to entering villages in some areas while, in others, villagers were issued leaflets ordering fighters to evacuate the village so the Russians could secure it peacefully or the civilians would be ordered out and artillery and air strikes would reduce the town to ruins. Another technique was used outside Grozny. On 5 December 1999, Russian planes dropped leaflets on Grozny ordering a complete evacuation within five days and stated that there would be no negotiations.[102]

Lastly, the '94-'96 Russian inability to influence the media was remedied during the 1999 campaign. Surprisingly few journalists complained initially about the Russian media control. Resolution Number 1538 created the Russian Information Center, which filtered information before it was disseminated. The Russian information effort had a positive influence on Russian public opinion.[103]

On 6 December 1999, the day after the Grozny leaflet drop, Gen Kvashnin, then Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, arranged for the release of Beslan Gantemirov, a Chechen dissident and the former Mayor of Grozny who was convicted of embezzling. In 1991, Gantemirov had been a Chechen National Guard commander who, prior to 1994, supported the Dudayev regime. During the First Chechen War, however, Gantemirov supported Dudayev's opposition in Grozny. Nevertheless, in 1995, he was jailed embezzlement and for having once supported Dudayev. Kvashnin had a new purpose for him in 1999: to use Gantemirov's popularity in Grozny to raise a partisan movement. By the end of the month, Kvashnin's gamble paid off as the ex-mayor cooperated and gathered support. Russian use of local leaders to fight counter-insurgency showed flexibility.[104]

By 8 December, Phases I and II were complete, as OGVs East and West had secured all the prominent villages surrounding Grozny and OGV Grozny apparently had the city isolated.[105] During that phase, OGV East leveled Alkhan-Yurt, a town a few kilometers northeast of Grozny. Chechen survivors who previously cooperated with Russian commanders claim the attack was an especially brutal one in which Russian soldiers executed 41 civilians, beheaded them, then cut off their ears. Russian commanders denied the massacre occurred but claims of such ruthlessness did not help maintain Chechen cooperation.[106] On 12 December, the Russian Phase III began as Bulgakov's OGV Grozny initiated the fourth Battle for Grozny.[107]

Pending its final assault, OGV Grozny instructed civilians to follow "safe routes" out of the city. In coordination with former mayor Beslan Gantemirov's partisan militia, totaling around 5,000 men, OGV Grozny moved slowly and deliberately from house to

house and building to building, clearing by sectors of the city as they assaulted through the outskirts and suburbs of Grozny from the north. Artillery fires intensified from 24 – 26 December, just prior to OGV Grozny's final assault. The renewed use of artillery reduced the size of Chechen detachments.[108] The Russians followed a four-step procedure to clear the city: 1) reconnaissance, 2) artillery, 3) snipers establish overwatch for infantry, and 4) infantry reduce each successive sector.[109]

Russian reconnaissance probed each city block only far enough to draw enemy fire. They maintained their troop strength by staying at least 300 meters (Kalashnikov and RPG effective range) from the Chechens while calling for artillery fire, fuel air explosives and air strikes suppressed enemy positions. The task organized storm detachment commanders then positioned snipers and maneuvered sections of supporting tanks to their rear to support the infantry as they cleared each sector.[110]

By 28 December 1999, lead units of Bulgakov's OGV Grozny, moving from the west, north and east on three axes through sector, reported having penetrated the Chechens outer ring defenses and secured the Old Sunzha region and the main bridge over the Sunzha River. At the expense of many of the remaining structures along their axes, Bulgakov's troops called in fifty-three sorties to destroy fifteen Chechen strongpoint defenses. Meanwhile, Gantemirov's militia neared Grozny's center, and the tempo of the operation slowed to the point that Bulgakov's men gained no more than 100 meters per day. However, thanks to force protection measures like reactive armor, infantry leading tanks, and all-around security, casualties were remarkably low and only a single tank was lost in an ambush since the initial assault.[111]

While the Russian advance slowed as a result of improved force protection measures, the Chechens did their part to slow OGV Grozny, too. The Chechens had made some improvements of their own during the inter-war years. Russians found it nearly impossible to enter a building from the first floor as its windows and doors were either boarded or blocked. Russians soon found that any movement toward these openings would place them in the path of a sniper's bullet. Chechens also improved their own mobility by exploiting underground tunnels and sewers. These allowed Chechen fighters to displace forward, backward and laterally and into the Russian rear area, where they could do the most damage. Chechens did not use body armor because of its weight reduced a fighter's agility and they had limited amounts. Like the First Chechen War, the Chechen fighter was less encumbered than his Russian counterpart, which helped the Chechen fighter to move forward to "hug" the Russian force to avoid Russian artillery fire.[112]

As January wore on, the Russians and Chechens approached a stalemate around Minutka Square, five blocks southeast of the Presidential Palace and nearly due east of the railroad station where the 131st IMBr had been gutted five years prior. As Russian commanders neared Minutka Square, they determined the tall five to nine story building around the square were key terrain, offering the owner a marked advantage over his enemy. Russian forces tried to seize these buildings and ignored their tried and true "back-off-and-bomb" technique of letting fire support do the work for them. Since these tall buildings were valuable as sniper platforms and artillery spotting, neither force wanted to rubble the tall buildings. The Russians eventually captured a nine-story building and two smaller ones, but could not retain them as Chechens infiltrated the

basement of the buildings and eventually ambushed the Russian force. In the end, the battle was of little consequence as the (approximately) 5,000 Chechen fighters began to wear down under the overwhelming combined strength of nearly 100,000 Russian troops. By the end of January, Chechen fighters began to retreat.[113]

In the final days of the Chechen withdrawal, a Russian intelligence unit staged an information warfare coup de grace on 29-30 January 2000. The Russians hoped to kill retreating Chechens. Russian intelligence gave false information over radio nets and encouraged partisans to spread the word about an undefended and unmined route out of Grozny. The false information campaign was successful as the Chechen fighters took the bait.[114] The "cleared" corridor actually passed through an anti-personnel minefield that killed or wounded retreating Chechens. Shamil Basayev, Chechnya's well-known leader, lost a foot to this minefield.[115]

On 6 February, Russian Forces raised the Russian flag over the rubbled Chechen capital city. The Chechen fighters had, again, been defeated. Reports indicated that no more than 300 fighters were still scatterred throughout Grozny, making continued overt Chechen resistance futile. The bulk of the Chechen fighters, including Aslan Maskhadov, fled to smaller cities or south into the Caucasus Mountains, vowing to continue their fight for Chechnya. OGV Grozny began to transfer control to the Russian MVD to control and administer. The fourth battle for Grozny had ended.[116]

Losses in this battle include nearly 4,000 Chechen fighters killed, approximately 5,000 civilians killed, 1,100 Russian troops killed, one tank destroyed, and more than 230,000 persons displaced. Great portions of Grozny and other cities were reduced to rubble.[117] Clearly, the Chechen people suffered the greatest losses.

There were several differences between the first and fourth battles for Grozny. Russian training for Grozny I was practically nonexistent. Combat proficiency of all units was extremely low. Although the Russians did not expect a fight, units and pieces of units combined to form ad hoc organizations that were untrained for and incapable of combined arms combat. After the First Chechen War, the Russians expected they would fight for Grozny again.[118] Thus, the Russians made major adjustments to their training methodology, placing extra emphasis on intra and interservice and interagency communications and resolving coordination problems. For the first time in ten years, the Russians conducted operational level exercises prior to Grozny IV.[119]

Preparations for information warfare were also absent in Grozny I. The Russian information stranglehold that denied media access backfired. By turning media away from the Mozdok CP and allowing them to enter Grozny on their own, the Russians turned the reporters over to the Chechens. The Chechens saw an opportunity and capitalized on it. Reports produced during Grozny I told the Chechen story and further degraded an already low Russian public support for the war. The Russians changed their policy prior to Grozny IV. The Russians now cooperated with the media and gained control of it. The Russian government used the media to build on existing Russian public support for the war. The Russians used information for tactical purposes, as well. They habitually informed civilians of their intentions and later used this information to deceive the enemy.[120]

Intelligence preparation of the battlefield prior to Grozny I could not have been worse. If leaders and soldiers had a map of the city at all, its scale was too small to depict the streets and buildings that define the urban battlefield. Russian Army units did not

conduct any detailed reconnaissance of the city prior to the assault. Human intelligence about the situation within the city was totally lacking. Prior to Grozny IV, however, the Russians had good maps and better reconnaissance information. This time, the Russians effectively used partisans to gain human intelligence.[121]

Because intelligence drives maneuver, planning for Grozny I was inadequate to capture the city. Lacking good enemy strength estimates, the Russians committed too few soldier to the assault. Further, the plan for Grozny I hinged upon seizure of terrain, instead of clearing the enemy off the terrain. Planning for Grozny IV was drastically different. Rather than focusing on terrain objectives, the Russians developed an enemy-oriented plan and used terrain to their advantage. They committed more than twice the numbers of soldiers as before to accomplish the mission.[122]

In the close fight of Grozny I, fire support assets were largely ineffective for the first three days. The Russians gave artillery a supporting role, although their use of artillery did improve from 5-18 January 1995. Air to ground coordination possibly had as many negative results as positive as indiscriminate bombing destroyed any local support. In the fourth battle for Grozny, the Russians returned to their roots and employed artillery as their main weapon. Air to ground coordination added to the fire support equation, rather than subtracted from it.[123]

Finally, despite efforts to improve individual soldier skills after the first battle for Grozny, Russian performance at the lowest tactical level changed little. Additional individual training prior to deployment, in-country training once assigned to a unit, then rehearsals in secured terrain helped but still didn't create the crack Russian urban fighter.[124] Chapter 5 discusses probable causes for this.

The Chechens, on the other hand, changed little in the interim years. Apart from a more extensive use of tunnels and sewers, the Chechens fought the same fight. Because they used the same tactics, the Chechen fighters were defeated. Grozny I and Grozny IV display an unusual occurrence in military history: a large, doctrinally based, modern army implemented change more quickly than a small, unprofessional, mobile force.

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[1]Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, 5.

[2]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 55.

[3]Gall and de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, 173.

[4]Thomas, *The Caucasus Conflict and Russian Security*, 13.

[5]Kipp, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[6]Library of Congress. *Country Studies - Russia*. Available from http://lcweb-2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCIC+ru0194); Internet; accessed 1 February 2002.

[7]Ib Faurby. *The Battle(s) of Grozny*. Originally published in the Baltic Defence Review, No. 2, 1999, 76. Available from http://www.bdcol.ee/publications/index.htm; Internet; accessed 6 February 2002.

[8]Knezys and Sedlickas. *The War in Chechnya*, 71.

[9]Faurby, *The Battle(s) of Grozny*, Internet.

[10]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 71.

[11]Lester W. Grau. *Soft Log and Concrete Canyons*. Originally published in the Marine Corps Gazette, October 1999. Available from http://call.army.mil/fmso/fmso-pubs/issues/softlog/softlog.htm; Internet; accessed 3 May 2002.

[12]Faurby, *The Battle(s) of Grozny*, Internet.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Thomas, *The Caucasus Conflict and Russian Security-Part I*, 13 and 29.

[15]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 91.

[16]Faurby, *The Battle(s) of Grozny*, Internet.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Viatcheslav Avioutskii. *Chechnya: Toward Partition?* Strategic International. Available from http://www.amina.com/article/partition.html; Internet; accessed 14 December 2001.

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[22]Thomas, Interview, 3 May 2002.

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[24]Thomas, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[25]BBC News. The First Bloody Battle. Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi-/english/world/europe/-newsid_482000/482323.stm#1; Internet; accessed 1 February 2002.

[26]Avioutskii, *Chechnya: Toward Partition?* Internet.

[27]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 71.

[28]Gall and de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, 174.

[29]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 72.

[30]Gall and de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, 173-174.

[31]Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 73.

[32]Gall and de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, 174.

[33]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 10.

[34]Faurby, *The Battle(s) of Grozny*, Internet.

[35]Thomas, *The Caucasus Conflict and Russian Security-Part I*, 13 and 29.

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CHAPTER 4

LESSONS LEARNED

The Chechen Fighters

The Chechen lessons learned after Grozny I, while significant, did not seem to have any profound effect on their performance in Grozny IV. During Grozny I, the Chechen fighters dominated the information war by welcoming Russian international journalists who were able to easily penetrate Russian checkpoints on the outskirts of Grozny. Chechen media relations had a dramatic effect on Russian popular support of the war.[1] In the long term, Chechen media relations had much to do with a worldwide perception of the Chechens as the victims of the Russo-Chechen Wars.

Within the loose organization of the Chechen fighters, information security was effective in preventing friendly intelligence from reaching Russian hands. Communications security, through the use of hand-held Motorola radios, further prevented compromise of their intentions. Since there was limited Chechen partisan support and there were few Russians who spoke Chechen, Chechen fighters could communicate in a non-secure mode to pass immediate tactical information concerning enemy locations to allow the more mobile Chechen units to ambush Russian vehicles and patrols. Once close to enemy vehicles, Chechen knowledge of Russian equipment proved invaluable. They knew how to destroy enemy vehicles by hitting their most vulnerable locations: the top, sides and rear. Perhaps their most valuable capability was the Chechen fighter's ability to blend in with the local populace, making the distinction between civilian and combatant difficult.[2]

Chechen information dominance facilitated much of their freedom of maneuver. While blending easily with civilians, a small, mobile group of Chechens could move more rapidly than larger Russian tactical formations. This allowed them to establish strong-point defenses with 8-10 men, from which they could displace to other defenses, confusing the Russians as to their exact location. The fighters determined that a mobile, nonlinear defense was effective in confusing and slowing Russian units. The optimal organization of the Chechen fighters was a "cell" consisting of three squad-sized groups with a light mortar assigned. Each of the subordinate groups would carry 1-2 RPGs, a sniper rifle, a light machine gun, and one or two assault rifles. Their inherent mobility allowed them to avoid overwhelming Russian fire support "hugging" a Russian force, maintaining contact within 50-250 meters.[3]

While maintaining close contact, Chechen cells could mass long enough to conduct synchronized ambushes on Russian formations. The most successful urban ambush technique involved destroying the lead and trail vehicle in a convoy to prevent the enemy's escape from the kill zone, then systematically destroying vehicles within the column. When Russian infantry dismounted, Chechens knew that it was far more effective to shoot to wound than to kill. Once a wounded soldier would fall, other Russian soldiers would attempt to treat or evacuate him. These soldiers could also be wounded, creating far greater Russian confusion and losses. If Russians left dead soldiers behind after an ambush, Chechens would booby-trap dead bodies and equipment to create more casualties. Chechens learned that the quickest way to disorganize a Russian enemy organization was to kill a radio operator. This would cut off units from communication.[4]

Although they possessed adequate firepower for urban combat, Chechens often prepared volatile buildings, e.g. chemical factories, gas stations, oil refineries, etc., for demolition. The secondary explosion of substances in the building would multiply the blast effects of the demolitions. Locally manufactured weapons could also be used effectively. Gasoline or jellied-fuel Molotov cocktails dropped on the tops of armored vehicles could provide the same effect as an RPG.[5]

To protect their defending forces, Chechens barricaded lower floor entries and reinforced upper floors of buildings. Snipers shot at Russian soldiers as they attempted to climb up to upper floor entries. If the sniper's position became untenable, he could displace with relative safety using underground escape routes or "mouse holes" cut through walls of large buildings. Mortar crews displaced after firing only three or four rounds to avoid counterfire. For movement in the city, Chechens used civilian vehicles with the roofs cut out and the back seat removed to transport a small Chechen squad and its weapons.[6]

Although Shamil Basayev's government battalion protected the city center, the irregular Chechen fighters had the skills and motivation to fight effectively within a loose-knit organization, garrisoning one point then another, without centralized control.[7] Although a loosely organized force has the greater ability to adapt its tactics to changing situations, the Chechens did not significantly alter the way they fought after the First Chechen War. Since their tactics worked very well, the Chechens saw no need to change since they expected no Russian tactical innovation.[8] Table 1 contains a summary of Chechen lessons learned.

Table 1: Chechen lessons drawn from the battles for Grozny.

Maneuver

- Hit and run tactics confused Russian units.
- Reinforcing buildings slowed the Russians and allowed Chechens to displace and fight elsewhere in the city.
- Targeting Russian radio operators destroyed Russian command and control.
- Small (squad-sized) units provided good mobility and were an effective, basic maneuver unit.
- Mining or booby-trapping entry points to buildings improved force ratios.
- "Hugging" (staying within 50-250 meters of the enemy) was the most effective way to avoid enemy artillery, mortars or close air support.
- Synchronized ambushes confused the enemy to the point that he did not know where to shoot back. As a result, Russian would start firefights between their own units.
- Destroying the lead and trail vehicles then each vehicle between in detail could easily isolate Russian armored columns.
- Shooting enemy soldiers in the legs caused allowed snipers to engage other soldiers trying to evacuate the wounded.
- Dead Russian soldiers can be booby-trapped to injure or kill enemy soldiers trying to recover their dead.

Firepower

- Pre-set demolitions in volatile buildings (chemical factories, oil refineries, etc.) provide excellent additions to traditional firepower.
- Gasoline or jellied fuel Molotov Cocktails dropped on the tops of armored vehicles provided additional munitions to destroy enemy vehicles.
- The Russian RPG was the weapon of choice against vehicles of all types in the urban environment.

Protection

- Barricading lower floor entries to buildings and reinforcing upper floors gave far greater protection to defending forces in urban combat.
- To evade enemy counterfire, mortar crews successfully displaced after firing only 3-4 rounds.
- Some protection was afforded by modifying private civilian vehicles (i.e. remove back seats, cut out the roof, etc.) to carry groups of Chechen fighters and their equipment.

Leadership

- A loosely organized unit that allowed greater freedom of action was effective to defend Grozny.

Information

- Embracing the media allowed Chechens to influence public opinion in their favor.
- Hand-held Motorola radios on civilian frequencies were adequate for internal communications.
- Use of existing Russian radios allowed Chechens to eavesdrop on Russian transmissions and to inject deceptive, false orders.
- Familiarity with Russian equipment allowed Chechens to shoot at the most vulnerable regions of combat vehicles.
- Chechen fighters can easily evade Russian attackers by hiding among civilians.
- Serving as guides to Russian units, Chechen fighters can easily lead enemy units into ambushes.

The Russian Army

The Russian Army flattened Grozny during Grozny IV. An initial analysis of Russian urban combat may conclude that Russia's primary lesson learned was how best to employ firepower to reduce cities to rubble. While firepower was a major factor in eventual Russian success in seizing Grozny, innovations in maneuver, protection, leadership and information noticeably contributed to the process.

After constrained use of artillery in Grozny I, the Russian Army used their overwhelming advantage in artillery to destroy the city from outside of the city before going in.[9] They massed direct and indirect fires using standard ammunition as well as special, concrete-penetrating, "smart" munitions. Artillery rounds, using variable time fuses, were effective in clearing rooftops, roads, and bridges.[10] "Smart" munitions, like the missile used to kill Chechen President Dudayev, were used much more extensively in the Second Chechen War with excellent results.[11]

Russians also improved fire support planning and fire control. The "fire block," a rectangular concentration of artillery fire was used to stop a withdrawing enemy force. A "fire sweep" was effective in impeding enemy movement where direct fire could not reach and in attacking targets that were unobserved. Protective, circular artillery or mortar fires, known as a "fire box," could prevent a friendly unit from being surrounded or overrun. The "fire corridor" employed several battalions of artillery to cut a swath of destruction through an enemy-held area. The Russians preferred quantitative, normative fires that were destructive, rather than expensive, high-precision fire.[12]

None of these techniques would have been as effective had the Russians not decentralized fire control. Forward observers were assigned to the company and platoon level, a break since the battalion is the base Russian maneuver unit. Direct fire was a common employment while supporting maneuver companies and platoons. Forward air controllers were also assigned down to company level. Attack helicopters were more vulnerable than jets, but were more precise and effective. Unrestricted use of close air support in the city meant that the remaining civilians were at high risk.[13]

Some munitions increased firepower lethality. Because Grozny was a standard concrete slab and steel Russian city, special concrete penetrating rounds proved more effective than standard high explosive rounds. Often simple time delay fuses allowed the standard munition to penetrate concrete prior to detonating. The time delay fuse also resulted in lethal splaying from shattered concrete inside the structure. White phosphorous munitions were also effective. If the blast did not kill the enemy, he might be either too burned or flash-blinded to continue to fight.[14]

In addition to artillery and close air support, air defense gun systems proved effective in urban areas. The ZSU 23-4 was used initially to engage areas that, due to traverse and elevation restrictions, tanks and infantry fighting vehicles could not target. A second benefit of the ZSU 23-4 is its high volume of fire. Firing up to 5,000 rounds per minute, it was able to penetrate, and often collapse, some light concrete structures, killing those inside.[15] Other weapons already in the Russian arsenal were effectively adapted for use in urban combat.

First used in the mountains of Afghanistan, the RPO-A Schmel is a thermobaric, or fuel-air, incendiary round that is shoulder fired by an individual soldier. The Schmel's

effectiveness resulted first from its initial blast and, second, from its 427-psi overpressure--almost 30 times atmospheric pressure. The enemy could die from burns or crushing pressure. Fuel-air technology was adapted for use on an armored vehicle. The TOS-1, a 30-barrel, 220mm multiple launch rocket system was mounted on the T-72 tank chassis. Effective from 400-3,500 meters, the TOS-1 was combat-tested in Afghanistan and employed during the Second Chechen War. This system was not assigned below the brigade level but was retained for priority targets. The Russians also employed a mounted 240mm, breech-loaded mortar that was also combat-tested in Afghanistan. Its laser guided munitions proved effective against stationary urban targets. All these systems, to include tank main gun fire, were instrumental in leveling the city prior to maneuver forces entering.[16]

Maneuver forces had to adapt to employ firepower better. Tanks and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) led the first assault on Grozny. The Russians learned to lead with dismounted infantry, with tanks and IFVs following in support. Without infantry to clear and secure buildings to protect from top and flanking fires, tanks and IFVs were very vulnerable to antitank fires, especially the Russian Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG-7). Securing the buildings they cleared was most important since the Chechens would reoccupy them, and then ambush follow-on vehicles.[17]

Contrary to Russian practice of using large, flexible, operational formations with centralized control of tactical elements, the Russians realized that urban combat is essentially a small unit fight. Consequently, supporting elements were attached down to company level. Command and control of smaller units was more difficult in the complex urban terrain. Infantry companies formed self-sufficient “storm detachments.” This task

organization included one marksman per motorized rifle platoon. Since Russian Army sniper schools were closed in 1952, four companies of snipers from the MVD, FSB, MoD and Border Guards helped train the MoD marksmen. Training MoD marksmen was not the MVD's only role.[18]

Although trained primarily for crowd control and public safety, MVD troops also had a combat role but were not as well trained for combat as MoD forces. MVD troops were employed with MoD (Army) troops as combat troops in Grozny I. This was done to meet the 6:1 ratio against an urban defender. In Grozny IV, although MoD and MVD units were tasked differently, they were still used close together and still required detailed coordination. The integration of FSB and partisan linguists into combat further complicated this cooperation. The Russians realized the importance of joint and interagency operational and tactical training exercises. It takes lengthy, intense training to train proficient forces for urban combat. Nonetheless, "green" troops may be used in limited roles, e.g. on a supporting axis or supporting by fire, to help them gain the feel of urban combat. Still, seasoned troops were needed for the main effort.[19]

Russians learned that objective areas had to be set prior to the final assault. The Russians failed to isolate Grozny in the first war until the end the fight. This allowed Chechen fighters to resupply and reinforce easily. In the second war, some isolated Chechen fighters escaped the city to the Caucasus Mountains.[20]

Target acquisition and identification were especially difficult in Grozny, even more difficult once buildings were nothing but rubble. Aircraft could not find ground targets. Ground forces also had difficulty. To find the enemy at night, the Russians first used night vision devices (NVDs). However, these devices, mostly goggles and infrared

pointers, were not able to see through smoke, fire, or steam. Searchlights and artillery illumination rounds were more reliable. The Russians employed large amounts of smoke grenades, smoke pots and smoke generators to conceal their movement outside of buildings.[21]

Collapsible ladders, grappling hooks and ropes were necessary to enter upper floor windows where Chechens had blocked ground floor entrances. Once inside, Russian soldiers found that fragmentation hand grenades were most suited to clear stairwell landings, stairs, and upper floors. The Russians tried using transport helicopters to land on top of buildings. However, helicopters were too vulnerable to small arms and RPG fires to use close to the fighting.[22]

Force protection helped prevent casualties. Russian soldiers reinforced their vehicles by placing sandbags on their vulnerable tops and erecting wire mesh screen 25-30cm from the skin of tanks and IFVs. These screens could detonate RPG rounds before the rocket could penetrate the armor. Russian parked their vehicles within existing barriers or completely enclosed them in a sandbag "garage." when the vehicle was to be parked for a long time.[23]

Because Russian agencies and services had different, often noncompatible radios, the Russians often used their tactical radios in the non-secure mode to be able to communicate with one another. Since many of the Chechen fighters had served in the Russian Army, they were familiar with Russian equipment and the language. The Chechens often eavesdropped on Russian nets or disseminated false information. The Russians learned that they needed to use secure radios to protect voice communications. This required distributing compatible radio systems throughout the combined force and

training radio operators. Even with secure communications, by the start of Grozny IV, Chechen commanders claimed to have intercept and voice matching capability. Chechens may have still had the ability to receive and to pass false information.[24]

Other force protection issues remained unresolved throughout the fourth battle for Grozny. Restrictive Rules of Engagement (ROE) prevented a Russian soldier from firing at an enemy prior to the enemy shooting at him. Fratricide was a problem. Chechens often moved between Russian maneuver units or checkpoints, fired one or two rounds at both Russian units, and then left while the Russians shot at one another. Since urban combat in Grozny was so stressful, the front-line soldiers had to be rotated off the lines at least weekly to prevent psychological disorders. This was difficult to do and troops were often left in combat for extended periods of time.[25]

Many of the shortfalls in maneuver and protection may have been averted through improved intelligence. The first step to prepare any battlefield is to gather all necessary information on the enemy, terrain, and cultural and sociological makeup of the area in which soldiers will fight. Urban terrain requires a far more detailed intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) than any other environment. Tactical reconnaissance elements did not gather this detailed intelligence. The Russian Army's small-scale maps that they used in Grozny I were grossly for urban combat. Beyond the physical characteristics that could be gleaned from accurate, large-scale maps, the Russians needed detailed demographic intelligence. They were unprepared for the presence of civilians on the battlefield and the requirement to care for them. While unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) helped, tactical reconnaissance was unable to tell maneuver units where

the enemy was prior to receiving enemy fire. Signals intercept, aerial photography and spies usually provided a far more detailed analysis of the battlefield.[26]

Russian soldiers had difficulty telling the Chechen fighters from civilians. They used gunpowder-sniffing dogs and visual body inspections to help do this. The Russians looked for a shoulder bruised from the recoil of a rifle, powder burns on clothing, or singed arm hair from the backblast of an RPG. Despite their best efforts, Russian soldiers were still duped by Chechen fighters. In several instances, Chechen fighters posed as friendly civilians or allied Chechens. They guided Russian patrols right into Chechen ambushes.[27]

Russian media relations during the Second Chechen War had improved. Improved media relations consequently increased popular Russian support of the war. Russian commanders curbed the indiscriminate attacks on non-military targets in Grozny.[28] Save the alleged Russian massacre of Chechens outside Grozny in December 1999, the Russians demonstrated that they had learned the value of a sound information campaign. A hostile population can hinder tactical missions by providing information to the enemy. A neutral or, better yet, supportive population can provide the friendly force information about the enemy. While Chechens provided information for the Russians, they gave more information to the Chechen fighters.[29]

NCOs are vital to a successful urban fight, yet the Russian Army still has conscript NCOs--graduates of a six-month NCO course. There is no professional NCO Corps in the Russian Army. The primary tasks of urban combat fall onto the shoulders of junior leaders: platoon leaders and NCOs. Without professional NCOs, the Russian fight is squarely on the shoulders of the junior lieutenant.

Lastly, it appears that Russia repeated many of the same errors in Chechnya that it did in Afghanistan, from 1979-1988, and in the Caucasus Campaign, from 1801-1864. In all three cases, Russia failed to properly assess the enemy's history, culture, social and political systems. Russia and the Soviet Union concluded that the enemy would capitulate in the face of Russian armed might. They failed to anticipate their enemy's determined resistance. The time-honored Russian approach of "divide and rule" was reapplied in all those campaigns by population relocation, alliances with cooperative groups in the society and application of maximum armed might wherever possible. Russia was unable to isolate Afghanistan and Chechnya and control the borders. In Grozny, Russia initially failed to surround the city. In Afghanistan and Chechnya, Russia wasted any initial popular support and did not develop it.[30] Russia clearly learned from Grozny I and successfully adapted its planning and training prior to Grozny IV. This was no small feat for a large, modern army and resulted in the Russian conquest of the smoking ruins of Grozny. A summary of Russian lessons learned in shown is Table 2.

Table 2: Russian Army lessons drawn from the battles for Grozny.

Maneuver

- Training and preparation are the most important part of winning battles.
- Urban combat training must be longer than days or weeks to be effective.
- Interagency training exercises must be conducted to be effective in urban combat.
- Leading urban assaults with tanks/armored vehicles does not work; they should support dismounted assault elements after a thorough artillery, mortar or close air support preparation of the objective area.
- Urban combat maneuver must be tailored to fit the enemy situation.
- Cities must be cleared methodically to ensure the enemy does not infiltrate rear areas.
- To be successful, urban combat required a force ratio on the order of at least 6:1.
- For urban attacks to be successful, the area must be completely isolated.
- Task organizing into small (squad-sized), combined assault groups worked better than large units.
- Smaller maneuver units are harder to command and control. Their success depends on junior leader initiative.
- Once captured, a building must be defended to prevent the enemy from moving into rear areas.

- Hastily assembled units were not effective. Well trained and integrated, combined arms units required to be successful in urban combat.
- In Grozny, the Russians underestimated the Chechen will to fight.
- Fixing forces may be green troops, but main effort troops must be seasoned soldiers to be effective.
- Well-trained snipers are invaluable during urban combat; MVD and FSK training helped train MoD marksmen.
- Lessons learned from successful tactics should be integrated into follow-on missions. To be successful, one must adapt quicker than the enemy.
- Cross talk between fire support and small maneuver elements required for success.
- Indirect illumination and searchlights needed to positively identify enemy at night and to disable enemy night vision equipment.
- NVDs proved ineffective in the smoke, fire, and steam from urban environments.
- Active InfraRed sensors were visible to enemy using passive night vision devices.
- The enemy must defend each seized structure to prevent re-occupation.
- Special equipment, e.g. collapsible ladders and grappling hooks with rope, were a valuable asset for individual movement within the city.
- In clearing buildings, each room must be individually cleared and then secured.
- Utility helicopters are not well suited to urban combat due to inherent vulnerabilities.
- Snipers are best employed in front of assaulting infantry as spotters/scouts rather than integrating them into the assault units themselves.
- Do not attempt to treat and evacuate a casualty until the threat has been eliminated; Chechen snipers often shot Russian soldiers in the legs to create the bait for continued ambushes.
- Target discrimination is especially difficult from aerial platforms.
- Transfer of authority between MoD and MVD troops in urban areas was not effective due to different training levels: MVD troops were not trained in urban combat but were trained in crowd control.

Firepower

- SP anti-aircraft (ZSU 23-4) required to protect armored vehicles from overhead threats.
- Massed indirect fires must be planned to achieve intended effects in urban combat.
- Artillery was the most effective weapon to destroy enemy strong-holds prior to dismounted infantry assaults.
- Concrete piercing munitions were required to penetrate most structures due to Russian construction (concrete).
- White phosphorous was effective in screening friendly movement and to incapacitate enemy.
- Using HE hand grenades to clear rooms before troops enter rooms prevented friendly casualties.
- Mortars, direct fire artillery, and the RPO-A Schmel (thermobaric, fuel-air incendiary round) were invaluable for destroying enemy snipers and defensive positions.
- ZSU 23-4 and HIND helicopters were very effective against dismounted infantry.
- ATGMs proved effective against enemy inside buildings.
- All maneuver units must have effective communications with fire support units to control and direct effective fires.

Protection

- Secure voice communications required to protect friendly radio transmissions.
- All vehicles had to be sandbagged to prevent attack; when stationary, troops used barricades, destroyed vehicles, and other materials to protect vehicles.
- Soldiers had to use wire mesh screens attached to armored vehicles 25-30 cm from the hull to protect against anti-armor fires.
- Defensive-natured rules of engagement (ROE) (do not shoot unless fired upon) were ineffective.
- Use of close air support must not be restricted in urban environments to be effective.

- In order to maintain an effective fighting force, it was necessary to rotate forward-deployed combat units almost weekly to prevent psychological disorders.
- Fratricide often occurred when green troops lacked the discipline to control their fires when caught in Chechen attacks.

Leadership

- Adapted lessons learned from previous urban battles proved invaluable.
- The greatest challenge to leadership was maintaining morale. High casualty rates destroyed the already low morale of combat units.
- Another challenge to morale was the Russian soldiers' fear of enemy mistreatment if captured.
- Failure to justify the nature of Russian military intervention in Chechnya resulted in low morale.

Information

- Due to its complexity, urban terrain requires a more detailed analysis to be effective for maneuver commanders.
- Failure to allow media access to the front will result in the enemy taking advantage of the media and releasing their side of the battle.
- The media controlled much of Russian public perception of the war in Chechnya. This perception, in turn, had strategic-level consequences by affected perception of the war at home.
- Chechen ambush patrols could be baited into kill zones by using apparently undefended armored vehicles to lure them in.
- Dogs helped to identify enemy by the gunpowder or explosive residue on them.
- Visual body inspection of detained civilians helped reveal which ones were fighters; they had bruised shoulders from rifle recoil, singed arm hairs from RPG backblast, or powder burns on their clothing.
- Small scale, military maps are inadequate for controlling maneuver in urban environments.
- All units and agencies in an urban area must be able to communicate.

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[1]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 22.

[2]Ibid., 18-20.

[3]Ibid., 18-20.

[4]Ibid., 19-21.

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 17.

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[9]Thomas, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[10]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 14 and 24.

[11]Grau, *Technology and the Second Chechen Campaign*, 105.

[12]Ibid., 102.

[13]Michael Orr. *Better or Just Not So Bad? An Evaluation of Russian Combat Effectiveness in the Second Chechen War*. in The Second Chechen War ed. Anne Aldis (United Kingdom: The British Army Review, 2000), 92-94 and Grau, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[14]Grau, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[15]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 24.

[16]Grau, *Technology and the Second Chechen Campaign*, 104-105.

[17]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 7 and 24.

[18]Orr, *Better or Just Not So Bad?*, 94-95 and Grau, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[19]Grau, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Thomas, *Grozny 2000*, Internet.

[23]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 25.

[24]Thomas, *Grozny 2000*, Internet.

[25]Grau, Interview, 3 May 2002.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars--1994-2000*, 25 and 27.

[28]Ibid., 22, 34, and 54.

[29]Lester W. Grau and Timothy L. Thomas. *Russian Lessons Learned From the Battles for Grozny*. Available from http://call.army.mil/fmso/FMSOPUBS/ISSUE/-Rusn_leslrn.htm; Internet; accessed 6 February 2002.

[30]Robert F. Bauman. *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan.* Leavenworth Papers, Number 20. (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Government Printing Office, 1983), 212-215.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been a compilation of varied historical accounts of the first and fourth battles for Grozny blended into one single "best approximation" account. It is intended to provide lessons from contemporary urban combat to help shape future US urban combat doctrine. Since, the primary value of any account of military history is its lessons learned, the military theorist should apply the tactical lessons from the Grozny experience to shape theory. This military theory, in turn, helps shape and define future military doctrine. This thesis should serve to help the military theorist to shape military theory for urban combat.

Readers may intend to apply lessons from these battles directly to future battles. Dr. Jay Luvaas warns that one of the common abuses of military history is taking historical lessons out of context. Once removed from their place in history, lessons are no longer meaningful. The lessons learned from one battle are not "plug and play" in the next. Thus, to view the lessons from Grozny as a model for future success in urban combat would be a dangerous proposition. Nor do the historical lessons in this thesis necessarily validate or disprove Russian or Chechen urban combat doctrine.[1]

However, just as doctrine is intended to fill the void of experience, the lessons learned in this thesis should also serve to fill a void. Rather than applying Russian and Chechen tactical lessons directly to future urban combat, leaders should use the observations in chapter 4 to help them understand the complexities and dynamics of urban combat. Most importantly, they should glean that the paramount point from the

battles for Grozny is the importance of properly training and preparing for combat, regardless of where it is to be conducted.

The Russians were successful in the first and fourth battles for Grozny due to their ability to adapt their doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures to fit the situation. Urban fighters must understand that, due to physical complexities of urban terrain and presence of noncombatants, urban combat is far different than combat in any other environment. Not only is combat in an urban environment different, it is more difficult. Leaders and soldiers must adapt their doctrine quickly to be successful. Urban combat

Urban combat adds a third dimension to the battle field that must be addressed. The urban environment causes a spatially compressed battlefield that is not easily controlled by graphic control measures. An area that could typically be controlled by battalions or brigades when operating in wooded, jungle, mountainous, or desert terrain demand corps and armies when operating in cities. Flat maps simply do not accurately represent the complexity of urban terrain.

The physical complexities of urban terrain are overwhelming. Urban fighters must have situational awareness in three dimensions: above the ground, at ground level, and below ground. Every building, window, doorway, stairwell, cellar, balcony, vehicle, wall, manhole or fence is a potential enemy position. Almost every one of those positions offers the enemy a covered and concealed route of withdrawal, or a counterattack route. Destroying these structures before entering a city provides the enemy an even more complex environment from which to fight. Enemy positions become less apparent when the structured pattern of a city is destroyed. Target acquisition becomes nearly impossible.

Once inside a building, physical complexity increases. Unlike streets and alleyways, building interiors often have such confusing floor plans that soldiers lose sense of direction. Once inside a building, each piece of furniture, doorway, hallway, stairwell and corner becomes a potential enemy position. The decreased space inside buildings is restrictive and isolates individual soldiers, adding to their fear. There is usually less light indoors and less ambient light to illuminate night vision devices. Night vision devices further decrease situational awareness by limiting the soldier's field of view.

Beyond the obvious physical complexities of urban terrain, the addition of noncombatants increases the difficulty of combat. Whereas wooded, jungle, mountainous and desert environments are mostly devoid of people, urban environments are inseparable from them. In combat in open terrain, more combat power is better; in urban combat, more combat power often increases the enemy's strength and perseverance to resist. Applying combat power in urban terrain often results in more negative effects than positive. Enemy look like noncombatants and vice versa. This forces the soldier to make an ethical decision every time he pulls the trigger.

Regardless of increased challenges of urban combat, urban combat will not go away. Tough, realist training and thorough preparation can help units to survive and win in future urban battles. The lessons learned from the battles for Grozny should not be directly applied to future urban battles. They should help leaders and soldiers understand the complexities, challenges of urban combat.

Recommended topics of future study

The added difficulties of fighting in cities defy practical application of combat power. Urban combat seems to be beyond the scope of military doctrine stemming from Otto Von Clausewitz's military theory. Clausewitz's Principles of War that guide most military doctrine may be insufficient to address the complexities of urban combat.

Dr. Roger Spiller suggests that since US doctrine is based upon Clausewitz's principles, it does not account for the complexities and uniqueness of urban combat.[2] Like many military thinkers of the past and those today, Clausewitz may have wanted to avoid the prospect of urban combat completely, despite having had the repository of three millennia of urban siege lessons learned at his disposal. Clausewitz had very little to say about a people's war, which urban combat often becomes, if not initiated as such. Herein lies the shortfall of Clausewitzian theory and its application to urban combat. To use Clausewitzian principles belies the nature of urban combat. To use Clausewitzian theory in the analysis of urban combat intellectually limits the expansive nature of urban combat.

In his urban combat theory, Dr. Spiller describes several characteristics of the urban environment that go far beyond the realm of Clausewitzian principles of war, but that are absolutely tied to military objectives in urban combat. While a nations' military may not inherently have the ability to influence all of these characteristics, other elements other government agencies might.[3] This message contains the core value of this thesis: due to the nature of emerging threats in today's operational environment, current urban combat doctrine is an amateuristic approach to the enormity of tactical problems that exist in the urban environment. For too many years, the US Army and other armies have

been lost in urban combat by focusing their efforts pounding a square peg through a round hole. To fully understand the breadth of the tactical lessons of Grozny experience, military thinkers must step out of the skin of conventional, Clausewitzian theory and step into the realm of a new military theory, one which addresses the unique characteristics of the urban environment.

Until the US Army can escape its ties to contemporary operational doctrine and its underlying military theory, the tactical problems that have plagued armies in urban combat for the past 3,000 years will continue. As contemporary threats attempt to negate the technological overmatch of modern armies by defending cities, modern armies will apply their blunt applications of combat power to tactical problems that may, in reality, fall well outside the application of conventional combat power. Control of urban terrain may more easily be achieved through other means or, at least, a much different application of conventional combat power. Until this happens, the rubbled remains of Grozny will stand as just another testament to the military's inability to adapt to the unique characteristics of combat in the urban environment.

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[1]Jay Luvaas *Military History: Is It Still Practicable?* Parameters 12, no. 2, US Army War College, (Carlisle, PA: US Government Printing Office, 1982), 3.

[2]Roger J. Spiller. *Sharp Corners: Urban Operations at Century's End.* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Government Printing Office, 2001), 81-83.

[3]Ibid., 84-100.

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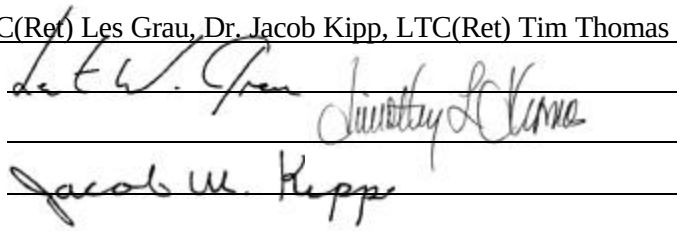
   Signatures: 

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