The First Battle of GROZNY
Decembre 1994 - January 1995

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Framing the topic

First Battle of Grozny and not War of Chechnia

Lessons learned of the battle and not of the campaign
Grozny
A Russian Victory

OUTLINE

• The spiral leading to war
• Act One : failure
  31 Decembre 1994 - 3 January 1995
• Act Two : revenge
  5 January - 13 March 1995
• Lessons learned
GROZNY

500,000 inhabitants
250 km²
7 x 9 km
123 accesses
a pipeline
refineries
Fifth attempt 26 November 1994
- "Chechen" elements supported by Russian special forces
- spontaneous, overwhelming reaction of pro-independence Chechens
- 20 Russian nationals captured

Yeltsin ultimatum
29 November 1994
1 December: first air and artillery bombardments
- 11 December: Yeltsin deploys thousands of troops
- 13 December: extension of operations to all Chechnya (heavy losses)
- 30,000 men
- Three chains of command

Extension of conflict
The Russian Plan

Phase 1: isolate (3 days)

Phase 2: penetrate (2 days)

Phase 3: sweep to the South (5-10 days)

Phase 4: clear

The Russian Plan
The Chechen Plan

Avoid pitched battle

Harass MVD troops and rear

First resistance on the outskirts of Grozny

Bait the force into town

Decentralised combat in town
Preliminary Operations

Air operations involving the whole Air Force
Up to 4,000 arty rounds per day
30,000 Russians against 15,000 Chechens

And yet, only 6,000 Russians entered Grozny
Russian Organization for Combat to Enter Chechnya
(3 Directions)

- Gen Grachev
  Min. of Defense

- Gen Mityukin
  N. Caucasus Mil. Dist.

Gen Lt Chilindin (Mosdok)  Gen Lt Chindarov (Vladikavkaz)  Gen Lt Rokhlin (Kizilyar)

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Russian Organization For Combat to Seize Grozny, Chechnya
(4 Directions)

- Gen Maj Pulikovsky
  Northern Axis

- Gen Lt Rokhlin
  Northeastern Axis

- Gen Maj Petruk
  Western Axis

- Gen Maj Staskov
  Eastern Axis
Disaster on 1 January

- 31 December: attempted raid
- 3 January: attack repulsed
800 casualties out of 1,000 men
20 tanks out of 26
102 IFVs out of 120
Massive failure

RUSSIAN SIDE

• No unity of command
• Over-optimistic planning
• Heterogeneous units, poor training
• Inappropriate tactics
• Weak morale
• Faulty details (maps...)
• Logistic shortfalls in contact
THE CHECHENS

- Fight for survival
- Intimate knowledge of their enemy
  - anticipation
  - intoxication
- Brilliant deception
- Décentralisation in « hunting squads »
  - AP (sniper, MG)
  - AT (RPG7)
The Battle of Attrition

1-19 Jan

• From 5 January, a battle of attrition
• Methodical advance
• Presidential palace conquered 19 Jan
• Combat until May 1995
• August 1996: first agreement (Lebed)
The Lessons: Command

- Faulty assumptions:
  - A foreign and empty town
  - A conventional enemy
  - Time to grow a combat force (during the approach)

Even then, the raid could have been a success!

- Second plan is more realistic
- Unity of command
- Better use of communication
- Protection of networks
Materiel
• Enormous consumption of ammunition
  – 1 phosphorous round in 5
  – Air-to-air arty

• Searchlights to cut LI
  • and avoid fratricide

Lessons: fire support
« Welcome to hell II »
Improved tactics
Lessons: close fight

• Extra protection of armour
• Protection of armour by infantry
• Using the tops (hooks, ladders...)
• Massive use of flame-throwers, teargas, phosphorous...
• Anti-sniper ambushes
Lessons: logistics

- Enormous deployment
  - Three bases ~ 110 km
  - 2,850 then 6,700 trucks
  - 1 MP brigade
  - Railways: 260 km repaired, 70 km demined

- Supporting the soldier
  - 3,000 heated tents, 114 mess facilities
  - Improved rations (150 %)
  - 3, then 4 bakeries: 18 T/D
HYGIENE in combat

WATER a persistent problem
- quantity
- quality: hepatitis, cholera
- One battalion had 240 unfit for duty!
• 1 paramedic per Coy, 1 medical doctor per Bn
• 2 KIA/DOW out of 3 WIA
• mortar and burns
• serious sanitary crisis
PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSSES

72 %

2/3 psychosomatic

1/3 psychotic
Maintenance

• MAINTENANCE
  – 225 armoured vehicles destroyed
  – Of 2,221 armour, 846 (38%) temporarily out of action
  – 1,286 VH repaired (of which 26% depot level)
  – 259 evacuated
  – 646 \textit{arrived} as sitting stock!

• SPARE PARTS
  – 573 T armour, 605 T other, 60 T artillery
Logistics: the problem was forward

- Transshipping in a combat zone – fuel, ammunition, water
- Provide hot food
- Health and medication
- Rest and recuperation
- Relieve after a few hours

1,500 KIA
Civilians in war

25,000 to 100,000 killed

- Constant presence (Russians...)
- Need to take into account
- Discrimination impossible
Searching:
- shoulders
- sleeves
- fingers
- smell

Combatants or non-combatants?
• Russian power...

... As seen by the media.
« A good little war.... » (Pavel Grachev)
Most tactical and logistical problems solved

War of information lost (tactical and strategic)

Legitimacy issue, internationally and on the home front

Win the battle and loose the war
The fundamental dilemma: siege or demolition
When it will be my turn...
Develop specific skills and tactical concepts
Adapt or develop materiel
Increase protection
Fight at distance
See at distance
New solutions or novel use of common technology
Urban combat tomorrow?
Endure in combat

- Relieve/rotate personnel
- Hot meal every day
- Basic hygiene and sanitation
- Attitude regarding population
- Plan for fires etc.
Mental hygiene: the key challenge
Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won.

Wellington