# THE BEAR FACTS: Russians Appraise the Stryker Brigade Concept

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# THE BEAR FACTS:

## Russians Appraise the Stryker Brigade Concept

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The Stryker brigade concept is a matter of some interest to the Russian Army, which has inherited a long tradition of using wheeled personnel carriers in concert with tracked personnel carriers. In Soviet times, Motorized Rifle Divisions normally had three motorized rifle regiments, a tank regiment and an artillery regiment. Two of the motorized rifle regiments were mounted on wheeled armored personnel carriers (BTRs), while the third was mounted on tracked armored personnel carriers (BMPs). BMPs were recognized as the tougher, more effective combat vehicle, but even the Soviet Army occasionally had to watch its rubles. The wheeled BTRs were used on secondary attack routes or as a follow-and support force while tracked BMPs were used for the main break-thorough attack in conjunction with the tank regiment. The cheaper wheeled carriers were a cost-cutting measure.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian Army continued this TO&E (table of organization and equipment), but formed a special "peace keeping" division. The 27th Guard Motorized Rifle Division kept their BTRs and BMPs, but stored their artillery and tanks. They used their BTRs primarily for "peace keeping" roles. The Russians saw the "peace keeping" division as a patrolling and stability unit, not a combat unit, so the prominence of the more road-bound wheeled carriers made sense.

When the Russians joined NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they contributed an airborne regiment. The regiment was mounted on the cramped, air-droppable BMD tracked armored personnel carriers. Once the ground situation settled, the Russian regiment was augmented with a number of BTRs. The BMD is just too cramped and uncomfortable for long-term patrolling missions. Russian troops in Chechnya use a combination of BMPs and BTRs. The BMPs are employed for anticipated combat, while the BTRs are used more for patrolling and administrative movements where a truck or jeep would be at risk.

The Russians are interested in how other countries employ tracked and wheeled troop carriers. The June 2004 issue of the Russian Foreign Military Review carried the following article, which was titled "The Formation of the Mechanized 'Stryker' Brigade in the U.S. Army:"

*In 2003, the U.S. Army formed its first "Stryker" Mechanized Brigade, the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division based at Fort Lewis, Washington. It is part of the transition to a new type of army.*

*The documents and regulations governing this force, its tactics, TOE, armaments and equipment were developed in 1999. The mission was to form, in the first decade of the 21st Century, a combined arms unit capable of rapid deployment and decisive action in any part of the world during combat or peacetime.*

*The Stryker Brigade has a headquarters element, a HHC, three infantry battalions, a reconnaissance battalion, an artillery battalion, a support battalion and four separate companies — antitank, military intelligence, engineer and signal.*

*The TOE strength is 3,614 personnel. The brigade has 308 Stryker armored vehicles, 12 towed M198 155mm howitzers, 66 mortars (l20mm, 81mm and 60mm), 10 TOW-2 ATGM launchers, 121 "Javelin" ATGM launchers, and three*

*"Shadow 200" UAVs. (See Organization chart and Personnel and Key Equipment Chart).*

*There are 121 personnel in the HHC and brigade staff The headquarters supports the brigade commander in directing the subordinate units in peace and war. It is organized into a command group and seven sections-intelligence, training, command and control, air movement, fire control, nonlethal weapons employment, communications and computers. The HHC supports the brigade staff. It has two groups of liaison officers and five sections: command, personnel, support, signal and medical.*

*The mechanized infantry battalions have 691 personnel each. They are the primary combat units of the brigade, capable of conducting all types of combat as well as peace-support missions. Each battalion has a headquarters, a HHC and three mechanized infantry companies.*

*The HHC has a reconnaissance, mortar and medical platoon as well as a sniper squad. The reconnaissance platoon is mounted on four reconnaissance Strykers. The mortar platoon has four M286 120mm and four M224 60mm mortars.*

*Every mechanized infantry company has three mechanized infantry platoons and a fire support platoon with a mortar and a sniper section. The mechanized infantry platoon has four Stryker vehicles and three "Javelin" ATGM launchers. The fire support platoon has three Mobile Gun System Stryker vehicles and its mortar section has two M286 120mm and two M224 60mm mortars.*

*The cavalry squadron (reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting battalion) has 428 personnel to support the commander and brigade units with intelligence, targeting combined arms fires and assessing the results in near-real time. The battalion is organized into a headquarters, HHC, three reconnaissance troops and a one electronic surveillance troop.*

*Each reconnaissance troop has three reconnaissance platoons, each of which is mounted on four reconnaissance Strykers each with "Javelin" ATGM launcher. Each platoon also has a mortar section with two 120mm M286mm mortars.*

*The electronic surveillance troop has a headquarters and three platoons: a UAV platoon with the "Shadow 200" launcher and three aircraft; a ground sensor platoon with four GSR radar and a NBC reconnaissance platoon mounted on three Fox Stryker vehicles.*

*The artillery battalion has 290 personnel for fire support to the brigade elements. It has a headquarters, an HHB and two artillery batteries as well as a target acquisition platoon.*

*Each artillery battery has two firing platoons, each platoon having three M198 155mm towed howitzers. The target acquisition platoon has the Q-36 and Q-37 radar.*

*The brigade support battalion has 338 personnel with a headquarters and three companies; an HHC and distribution, a maintenance and a medical.*

*The antitank company consists of 53 personnel who destroy armored vehicles and enemy strong points. The company has three antitank platoons and three sections — headquarters, fire direction and medical. Each antitank platoon has three TOW-2 launchers mounted on Stryker vehicles.*

*The military intelligence company has 67 personnel that conduct reconnaissance, gather data and analyze it for the brigade. The company has a command group and two platoons. Each platoon is responsible for a separate brigade axis.*

*The engineer company has 120 personnel to support the brigade. It has a headquarters and three engineer-sapper platoons and an engineer support platoon. Beside engineering equipment, the company has four "Javelin" ATGM launchers.*

*The signal company has 74 personnel and supports the brigade commander, staff and brigade elements with various signal support. It has a headquarters, two signal platoons and a support platoon.*

*The main organization difference in the TOE structure of the Stryker brigade is that it has replaced all the heavily- armored tracked vehicles (the M1 Abrams tank, the M2 and M3 Bradley Fighting and reconnaissance vehicles, and the Paladin M109A6 self-propelled howitzer) with the wheeled armored LA V-III vehicle, the Stryker, and the towed M198 howitzer. The weight of each of these systems does not exceed 19 tons.*

*The Stryker is based on the Canadian LAV-III "Kodiak" and is named in honor of two US soldiers, Stewart and Robert Stryker- who were noted for their service in World War II and Vietnam. The Stryker Brigade has two primary types of Stryker-LA V-III troop carriers and LA V-III Mobile Gun Systems. Other specialized Stryker vehicles are equipped for reconnaissance, command, engineering support, artillery spotting, NBC reconnaissance and medical evacuation as well as mortar carriers and anti-tank vehicles.*

*Despite its lack of M1 Abrams tanks and M2 and M3 Bradleys, American military specialists do not consider that the Stryker brigade is any less effective than the US heavy brigades. The mechanized rifle companies have the minimum essential fire power due to their organic platoons of Mobile Gun Systems armed with a 105mm cannon plus their mortar sections and a sniper groups.*

*The brigade's ability to conduct reconnaissance and command subordinate units is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of an organic cavalry squadron and an MI company. These units have the "Shadow 200" UAV system and a command and control computerized information system which is under development.*

*The Brigade's TO&E was determined and the precise dimensions of the equipment was designed in order to fit in all models of US transportation aviation, including the C-130 "Hercules." This significantly enhances the mobility of the brigade. According to American experts, the unit and its equipment can be moved from the American continent to any region of the world within 96 hours.*

*The most apparent weakness of a mobile unit is its inadequate combat power for penetrating a prepared defense. Second, is its high vulnerability to artillery fire and anti-tank systems during combat with a well-armed opponent. The US Army Senior Command feels that these weaknesses can be offset by aviation support from the USAF, USN and coalition air forces. In addition, the brigade can be reinforced with tanks, artillery, air defense systems and army aviation from division or corps. According to American experts, the real assessment of the Stryker brigade's combat potential will come only after it has fulfilled its mission to stabilize Iraq. One brigade has been stationed in Iraq since January 2004.*

*The military leadership of the U.S. plans to field four more active-duty Stryker brigades by 2009. They will be the 1st Brigade, 25th Light Infantry Division (Fort Lewis, Washington), the 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade (Fort Wainwright, Alaska), the 2nd Light Cavalry Regiment (Fort Polk, Louisiana) and 2nd Brigade, 25th Light Infantry Division (Schofield Barracks, Hawaii). There will be another*

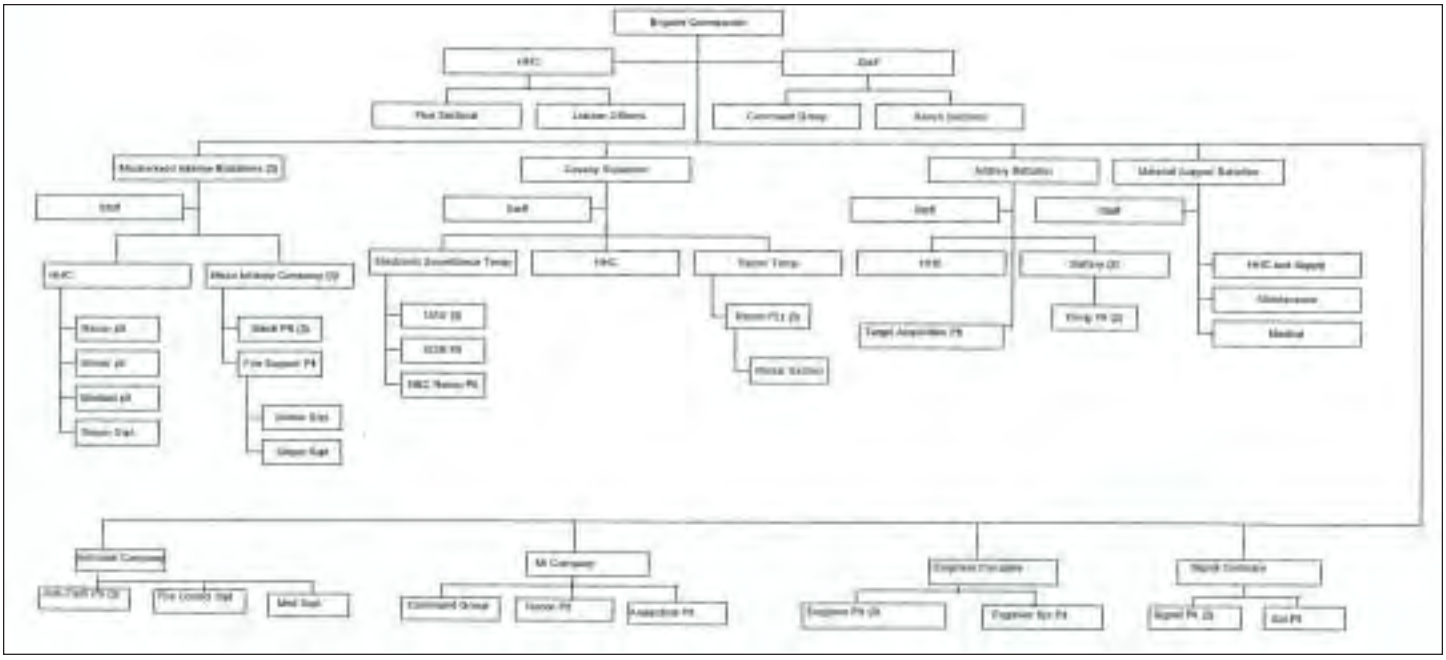

**Figure 1 - Stryker Brigade Organization**

*Stryker Brigade formed from the 56th Infantry Brigade of the 28th Infantry Division (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) of the Army National Guard. During the course of the transformation, there can be corrections made in TO&E, they can add an organic army aviation battalion, improve the personnel and equipment mix and modernize the equipment, etc.*

*As a next step, the U.S. Army plans to incorporate the Future Combat Systems (FCS) vehicle as part of its transformation process. The U.S. Army will form another new type brigade, based on its Stryker experience, by 2010.*

The TO&E of the Stryker brigade changes rapidly and the Russian article is slightly out-of-date. However, it has captured the main points and spent a lot of time on details. The article also ran pictures and specifications of most of the vehicles and weapons in the Stryker brigade.

The Stryker brigade is similar in size and number of vehicles to the old Soviet BTR regiment. The Soviet BTR regiment had three motorized rifle battalions, an organic tank battalion, howitzer battalion, reconnaissance company, NBC reconnaissance and decontamination platoon, engineer company, signal company, maintenance company, transport company, medical company, supply platoon and band. Much of the combined-arms structure of the Stryker brigade is comparable to that of the older BTR regiment, although the Soviet regiment had much more firepower and the US model has much more intelligence-gathering capability. The Russians realize that their BTR regiments lacked breakthrough power and were very vulnerable to enemy artillery and anti-tank fires. Consequently, BTRs were never used for the main attack. They see similar vulnerabilities in the Stryker brigade. It is interesting to note what is missing from the Russian Stryker article. First, there is no real discussion or excitement about using information technology as electronic judo to outperform an opponent and substitute electrons for armor plate and fire power. The presence of advanced computers and the eventual delivery of advanced computerized C4ISR is noted, but not developed. Second, the stand-alone nature of the Stryker brigade is not accepted. The Russians still see this as a underpowered brigade that needs augmentation and lots of air support to carry out a mission when confronted with a well-armed, well-positioned enemy. Third, the air transport issue is not as important to the Russians. Russia is a continental power. In the days of the Soviet Union, they resolved their air transport issues by building wing-in-ground effect aircraft capable of carrying the standard tanks, self-propelled howitzers and armored personnel carriers. Their philosophy was to build a large enough aircraft to hold and move the equipment, so that the optimum combined-arms combat unit could be delivered. They see the U.S. move as sacrificing combat power and soldier protection for the sole purpose of fitting into existing, aging airframes.

The proof of the Stryker brigade and wheeled personnel carrier controversy will be in combat. Russia is currently engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Chechnya. The United States is engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Counterinsurgency places special demands on conventional forces that eventually lead to changes in training, tactics, force structure and equipment. Consequently, the Russians are watching the performance of the Stryker brigade in northwest Iraq with almost as much interest as the U.S. Both countries have a lot to learn from one another as they prepare forces to meet all the challenges of the future.

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