

# Chechnya: A Glimpse of Future Conflict?

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*Netwar, an emerging mode of conflict engaged in by networked, mostly nonstate actors is associated most with social activism (e.g., the Zapatistas), terror (e.g., bin Laden's Al Qaeda) and crime (e.g., the Asian triads). However, netwar can also manifest itself in highly militarized settings, particularly in the context of ethnonationalist conflict. The recent war in Chechnya provides a good example of how netwar can be used in extremely violent ways to confront and overcome the much larger conventional forces of nation-states. In this conflict, a network of clan-based Chechen fighters, organized in closely internetworked small fighting cells, was able to defeat a valorous, but still-hierarchical, balky Russian army in the field. This case is also analytically important because the Chechens employed a wide range of netwar-oriented activities, from social activism to terror and strategic crime in order to complement their military netwar.*

Both American and Russian armed forces have gone to war during the 1990s—though not against each other. The U.S. military went first, in 1991, inflicting a severe defeat on Iraq. The scale of the victory has led to much speculation that Operation Desert Storm represents a “revolution in military affairs.” Yet the stunning results ring hollow, as Saddam Hussein persists in power, and continues to pose nettlesome challenges. And, after all, his defeat hardly seems surprising, given that he faced a thirty-nation coalition that enjoyed total air and naval mastery, and was led by half a million U.S. troops on the ground. Far more interesting is the Russo–Chechen War (1994–96), in which the other great military of the Cold War era was roughly handled by skillfully internetworked, small forces. The outcome of this war was a great surprise to military analysts around the world;

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and the loose Chechen network of lightly-armed fighters may provide a far more relevant example of the future of war than the heavy American armored divisions that may well have enjoyed their last hurrah in the Gulf, or the air armada that, more recently, pounded the Serbs into semi-submission.

### **Contrasting Ways of War**

On 10 December 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin called upon the Russian armed forces to restore order in the breakaway Chechen republic. The military soon deployed to the Caucasus, utilizing World War II-era doctrines that emphasized the massing of forces and aerial carpet-bombing. The Russians organized in classical, hierarchical fashion, and maneuvered in a linear, sequential approach to seizing control of territory—with emphasis on occupying the Chechen capital, Grozny. The Chechens fought back with small, mobile teams of light, but nevertheless well-equipped, fighters. Instead of centralized command and control, the Chechens gave great latitude for action to their dispersed but highly interconnected bands, which fought in a nonlinear fashion, enabling them, repeatedly, to “swarm” advancing Russian columns from all directions. Finally, the Chechens engaged in military strikes in Russia, as well as afloat on the Black Sea. Their view of the arena of conflict was expansive, their organizational approach innovative, and their results stunning. No doubt this is the sort of conflict that Martin Van Creveld envisioned in his notion of the “transformation of war.”<sup>1</sup>

The war was fought throughout Chechnya (and sometimes beyond its borders), from urban centers and villages to the distant mountains. In all arenas, the Chechen fighters demonstrated tactical prowess and networking capabilities far beyond those of the Russians, including the skillful use of communications media and propaganda in pursuit of their goals. The Russians, besides having an inherently balky military hierarchy, suffered further because strategic control was impaired by a contradictory, decentralizing trend that had gained force since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. That is, multiple and/or regional military commands were becoming more independent, with little coordination to help integrate their capabilities in crisis and conflict.<sup>2</sup> And, even at the highest levels of political leadership, the Kremlin allowed security policy to drift prior to and during the war.<sup>3</sup>

Russian strategy, such as it was, focused on two means of keeping Chechnya a part of Russia: a counterleadership strike on Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, and the capture of Grozny. The pursuit of these objectives lasted for two years, with Moscow eventually forced to transfer substantial additional assets from the Far East, the northern area, the navy, naval special forces, and naval infantry to support operations in Chechnya.<sup>4</sup> Dudayev was finally killed; but this had little impact on the networked Chechen forces, whose military effectiveness and motivation were not dented by loss of their “leader.” As to the other Russian objective, Grozny was indeed taken, at huge cost; but the Russian occupiers soon became the victims of a final, swarming Chechen attack that recaptured the city and won a peace favoring the rebels.

This last offensive by the small Chechen bands against the main Russian

forces contradicts any notion that this was simply a guerrilla war. Guerrillas like to hit and run. They do not take on massed enemy forces directly.<sup>5</sup> In the classical Maoist formulation of guerrilla war, where insurgents do “regularize” in the end, they do so to fight their opponents conventionally.<sup>6</sup> The Chechens never imitated the massed formations of their opponents, however. Instead, they continued to rely upon their small bands of 12–20 fighters to engage the main Russian forces.<sup>7</sup> And they succeeded.

Oil and money also played major roles in Chechen strategy for engaging the Russians. Prior to the war, the Chechens exported millions of tons of oil to Russia.<sup>8</sup> After the war broke out, the Chechens disrupted oil supplies, draining the Russian economy by \$30 million per day.<sup>9</sup> The Chechens also established collecting centers for financing the war effort in over nineteen Russian cities.<sup>10</sup> The Russians had simply not contemplated the need to protect themselves against these types of initiatives, and were very slow in responding. This is curious, because oil and gas issues were very much on the minds of the decision makers in Moscow from the outset. Under the Soviets, Grozny had become a key oil pipeline juncture. It grew into an important oil refining center, supplying basic consumer needs in the North Caucasus—but also supplying specialty lubricants and paraffins to the country as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Grozny is also a juncture for natural gas from gas fields in Russia and from Central Asia.

Some observers have suggested that the decision by Moscow to send military forces to stem the tide of Chechen separatism was motivated by a desire to secure control over its oil industry.<sup>12</sup> Other sources claim that Kremlin policy toward Chechnya in late November 1994—just before the outbreak of the war—coincided closely with the appearance of the Chechen oil and gas producers’ shares of common stock on the Russian securities exchange. Finally, some experts believed that the war erupted because of Dudayev’s unwillingness to make concessions to Moscow in the area of oil industry privatization.<sup>13</sup>

These resource issues aside, there is also much evidence that sovereignty issues were important causes of the war. On the Russian side, there was the fear that letting the Chechens find their own way might engender cascading effects throughout the Russian Federation—and the belief that the Chechens simply had no right to secede. For their part, the Chechens saw, in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an historic opportunity to win independence in the wake of over a century of harsh rule from Moscow.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Chechen society had never accepted Russian rule comfortably, and now its ethos both fostered and guided the course of rebellion.

## **The Role of Chechen Social Structures**

An important building-block of Chechen success was the structure of Chechen society, which consists of tribal/clan formations divided between lowland inhabitants and the mountaineers—who frequently feud.<sup>15</sup> When threatened by outside forces, though, Chechens have traditionally shifted from intertribal “fission” to tribal “fusion,” uniting to confront the invader. Indeed, the Chechens have

been in their present geographical area for over 6,000 years (save for the period during which Stalin moved them to Kazakhstan due to his fears that they would collaborate with the Nazis), and have always been fiercely independent. It is a part of their lore that they come together to fight for autonomy from empires.<sup>16</sup>

The ways in which Chechen society revolved around kinship-based relations were reinforced by a very deep sense of economic community, and an instinctive will to fight “infidels” inspired by Islamic culture.<sup>17</sup> Islam is a particularly salient factor in Chechen society, even though it came to the region relatively late—via Sufi missionaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As a result of the prominence of Sufism, most Chechens were included in either the Naqshabandiya or Qadiriya *tariqat*, the Islamic orders that demand spiritual perfection from their members. These orders provided the ideological basis and organizational forms that inspired resistance to imperial Russian expansion for over three hundred years.

These *tariqat* are numerous, having more than fifty subgroups. Two-thirds of the groups, *weirds*, are part of the broader, more radical Naqshabandiya order. Among the most radical is the Kunta-haji *weird* founded in the nineteenth century. President Dudayev was reportedly a member of this order.<sup>18</sup> In many cases, membership in the Islamic *weirds* overlaps closely with membership in a clan, or *taip*, a pattern that deepens the influences of family and society.<sup>19</sup>

Chechen clan structures are called *taip*. The members are identified by their descent from a common ancestor twelve generations removed. A *taip* corresponds with two to three villages of 400 to 600 people each. Each *taip* has a Council of Elders, economic interests, rules, and regulations. Each *taip* divides into sub-clan formations called *ne'ke* or *gar*. Each *ne'ke* or *gar* consists of 10–50 families. The Chechen *taip* are *Aleroy*, *Arsenoy*, *Bekhoy*, *Belgetoy*, *Benoy*, *Dyshni*, *Jay*, *Kubchi*, *Shatoy*, *Taiku*, and *Tsontaroy*. Each *taip* is grouped into tribes called *tukhum* spread across Chechnya, and divided by location in either the plains or the mountains. Each *tukhum* possesses unique dialects, taboos, polygamous practices, and tribute systems. The mountain *tukhum* are *Chaberloy*, *Chanto*, *Galay*, *Malkho*, and *Nakhchimakhoy*.<sup>20</sup>

Chechen small-unit cohesion during the war benefited greatly from the fact that fighters were almost always serving in combat with their kinsmen. A particular *taip*, for example, might have a supply of 600 fighters. These would be broken down into units of 150 (further subdivided into squads of about 20) that would work one-week shifts, one after the other. This way, a particular clan would always have units in action. These groups “commuted” from their homes to the field of battle. While home, they would share, through story-telling sessions, their latest experiences with other units of the *taip*, offering advice about how to fight the Russians, as well as technical tips about such matters as how to alter grenade launchers with saws to provide them with more velocity.

Commuting also ensured that all those whom a fighter knew would be kept well aware of his conduct on the battlefield—a significant impetus to acts of bravery. Commuters also brought home plunder, special favorites being batteries for their own cars stolen from Russian vehicles. Finally, while the benefits of sharing experiences were primarily felt within the clan, there is also much

evidence that, confronted by a dire Russian threat, a good bit of inter-clan information transfer went on as well.<sup>21</sup> This was very important because, overall across clans, Chechen men had important insights to offer each other—based on combat experiences in Abkhazia, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Thus, Chechen social networks formed the basis for their military organizational structures, imbuing the latter with much flexibility and the sort of durability under stress that was required in the war with the Russians.<sup>22</sup>

## **An Overview of the Conduct of the War**

Russian forces entered Chechnya in late 1994 in a confusing jumble of balky formations, reflecting to some extent the multiple military and regionalizing trends that had taken hold in the Russian armed forces. They quickly ran into difficulties in their clumsy attempts to grapple with the small bands of Chechen fighters. Soon, however, they were reorganized into three “Joint Groupings of Federal Forces” with carefully chosen commanders.<sup>23</sup> Many high-quality units were sent to Chechnya: naval infantry regiments, twelve airborne battalions, and many Spetsnaz (special) forces.<sup>24</sup> Just as important, the Russians strove to change tactics away from a simple emphasis on massed forces and fire, also developing an ability to fight in small groups.<sup>25</sup>

Russian forces eventually took the Chechen capital in January 1995; but they then faced an Afghanistan-type situation. The Chechen insurgents—many of them former Soviet soldiers trained in mountain guerrilla fighting—dug into the hills, and waged a long, fierce, and widely distributed battle of attrition.<sup>26</sup> Unlike in Afghanistan, however, Russian military commanders rebelled against the Kremlin’s policy. Yeltsin quickly found it necessary to oust four of his most vociferous critics in the Russian military—including three deputy defense ministers.<sup>27</sup>

By March 1995, the Russian army had 38,000 troops in Chechnya, and the Interior Ministry had deployed an additional 15,500. The second phase of the war featured small, sharp firefights in towns and villages in the plains east, west, and south of Grozny. Aerial and artillery bombardments were frequently used in very indiscriminate ways, killing thousands of civilians. Even under these conditions the Chechens refrained from shifting to guerrilla warfare. Their small formations continued to confront massed Russian forces.<sup>28</sup> The war on the plains continued for another year, though by late April 1996, most of the Chechen fighters had been driven into the mountainous south, where they stood on the defensive. Offensive actions in this period shifted outside of Chechnya, expanding to include terroristic hostage-taking at a hospital in southern Russia and on a Black Sea ferry.

But the climax of the war was reached back in Chechnya itself, where the rebels took the offensive—still maintaining their small-band unit formations—with a drive on Grozny that began on 6 August 1996 (Yeltsin’s inauguration day after reelection). The offensive achieved strategic surprise, catching the Russians completely off guard. Tactically, it also proved perplexing, as this was the first major assault on a large army replete with tanks, heavy artillery—and with much

air support—by small bands of lightly-armed fighters. Soon, thousands of Russian troops and civilians fled Grozny, the remaining Russian troops being surrounded. When Alexander Lebed was sent in by Yeltsin to work out a cease-fire, he found Russian soldiers weak, underfed, poorly clothed, and lice-ridden. Lebed, as Russian Security Council Secretary, ended the war with a cease-fire at Khasavyurt in August 1996 that stopped the fighting, promised the pullout of Russian forces from Chechnya and, finally, called for settling the issue of sovereignty within five years.<sup>29</sup>

Just how the Chechens performed so well in this war is a bit of a puzzle. The two most detailed studies of the conflict to date emphasize the importance of morale factors, arguing that unshakable Chechen resolve played a great role in the victory. Both studies also criticize the debilitating effects on military effectiveness, at higher command levels, of Russian bureaucratic political infighting during the war.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, these factors mattered. In our view, though, the outcome of this conflict also had a great deal to do with the new way of war that the Chechens were pioneering—one largely based on their exploitation of the network form of organization and a related capacity for swarming attacks. Thus, the Russian military's poor performance was not due largely to incompetence, but rather to the difficulties inherent in trying to reshape its Cold War-era military to confront a baroque, yet postmodern approach to war.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, the United States was very lucky to find, in its own major war experience of the 1990s, an opponent like Iraq that was willing to fight so conventionally.

## Detailed Analysis of the Conflict

To explore our hypothesis about the Chechens having forged a new way of war, we next examine the key aspects of the war's military operations—in terms of terrain effects (e.g., urban settings, plains, mountains), types of operations (e.g., raids, or more protracted operations), and the extent to which organizational structures (small bands v. larger formations) and information operations affected the outcome.

### *The Urban Environment: Battles for Grozny*

There were two battles for Grozny. In the first, the Russians took the city with a conventional, massed armored force with infantry and close air support. The second battle featured small bands of Chechens taking the city back from the same sort of Russian force that had captured it in the first place. The lessons of both battles are very instructive.

The experience of Russian-manufactured armored vehicles in urban combat provides the first lessons. In the opening month of the war, Russian forces wrote off 225 armored vehicles as unrepairable battle losses. This represented 10.23 percent of the armored vehicles initially committed to the campaign. The Russians evacuated some of these 225 hulls to the Kubinka test range for analysis. General-Lieutenant A. Galkin, the head of the Russian Armor Directorate, held a

conference on the findings on 20 February 1995, which was attended by the Minister of Defense, Pavel Grachev.<sup>32</sup> The results of the conference convinced Grachev to stop procuring tanks with gas-turbine engines, because of their propensity to break down.<sup>33</sup> Further, the test range analyses disclosed the great effectiveness of Chechen close-in anti-armor tactics, and the terrible vulnerabilities of Russian armored vehicles in urban combat.

The analysis held that heavy initial Russian vehicle losses were due to a mix of factors: inappropriate tactics, underestimation of the opposing force, and a striking lack of what Western militaries call “preparation of the battlefield.” Basically, the Russians had moved directly into Grozny, without encircling it or attempting to seal it off from Chechen reinforcements. The Russians tried to take the city “on the march,” without even dismounting. One reason for this gamble was the initial shortage of infantry. Thus, the first Russian columns drove with few or no dismounted soldiers to deal with the swarming Chechen anti-tank teams. These initial forces were decimated.

The Russians learned a lesson from these initial encounters. They soon brought in more infantry and began a systematic advance through the city—house-by-house and block-by-block. Russian armored vehicle losses dropped off with this change in tactics that had their infantry moving in front, with armored combat vehicles in close support or reserve. The Russians also came up with an interesting innovation, attaching ZSU-23-4 and 2S6 track-mounted light anti-aircraft guns to armored columns to help deal with close-in Chechen attacks.<sup>34</sup> In addition, some Russian vehicles were outfitted with a cage of wire mesh mounted some 25–30 centimeters away from the hull armor—to defeat the shaped charges of anti-tank grenade launchers, as well as to protect the vehicle from Molotov cocktails or bundles of explosives. Finally, the Russians began establishing ambushes on approach routes into selected areas, and then running vehicles in these areas as bait to lure Chechen hunter-killer teams to their destruction.<sup>35</sup>

Sixty-two tanks were destroyed in the first month’s fighting in Chechnya. Sixty-one were knocked out by rounds that impacted in areas not protected by reactive armor.<sup>36</sup> The Russians employed the T-72 and T-80 tank in Chechnya. They were both invulnerable to frontal shots, since their fronts are heavily armored and covered with an additional layer of reactive armor. However, the Chechens were able to make kill shots at those points where there was no reactive armor: the sides, rear, and, for top shots, on the driver’s hatch, the rear of the turret, and the rear deck. Shoulder-fired anti-tank weapons and anti-tank grenades knocked out the bulk of armored vehicles, and each destroyed vehicle took an average of three to six lethal hits.<sup>37</sup> Fuel cells and engines were the favorite aiming points for Chechen anti-tank gunners. Needless to say, the number of hits achieved, on average, and the kind of precision targeting employed, give some idea of the ability of the Chechens to swarm these behemoths close-in.

The rebels’ tactics are worth examining a bit more closely, for they outline a nonlinear, swarming kind of military doctrine for small, but well-internetted forces that are engaging much larger, heavier formations. First, it is important to note the heavy reliance of the Chechens on the rocket propelled grenade (RPG)

launcher—which they possessed in abundance, in part due to Russian corruption that included heavy RPG sales to the Chechens.<sup>38</sup> The Chechens had two basic approaches to close-in RPG attacks on armor. In one, they would coordinate massed fire at sharp angles from the roofs of low buildings and from around them, with little attempt to aim. The other tactic was to form up and fire in very disciplined volleys. Both methods worked quite well.

The other significant capability of the Chechens grew from their abundant supply of veterans of the Russian army who had sniper training, which they both used in the field and passed on to Chechen trainees. Thus, the rebel order of battle came to include large numbers of designated marksmen. They were very hard to deal with and usually provoked the Russians to call for heavy fire support to try to winkle them out of their hide sites. This process took time, allowing just a few snipers to cause very serious delays (while heavy firepower was allocated to the trouble site), and to pin down Russian forces so as to make them more vulnerable to RPG attacks.

The Chechens organized well for the kind of war they were developing. Their basic combat group consisted of fifteen to twenty personnel, subdivided into three- or four-man fighting cells. These cells consisted of an anti-tank gunner (normally armed with the RPG-7 or RPG-18 shoulder-fired anti-tank rocket launcher), a machine or submachine gunner, and a sniper.<sup>39</sup> Chechen combat groups deployed these cells as anti-armor hunter-killer teams. The sniper and machine gunner would pin down Russian supporting infantry, while the anti-tank gunner would engage the armored target. The teams deployed at ground level, and also in second and third stories and in basements. Normally, five or six hunter-killer teams attacked an armored vehicle in unison. Kill shots were generally made, as noted above, against the top, rear, and sides of vehicles. The Chechens also dropped bottles filled with gasoline or jellied fuel on top of vehicles.<sup>40</sup>

To deal with vehicle columns on city streets, Chechen hunter-killer teams would knock out lead and rear vehicles, trapping the rest. As to their victims' own firepower, the elevation and depression limits of the Russian main tank guns made them incapable of firing at hunter-killer teams fighting from basements and second- or third-story positions; while the simultaneous, multidirectional ground-level attack from five or six teams limited the effectiveness of the tank's own machine guns.

In engagements with Russian infantry, Chechen fighters developed a set of tactics built around the notion of “vertical pincers.” Conditions for this tactic would arise when the Chechens held, say, the third floor and above of a building, while the Russians held the first two floors, and perhaps the roof. If the Russian unit holding the second floor evacuated parts of it without telling the unit on the ground floor, the Chechens would move troops back down and attack the ground floor unit through the second floor ceiling—sometimes in conjunction with Chechen cells that had holed up in the basement, who would now open fire from below. This often resulted in a great deal of fratricide, as the ground floor Russian unit often responded with uncontrolled fire through *all* of the ceilings, not just those portions of the floor above from which the Chechens were firing.

Entire battles were fought through building floors, ceilings, and walls without visual contact.<sup>41</sup>

For the Russians, the first battle for Grozny was a costly learning experience—but they did indeed learn. They integrated more infantry into their combat formations (and brought in the naval infantry, which are actually trained in urban fighting),<sup>42</sup> and began to use smaller, nimbler task groups themselves. Though they were never able to significantly reduce their reliance on their (underperforming) tanks and armored personnel carriers (BMPs), or their appetite for heavy fire support, they did come to rely more on the highly effective RPG. And they even managed to innovate a bit, finding some applications for their precision guided munitions (PGMs) and the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that, at low risk, often gave them a good picture of Chechen maneuvers. These latter tools became even more useful in the fighting on the plains of Chechnya that followed in the wake of the battle for Grozny.<sup>43</sup>

In the end, though the Russians improved enough to take Grozny initially, the level of military effectiveness that they could hope to reach was limited by the Army's organizational structures. Command of even small tactical actions remained centrally controlled, to the point of imposing constraints on the ability of field units to talk to each other.<sup>44</sup> This bespoke a strategic cultural limitation on the Russians' abilities to innovate, which, as Anatol Lieven puts it, "shows up cruelly the shortcomings of an army used to relying on major units acting together in accordance with a rigid hierarchy of command."<sup>45</sup> The highly decentralized Chechen form of organization, to some extent an outgrowth of their social structures, proved a far more robust approach to fighting this war.<sup>46</sup> That they lost Grozny initially is both testament to the Russians doing well under their many constraints, and to the Chechens' shortage of fighters—due to the heavy attrition they suffered over a month of combat. In the second battle for Grozny, the Chechens would have more forces, and would still retain their edge in the command and organizational realms. And defeat in the second battle for Grozny would seriously undermine Russian resolve to go on fighting, and would bring about the cease-fire that ended the war. But much hard fighting in the plains and mountains of southern and eastern Chechnya would go on for over a year before war came back to Grozny.

### ***Rural Engagements and Mountain Warfare***

In April 1995, the war moved to the rural and mountainous regions in the south and east of Chechnya as well as to the villages on the border with Ingushetia, after bitter fighting across the plains, where the Chechens contested every advance. Russian air forces bombarded many small villages in preparation for assaults on the mountain strongholds of Vedenov and Shatory—while the Chechens reassessed their strategy for fighting in mountainous terrain.<sup>47</sup> These battles went on for months as Chechen rebels fought the advancing Russians, then escaped to wooded areas.

Russian doctrine for mountain fighting drew heavily upon the experience of

the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis, where the campaign of 1942 saw German and Soviet forces deeply engaged in the Caucasus. But Russian doctrine was also influenced by the war in Afghanistan. In Chechnya, the lessons learned from the Second World War and Afghanistan were coupled, leading to tactical innovations and some truly integrated military thinking. In particular, experiences from the counter-insurgency in Afghanistan helped to highlight the importance of small-unit actions and the key role of junior officers. As General Yuri Maximov put it:

Surprise, resoluteness, and audacity play an especially important role in mountain operations. Even a small subunit can decide the outcome of the whole battle by unexpectedly maneuvering around a defender's flank or capturing a dominating height. . . . In mountain combat the subunits should operate independently of the main body.<sup>48</sup>

But, as in Afghanistan, tactical mobility proved to be the Russian "achilles heel." The Russians relied heavily upon heliborne movement, employing target approach maneuvers closely resembling those used in Afghanistan. The Chechen fighters were extremely well organized and armed to disrupt airmobile operations. Indeed, the small Chechen cells (they never deviated significantly from this unit of maneuver) were well equipped with weapons that posed serious danger to the Russians. Not only did they hold the helicopters at risk with shoulder-mounted surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), they also gave their small units great mobility by deploying each in a small truck or passenger car. Thus, the Chechens had both an ability to knock down Russian helicopters, and an ability to swarm their combat teams to whatever landing zone the Russians alit upon, bringing them quickly under machine gun, sniper, and RPG fire.<sup>49</sup>

Closely internettted communications played a critical role in Chechen reaction operations in the mountains. Their mobile air defense weapons were controlled by radio and changed positions constantly, hampering the Russians' ability to detect and destroy them. The Chechen forces also became adept at luring Russian air assets (as they had done with Russian tanks in Grozny) into specially prepared "kill zones."<sup>50</sup> In addition, the Chechens reduced the effectiveness of the Russian airmobile and bombardment forces both by jamming Russian radio transmissions and by hunting down (via radio direction finding) and killing forward air controllers whose job was to guide Russian forces to their targets. As one study of the mountain operations notes:

As soon as a forward air controller went on the air near Chechen-Aul, massive shelling of his location began. The officer changed his position, but everything was repeated. The enemy was accurately pinpointing the place where he was going on the air.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, the Chechens were able to repel Russian Army incursions into their mountain redoubts by these various means. Their particular advantages seemed to lie in their ability to swarm small units to any landing zone<sup>52</sup> that the Russians

might choose, and to “blind” the Russians by striking at the information-rich target provided by their forward air controllers. Thus was the Russian offensive finally blunted. But the road back to Grozny would hardly be a direct one. Instead, the Chechens would employ varied means, including sophisticated psychological operations, raids, and hostage-taking episodes, to throw the Russians off balance prior to the renewed fight for Grozny.

### **Psychological Operations and Other Information Warfare**

In the realm of “information-based conflict,” the war in Chechnya is replete with diverse examples on both sides of psychological operations, deception, perception management, and electronic warfare (EW)—the last of which came to the fore in the fighting in the mountains, and was a key element in finding and killing Dudayev (though his death had little effect on the continued functioning of the rebel networks). In terms of psychological warfare, the Russians used leaflets and loudspeakers, and interfered electronically with Chechen radio broadcasts. The Chechens used human roadblocks, mass protests by women confronting Russian troops, and deceptive threats ranging from falsely claiming possession of nuclear weapons to the ability to unleash an Islamic fundamentalist terror campaign. At the strategic psychological level, the Chechens proved adept at enlisting support from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), bringing pressure to bear on Yeltsin from outside Russia, while at the same time reaching the Russian mass public, damaging morale, and seriously affecting Russian popular support for the war.<sup>53</sup> This activist “social netwar” proved highly effective in pressuring Yeltsin to negotiate a cease-fire, as the Chechen campaign against public opinion played to the public’s suspicion that the war had been undertaken to divert attention away from Yeltsin’s domestic economic and political woes.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to deception, the Chechens used a wide range of activities, some simple, some technically sophisticated. For example, the Chechen fighters routinely dressed in Russian uniforms. This simple tactic got them through hostile checkpoints again and again, allowing them to strike repeatedly behind the lines.<sup>55</sup> A variant of this tactic was to pose as friendly Chechen “guides” for Russian units, or to infiltrate them by posing as Red Cross workers.<sup>56</sup> At a more technical level, the Chechens sent deliberately provocative fake radio messages that were intended to be intercepted. The other major Chechen approach to use of the radio was to send messages addressing Russian officers by name, telling them the location of their wives and children, and that Chechen “hit squads” were “on their way.”<sup>57</sup> Finally, the Chechens used a radio jamming system to limit the influence that the Russian mass media might have on the Chechen mass public. More proactively, Dudayev used small, mobile television platforms with Sony radio and television equipment to override Russian television programming, in order to transmit his own, personal taped messages to the average Russian. On balance, it was as Russian Federal Security Forces Chief (and current prime minister) Sergei Stepashin noted: “The information war was lost.”<sup>58</sup>

The Russians were not without resources in the information war, though the successes they enjoyed were mostly in the field, at the tactical, rather than the strategic, level. For example, at one point the Russians—by means not disclosed, but thought to be electronic—“captured” a database including Chechen payroll lists with addresses, and used the information to make sweeping arrests.<sup>59</sup> At a less technical level, the Russians dealt with the problem of distinguishing between true noncombatants and Chechen fighters by sniffing them (using their own, or their dogs’ olfactory sense) for the smell of gunpowder or gun oil—a lesson learned from the war in Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup>

Both sides deliberately used acts of brutality to attack the other’s morale—but the Chechens far outdid the Russians in these grisly psychological tactics. They hung Russian wounded and dead upside down in the windows of defensive positions, for example, forcing the Russians to fire at their comrades in order to engage the rebels. Russian prisoners were decapitated, and at night their heads were placed on stakes beside the roads leading into the city, over which Russian replacements and reinforcements had to travel. Both Russian and Chechen dead were routinely booby-trapped by the Chechens, who showed sophisticated insight into the likely actions and reactions of the average Russian soldier.<sup>61</sup>

During the period after the initial fall of Grozny, while the Chechens were engaged in a fighting retreat across the plains, information warfare was used as a potential “force divisor” of the Russian effort. The idea was to convince the Russians that a widespread Chechen offensive would soon be launched, not just in Chechnya, but also in Russia. Foreign mass media and computer networks were used to conduct their information campaign. It was exemplified by comments made by Dudayev in an interview published in American newspapers: “We are giving notice: In the spring and summer, the war moves to Russian territory.” Dudayev then went on to list targeted areas across southern Russia: “There’s Stavropol, there’s the Krasnodar region and the cities there; there’s Mineralniye Vody, Sochi, Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, Astrakhan. Our quick maneuverable groups will quietly move in.”<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Dudayev’s threat to bring the war to Russia itself was actually carried out in 1996—a year after the announcement of the campaign, when the psychological effect had had ample time to work, and the Russians had been on edge long enough for their guard to have begun to let down a bit. The campaign itself also emphasizes the point that the Chechens saw the battlespace in broad, nonlinear terms—a key principle of information-age conflict.

Information warfare is not just about what is done to affect the attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and communications of the enemy. It is also about managing one’s own information resources; and in this realm the Chechens also get high marks. For example, the Chechens were very innovative in their use of ham radio contacts and television feeds to relay information to combatants and civilians alike. These older information technologies were useful in informing Chechens of general news events, and helping families and relatives to stay in touch. They kept Chechen fighters and civilians informed about where travel was dangerous. And, during periods of intense fighting, Chechen commanders used ham radios

and cell phones extensively to issue orders and maintain overall command and control of their widely scattered forces.<sup>63</sup>

This ability to coordinate the actions of small groups over great distances was a hallmark of the Chechen war effort during the period from the retreat from Grozny to the blunting of the Russian offensive in the mountains. As the Chechens prepared to retake the initiative within Chechnya, they decided to widen the battlespace to include territory well beyond Chechnya. Such a campaign would both keep the Russians off balance and contribute to their war-weariness—the latter a key goal of the information war against Yeltsin. The actual means to be employed in this campaign consisted of a series of terroristic actions, which the Chechens hoped would do more to undermine the Russian will to fight than to spur the Russian public to call for revenge. As events played out, it's clear that the Chechen hunch was correct.

### **The War Outside Chechnya: Budennovsk**

On 14 June 1995, a group of one hundred Chechen fighters, led by Shamil Basayev, attacked the southern Russian town of Budennovsk, about 120 kilometers northwest of Chechnya. The Chechen group took hold of the local hospital, taking over 1,500 civilians hostage, and killing perhaps 125 people during the initial fighting. In high-level efforts to resolve this crisis, Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was ultimately able to negotiate a settlement with Basayev via telephone—although the connection throughout their twelve conversations was very poor.<sup>64</sup> Chernomyrdin's moves not only saved most of the hostages, but also had a powerful positive effect on Russian public opinion. He won praise from the media for his bold actions, and made sure that he was given extensive exposure on television and radio, as well as in the newspapers.<sup>65</sup> This event in itself represents a major breakthrough for small groups, in that the terrorists were able to reach and compel the direct participation of high-level state leadership in the crisis bargaining.

The operational aspects of the Budennovsk story are also informative. The Chechens set out on their mission with two heavy-freight KamAZ trucks and several cars, including a lead police vehicle with a flashing light. The first Russian military units to encounter the Budennovsk-bound fighters were the State Traffic Inspectorate (GAI). The Chechens knew when the GAI guards' duty shifts were changing, slipping through against only scattered resistance.<sup>66</sup> GAI officials thought that the Chechens were attempting to get to the airport in Mineralniye Vody, and set roadblocks in the wrong area.<sup>67</sup> Once in Budennovsk, the Chechens split into small groups (their usual method of operation) and simultaneously attacked the post office, communications center, the city police department, city administration buildings, the market, and the hospital—the last of which came to play the most salient role in the crisis.<sup>68</sup> The Chechens were very heavily armed. Basayev disclosed that for the raid he personally had 1,700 AKS cartridges, eleven hand grenades, five kilograms of TNT, three Mukha grenade throwers, and 152 Stechkin pistol cartridges. "The rest of the soldiers were armed exactly the same," he said.<sup>69</sup> Their tactics were to capture ground floors of the target buildings by

*coup de main*. In the face of serious resistance, one cell would retreat to and fight from the basement, with the other members of that attack joining in assaults on other buildings. After seizure of their primary targets, the Chechens then broke up their larger combat groups into squads of five or six, and began to spread throughout the city.<sup>70</sup> Finally, the raiders hoisted a Chechen flag over the local administration building, making clear to all that the Chechen war had expanded into Russia itself.<sup>71</sup>

Yeltsin's first impulse was to strike directly at Basayev, as in the case of Dudayev. Once again this notion of counterleadership targeting played a prominent role in Russian strategy. Soon Russian special forces, led by the elite Alpha and Delta commando teams, stormed the Chechen positions. The teams were able to achieve some gains, but had trouble locating Basayev, and then balked when the Chechens used hostages as human shields.<sup>72</sup> Some assaults went ahead, though, and many hostages were killed. Thus the Russian Alpha Group, an elite anti-terrorist unit (not unlike the American Delta Force), saw their record tarnished, as the media blamed them for the deaths of 50 civilians in the hospital.<sup>73</sup> The June 1995 Budennovsk crisis proved to be a military and political watershed for Alpha itself. Militarily, they had failed in their attacks. And suffering the political heat for the civilian deaths caused Alpha to become very alienated from the Yeltsin government. This was a prime objective of the Chechens, who had suspected Alpha of harboring praetorian sentiments, and wanted to demoralize it and set the group against Yeltsin.<sup>74</sup> Beyond Alpha, broader surveys of opinion in the military overall reflected a sharp drop in support for Yeltsin's Chechnya policy in the wake of Budennovsk.<sup>75</sup>

The Budennovsk affair also revealed the degree of Chechen sophistication in preparing for the operation. According to the Alpha Group Commander, Colonel Aleksandr Gusev, the Chechens had leased basement rooms in the hospital well in advance of the attack, then delivered and stored all the needed weapons and ammunition—including large-caliber machine guns, submachine guns with stands, hand-operated bazookas, and even a heavy grenade launcher.<sup>76</sup>

The final, negotiated end to the crisis, which included a temporary cease-fire and a Russian commitment to serious peace negotiations, inflicted even further humiliation on the Russian military and government. Basayev led a triumphal procession (with some hostages along for the ride) in a criss-cross path throughout northern Chechnya, finally decamping to a hero's welcome in the remote village of Zandak. The "safe-passage" hostages were then released. Basayev and his troops had lived to fight another day.<sup>77</sup>

### **The War Outside Chechnya: Kizlyar-Pervomaiskoye**

In the next major terrorist episode, for two weeks in January 1996, Chechen rebels took 3,400 hostages in the Dagestani city of Kizlyar. They threatened to start killing them unless Russia stopped its war with Chechnya. Led this time by Salam Rudayev, they followed the Budennovsk pattern by seizing a hospital and pushing hostages in front of windows to act as shields.<sup>78</sup> As Basayev did at

Budennovsk, Rudayev and his men escaped with at least 100 hostages. But this time their return to Chechnya was held up by a Russian counterattack to free the hostages at the town of Pervomaiskoye, located on the border with Chechnya. The Russians hoped to avoid the humiliation that they suffered in the wake of Budennovsk by standing firm here.

Outnumbered more than 10 to 1, the Chechens holed up in the town, and soon endured a withering artillery and air assault. When the preparatory fire ended, and the order came to storm the village, the Russians found that the Chechens were still full of fight. Eventually, one detachment of fifty elite Russian soldiers did manage to penetrate the inner Chechen defenses and reached the mosque where many of the hostages were held—but a Russian helicopter mistakenly opened fire on their own commandos, forcing them to fall back. As they retreated, they were mowed down by the Chechens.<sup>79</sup>

How did the Chechens do so well in this seemingly hopeless siege? First, they created brick perimeters, dug trenches, and placed machine guns on roofs to improve their defensive positions. To reduce the risk of successful rescue of the hostages, and to try to deter Russian attacks, the Chechens repeatedly shuttled the hostages between houses as they awaited the Russians. The Chechens also had a bit of a technological edge, as they were intercepting (frequently *en clair*) Russian radio communications concerning movements and actions that were or would soon be underway. But these factors alone cannot explain how they withstood the heavy assault that ensued, and how they made good their escape. To understand this, one has to look to the Russian troops who, for the first time seemed to be losing their will to keep on fighting.

The breakdown of Russian forces during Pervomaiskoye is best symbolized in the behavior of the Alpha Units deployed there. They refused to storm the village in protest of the poor organization of the operation. Apparently, Alpha Commandos walked off the battlefield and paid for their own train tickets back to Moscow.<sup>80</sup> At this jarring point, the Chechens made their surprise breakout from the village, being aided by reinforcements who slipped in from Chechnya—only a few hundred yards away—and ambushed Russian soldiers trying to hamper the escape.<sup>81</sup> Rudayev and about half of his original raiding force had come home, and the Russians had taken yet another body blow to their military and national prestige. Pervomaiskoye was not the last embarrassment they would suffer.

## **Hijackings, Assassinations, and Nuclear Terrorism**

At the same time as events were unfolding in Pervomaiskoye, pro-Chechen gunmen hijacked a Russian Black Sea ferry, the *Eurasia*, whose route took it from Trebizond through the Bosphorus strait. Over 200 passengers were taken captive. The nine Chechen perpetrators (five of whom were from Turkey), led by Muhammed Tokcan, announced that they planned to blow up the vessel if Chechen fighters in Pervomaiskoye were not freed. The gunmen, bearing traditional Chechen sidearms, also brandished AK-47 assault rifles. During the crisis, Tokcan talked with Turk-

ish officials by radio-phone, negotiating the release of passengers after achieving the goal of attracting international attention to the Chechen cause back in Russia.<sup>82</sup> One of the hijackers, who did not identify himself in an interview with Turkish television but spoke perfect Turkish, said the group “is not composed by (sic) Chechens, but our hearts are with the Chechens.”<sup>83</sup>

The next terrorist incident occurred in March 1996, when four Chechens with Russian passports hijacked a Turkish Cypriot Airlines Boeing 727 passenger aircraft with over 100 passengers on board. The terrorists forced the plane to land in Munich where they gave up to authorities, stating very simply that “they wanted to make a point for the Chechen conflict. . . .”<sup>84</sup> Like the ferry hijacking, and indeed like events in Budennovsk and Kizylar-Pervomaiskoye, the Chechens took a very nuanced approach to terror. Their aim was to achieve a cease-fire and to force the Russians to negotiate with them. Thus, they readily gave up their hostages when the purpose of this “propaganda of the deed” had been achieved.

Care for such niceties as the safety of hostages was much less apparent in the various Chechen assassination attempts on leading Russian politicians and military officials. But instead of targeting leadership at the highest levels, as the Russians had, the Chechens focused their attacks on officials who were charged with carrying out Moscow’s policy. For example, Oleg Lobov, Yeltsin’s presidential representative in Chechnya, barely survived an attempt on his life when his motorcade crossed a bridge near Grozny and a bomb was set off by remote control.<sup>85</sup> Soon after, Lieutenant-General Anatolii Romanov, commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, was seriously injured in an assassination attempt. In Grozny, his motorcade—consisting of a bus packed with civilians, an APC, and Romanov’s jeep—went through an underpass at Minutka Square, where the bomb exploded. The attack was conducted, as Russian experts noted, with “the highest possible technical skill from the era of the U.S.S.R.”<sup>86</sup>

Finally, the Chechens even made use of nuclear threats to draw attention to their cause. This is a very murky area, but Russian military officials did say that the Chechens might have some sort of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons capability. Some reports suggested that scores of tactical nuclear weapons had been stored in Chechnya.<sup>87</sup> It is well known that Dudayev had threatened repeatedly over the past several years to launch a nuclear attack on Moscow. Shamil Basayev also threatened to use biological or radioactive substances as early as July 1995 in order to bring the war to an end.<sup>88</sup> On 8 November 1995, Basayev showed a picture on Russian television of four containers that he contended were filled with Caesium-137, a substance used in cancer research and radiation therapy. He stated that the four containers were then placed in four cities throughout the Russian Federation. By 23 November, a container of radioactive substances was discovered in Moscow’s Izmailovo Park. It matched the type of container Basayev had shown earlier. In response, the Russians implemented an emergency radiation monitoring system in Moscow. The nuclear detection system consisted of 46 mobile sensors scattered around the city, and was developed to counter threats from radiation. In addition, Moscow police were ordered to step up checks on roads to the city and to be especially vigilant on patrols in crowded areas,

crossroads, railway stations, and highways.<sup>89</sup> These sorts of measures contributed even further to the deepening sense of crisis in Russia, and both the war in Chechnya and Yeltsin had grown deeply unpopular. This was, of course, what Basayev and Rudayev had hoped would happen when they took the war outside of Chechnya.<sup>90</sup>

Sensing that a debilitating weakness was settling in upon Yeltsin and senior leaders in the Russian government, the Chechens seized the opportunity to return to the offensive within Chechnya. Soon, the second battle of Grozny was fought, largely along the lines of the first, but with more Chechens in the field, and with weakened resolve by the Russians. It was at this point (August 1996), with Russian forces on the brink of defeat, that Alexander Lebed was able to negotiate a cease-fire and moratorium on the issue of Chechen independence. The war was over . . . for now.

## Conclusion

It is hard to see the Chechens as anything other than the overwhelming victors in their war with the Russians. Yet one must remember that the Russians fought both hard and often quite effectively during the war, and the negotiated cease-fire did not resolve the issue of sovereignty. Moreover, the Russian interest in holding on to Chechnya is hardly likely to diminish, unlike the U.S. commitment to Vietnam after the “decent interval” for withdrawal afforded by the Paris Accord. So this story is not over, and it is far too early to consider the events that did take place as being the “tombstone” of Russian power.

While the Chechens performed remarkably well against what, up to this point, was considered one of the best militaries in the world, one should expect that the Russians will learn much from their hard experiences in Chechnya. This has always been the case with the Russians, who have traditionally responded to adversity with tenacity and creativity. The best examples of this resilience are provided in the events surrounding the Winter War with the Finns (1939–40) and the Great Patriotic War (1941–45). In each, Russian forces suffered early, stinging defeats. In each, they found a way to regroup, rethink their military approach, and find the path to victory. Strategic cultures like those of the Russian military “do not go gentle into that good night,” and the way they respond to the experience of war in Chechnya may provide lessons for all militaries as they contemplate the context and conduct of future wars. Indeed, it is in part *because* of this experience that the Russian military’s responses should be closely analyzed in the coming years.<sup>91</sup>

The “lessons of Chechnya” that the Russians, and close observers, are likely to learn seem to fall preponderantly into the organizational realm. Chechen military effectiveness was, in great part, a function of the demonstrated combat power of even very small units of maneuver—when properly networked. This insight should be seen as part of a century-long trend that has seen the increasing empowerment of small groups and their penchant for taking a nonlinear view of what is now called “battlespace.” Beyond the size of combat units, though, the

organizational issues also impel an examination of questions of command and control. The Chechens had a very robust capability to disseminate functional information—and they took advantage of this by allowing a high degree of tactical decentralization of authority for their many small maneuver units. The Russians were still trapped in hierarchical, Cold War–era institutional structures, and suffered mightily for it. But one cannot expect that the Russians will let this organizational weakness continue to fester—another reason to watch them as potential sources of innovation in the future. Indeed, Alexei Arbatov has argued that the experience of Chechnya is a sort of crucible that will compel the Russian strategic community to reform and innovate—or face collapse.<sup>92</sup>

These sorts of challenges have faced the Russians before, and they have always risen to the occasion. Whether they will this time remains unknown—but even if they do, the challenge they face will be a stiff one, mounted by the fierce people of a small republic who have pioneered a new way of war. A people who no doubt are drawing lessons of their own from the war in Chechnya; and who derive their strength not from “great man” leaders, but rather from social networks that are their very essence.

Indeed, one can clearly see that the networked nature of Chechen society made good netwarriors of the Chechens. They were very much habituated to the decentralization of authority, and well primed to make the most of (old and new) communications systems. Thus they had both the organizational suppleness and technical wherewithal needed to mount swarming attacks, then to disperse and disperse, recombining later to resume the offensive.

For the concept of netwar itself, the conflict in Chechnya suggests that netwar may sometimes be quite violent in nature—a particularly cautionary note, given the growth of networked criminal and terrorist organizations. But the Chechen case also reflects the social activist dimension of netwar, which did less, perhaps, to bring world opprobrium down upon Yeltsin’s policy, but much more to foster unrest within Russia, fatally undermining domestic support for the war. In their integration of violent and ideational acts, the Chechens have pointed out that netwar may be either a nasty new form of conflict, or an effective shaper of mass opinions and belief. Or both.

## Notes

1. See Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

2. Charles Dick, “Russia’s Multiplying Armed Forces,” *Wall Street Journal*, 29 October 1996, p. 10.

3. There is abundant evidence of this drift. See, for examples: Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Pain, *U.S. and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996); Lyle J. Goldstein, “Russian Civil-Military Relations in the Chechen War,” December 1994–February 1995, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10(1) (March 1997), pp. 109–127; Jacob W. Kipp, “Military Pluralism and the Crisis of Russian Military Professionalism: Reflections of a Military Historian,” in Ariel Cohen (ed.), *The Future of the Russian Military: Managing Geopolitical Change and*

*Institutional Decline* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1996); Stephen F. Larrabee and Theodore Karasik, *Foreign Security Policy Decisionmaking Under Yeltsin* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997); E. Pain, and A. Popov, "Chechenskaia politika Rossii s 1991 po 1994 gg." *MEMO* (May 1995), pp. 19–32; James Sherr, "The Conflict in Chechnya," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (December 1994), pp. 556–558; and *The Political and Economic Situation in Russia After the Chechen War: Possible Options for Further Development (Roundtable)* (Washington D.C.: Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, February 1995).

4. Barbara Starr, "Chechnya May Cause Casualties in Kremlin," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 28 January 1995, p. 8.

5. A point emphasized by Lewis Gann in his wide-ranging survey, *Guerrillas in History* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1970).

6. See Mao Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1961), trans. by Samuel B. Griffith. The best example of this conventionalization, as the culminating transformation of guerrilla war, is the North Vietnamese blitzkrieg in the spring of 1975.

7. There were exceptions to this small-unit approach, most notably in the first battle for Grozny, during which the Chechens formed a 500-man elite "fire brigade," composed of men with combat experience in the Red Army, that was designed to deal with emerging crises on the battlefield. As many as 200 would be detached to a particular hotspot, where they would then break into smaller teams. See Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 205–206.

8. Elaine Holoboff, "Oil and the Burning of Grozny," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 7(6) (1995). In the first five months of 1996, 156 underground mini-oil refineries were discovered in Chechnya, up from 72 in 1995. Each operation typically drained seven to eight tons of oil per day from oil lines in Chechnya. See *OMRI*, 2 May 1996.

9. Lee Hockstader, "Chechnya Draining Russian Economy," *Washington Post*, 9 January 1995.

10. Vadim Belykh, "Second Front of the Caucasus War," *Izvestiia*, 12 May 1996, pp. 1, 4; in *FBIS-SOV*, 14 May 1996, p. 34.

11. The region has a rich oil history. See E. S. Levchenko et al., *Nefti severhogo kavkaza* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe nauchno-tehnicheskoe izdatel'stvo neftianoi i gornotoplivnoi literatury, 1963), pp. 54–155.

12. Robert Ebel, "The Politics and History of Chechen Oil," *Caspian Crossroads*, 1(1) (Winter 1995), pp. 15–20.

13. "Oil is the Real Cause of the Chechen War," *VEK* (No. 48), 1994.

14. On this issue as a cause of the war, see Gail W. Lapidus, "Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya," *International Security* 23(1): 5–49 (Summer 1998).

15. Dzhokhar Dudayev gave the official name "Chechnya-Ichkeria" to the republic as part of the physical divisions of the republic. Ichkeria is a territory which comprises two mountainous districts of southern Chechnya, the Shatoi District and Vedeno District. It seems that Dudayev officially proclaimed the superiority of the mountain population over those Chechens who live in the plains. This is one reason why the population of the northern and central districts did not support Dudayev when he came to power. Only Russian intervention united these two groups. See Igor Rotar, "The Russian–Chechen Stalemate: Could a New Large-Scale War be in the Offering?" *Prism* 1(23), 1996.

16. See, for example, John B. Dunlop, *Gathering the Russian Lands: Background to the Chechen Crisis*, The Hoover Institution Working Papers in International Studies,

- I-95-2, January 1995; and P. B. Henze, *Russia and the Chechens* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).
17. Bulent Gokay, "Chechens Make Fearsome Enemies: Historical Background of Russia's Age-Long Fight in Chechnya," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 1995.
  18. Yury Kulchik, "The Role of Islam in Chechnya," *Smena*, 12 May 1995.
  19. *Ibid.*
  20. For more detail, see Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (New York: KPI, 1986); Alexandre Benningsen, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Johanna Nichols, "Who are the Chechens?," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(4), 1995, pp. 573–577; and Aleksei Malashenko, "Islam in the Northern Caucasus," *Prism*, Vol. II, Part 2, October 1996.
  21. Michael Specter, "Commuting Warriors in Chechnya," *New York Times*, 1 February 1995, p. 6.
  22. Gall and de Waal, p. 26, note that the rebels great strength was that "[i]nstead of having a strong vertical hierarchy, Chechen society breaks down into a web of tight cells and overlapping communities."
  23. Andrei Raevsky, "Chechnya: Russian Military Performance in Chechnya: An Initial Evaluation," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8(4) (December 1995), p. 685.
  24. *Ibid.*, p. 685.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 685.
  26. General (ret.) Mohammad Yahya Nawroz and Lieutenant Colonel Lester W. Grau (USA, ret.), *The Soviet War in Afghanistan: History and Harbinger of Future War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1995).
  27. Michael Specter, "Yeltsin Declares Chechen War Over, Ousts 4 Critics in Military," *New York Times*, 20 January 1995, p. 10.
  28. Gall and de Waal, p. 247, note: "After Grozny fell [initially to the Russians] there was a lot of talk of fighters going to the mountains to carry on a guerrilla war. In fact they defended every town and village they could on the plains in a front-line war."
  29. This is the Chechen position. The Russians view the agreement as allowing a five-year period to elapse before they are required to return to the sovereignty issue.
  30. See Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); and Gall and de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*.
  31. On ways of war that react to or take advantage of the vulnerabilities of modern militaries, see Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997).
  32. N. N. Novichkov, V. Ya. Snegovskiy, A. G. Sokolov and V. Yu. Shvarev, *Rossiyskie vooruzhennye sily v chechenskom konflikte: Analiz, Itogi, Vyvody* [Russian armed force in the Chechen conflict: Analysis, outcomes and conclusions] (Moscow: Kholveg-Infoglob-Trivola, 1995), pp. 138–139.
  33. Mikhail Zakharchuk, "Uroki Chechenskogo krizisa [Lessons of the Chechen crisis]," *Armeyskiy sbornik*, April 1995, p. 46.
  34. Novichkov et al., p. 123. This innovation, using high explosive anti-aircraft gunfire against the bands of Chechens, is reminiscent of the highly effective German use of the 88mm anti-aircraft gun as an anti-tank weapon during World War II.
  35. Sergei Leonenko, "Ovladenie gorodom [Capturing a city]," *Armeyskiy sbornik*, pp. 31–35.
  36. Explosive reactive armor works by channeling some of the energy of a hit on the tank outward, rather than allowing the hull to absorb all of the shock.
  37. Novichkov et al., p. 137.

38. See Lieven, p. 286, who cites journalist Thomas Goltz's eyewitness report that "the Chechens either bought or stole from them [Russian troops] everything from hand grenades to anti-tank mines. Acquired from Russians one day, they would be used against their former owners the next."

39. "Pamyatka lichnomu sostavu chastei i podrazdeleniy po vedeniyu boevykh deistviy v Chechskom Respublike [Instructions for unit and subunit personnel involved in combat in the Chechen Republic]," *Armeyskiy sbornik*, January 1996, p. 37.

40. Novichkov et al., p. 145. But Lieven, p. 117 puts it succinctly about the most effective weapon in this war: "The RPG, it must be noted is a great equalizer. Very cheap compared to the tanks it is intended to destroy, [and] it requires only a single operator. . . ."

41. For an overview of the urban fighting, See Gall and de Waal, pp. 204–227.

42. Lieven, p. 114 observes that, in addition to the naval infantry, Russian troops that used to be deployed in the vicinity of West Berlin also trained for city fighting.

43. Sergei Prokopenko, "Desantniki Voiiuit na Zemle, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 24 June 1995, p. 3; Raevsky, Andrei, "Chechnya: Russian Military Performance in Chechnya: An Initial Evaluation," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8(4) (December 1995), p. 686.

44. See, for example, Gall and de Waal, p. 207, which points out that "units could often only talk to their base command and not to other groups around them."

45. Lieven, p. 114.

46. Gall and de Waal, p. 213, note that Chechen command and control was often a function of a small cell listening to determine the direction from which firing was coming, and moving there—a latter day analog to the Duke of Wellington's admonition to subordinates, if confused, to "march to the sound of the guns."

47. Pavel K. Baev, "Russia's Airpower in the Chechen War: Denial, Punishment and Defeat," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10(2) (June 1997), p. 12.

48. Cited in LTC John Sray, *Mountain Warfare: The Russian Perspective* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1994).

49. Colonel Anatoly Surtukov and Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Prokopenko, "Lessons of Combat Operations," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 18 July 1995, p. 2.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 2. This pattern in the use of "kill zones" suggests the possibility that attacks using a swarming doctrine may be more effective if care is taken in the first place to put the enemy in the most disadvantageous position possible. That swarming can still work against a well-entrenched, prepared defender, however, is evident from the second battle for Grozny.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 2. Gall and de Waal, pp. 319–321, point out that the Russians had their own direction finding capabilities, the most spectacular example of whose exercise was locating and killing Dudayev by these means while he was speaking on his cellular phone.

52. Indeed, the Chechen use of small trucks and passenger cars for moving and concentrating their small units sounds a distant echo of the French taxis that ferried troops to and fro, plugging gaps in the line at the Battle of the Marne in 1914.

53. Timothy Thomas, "The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya: II. Military Activities, 11–31 December 1994," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8(2) (June 1995), p. 278.

54. Gall and de Waal, p. 165, note, for example, that hawkish elements in Moscow saw the intervention as a "way of remaking Yeltsin in their own image and stealing the rhetoric of the nationalist opposition."

55. Thomas, p. 282.

56. Timothy Thomas, "The Caucasus Conflict and Russian Security: The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya III. The Battle for Grozny, 1–26 January 1995," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8(2) (March 1997), p. 63.

57. Felix Alekseyev, "Goofing Was Needed in the War," *Bratislava pravda*, 23 January 1995, p. 14 as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 26 January 1995, pp. 43–44.

58. Cited in Oleg Falichev, "FCS Will Certainly Publish Information on Who Helped Dudayev and How," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 21 January 1995, p. 2.

59. Richard Boudreaux, "Russian Sees Chechnya Gains, More Fighting," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 February 1995.

60. Colonel Oleg Namsarayev, "Sweeping Built-Up Areas," *Armeyskii sbornik*, April 1995 as cited from "Chechen, Afghan Experience of Sweeping Built-Up Areas," *FBIS-UMA*, 20 July 1995, pp. 20–22.

61. Lester Grau, "Lessons from the Battle for Grozny," *Strategic Forum*, Number 38, July 1995.

62. Matt Bivens, "From Hideout, Top Chechen Vows Rebel Raids on Russia," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 February 1995.

63. Peter Ford, "Chechen Linkup Outdoes the 'Net'," *The Christian Science Monitor* 17 (January 1996), p. 1.

64. Aleksandr Minkin, "A Commando and the Prime Minister Stopped the War. . . ." *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 20 January 1995, pp. 1, 3 as quoted from *FBIS-SOV*, 6 July 1995, p. 16.

65. *ITAR-TASS*, 18 June 1995. Chernomyrdin took the unexpected step of inviting into his office journalists to cover his conversations with Basayev, later broadcast on Russian television.

66. Leonid Nikitinsky, "Budennovsk: The GAI Version," *Moscow News*, 7–13 July 1995, No. 26, p. 13 as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 8 August, 1995, pp. 20–21.

67. Nikitinsky, p. 22.

68. Nikolai Astashkin and Vladimir Gavrilenko, "The City is Sealed Off by a Double Ring," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 16 June 1995, p. 1.

69. *Interfax*, 16 September 1995 as quoted from *FBIS-SOV*, 18 September 1995, p. 29.

70. Scott Parrish, "A Turning Point in the Chechen Conflict," *Transition*, 28 July 1995, p. 42.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

73. Alpha had played a major, and quite successful, role in Soviet-era antiterrorist special operations, including spearheading an assault on Baku in January 1990, and a similar effort in Vilnius in January 1991.

74. Vladimir Zhdanov and James Hughes, "Russia's Alpha Group Changes With the Times," *Transition*, 8 March 1996, p. 31.

75. Deborah Yarsike Ball, "How Reliable are Russian Officers?" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, May 1996, pp. 204–207.

76. Leonid Nikitinsky, "Alpha Group Commander Speaks on Storming of Hospital" *Moscow News*, No. 24–25, 30 June–6 July 1995, p. 3 in *FBIS-UMA*, 2 August 1995, p. 24.

77. For a good overview of the crisis, see Gall and de Waal, pp. 263–275.

78. Michael Specter, "10 Days that Shook Russia: Siege in the Caucasus," *New York Times*, 22 January 1996, p. 1.

79. See David Filipov, "Moscow's Best, Fighting Mad," *The Boston Globe*, 27 January 1996, p. 1.

80. *Ibid.*

81. See Gall and de Waal, pp. 293–305 for a good summary of this incident. Further analysis of it may be found in C. W. Blandy, “The Significance of Pervomaiskoye,” (Camberley, Surrey: Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1996).

82. Kelly Couturier, “Turkey Set to Intercept Captive Ferry,” *Washington Post*, 19 January 1996, p. 31.

83. *OMRI*, 17 January, 1996.

84. *ITAR-TASS*, 9 March 1996 as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 11 March 1996, p. 1.

85. *ITAR-TASS*, 20 September 1995 as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 20 September 1995, p. 42.

86. *Analytica Moscow* II(39), 7–13 October 1995.

87. Boris Vishnevsky, “It Could Only Happen Here,” *Komsomolskaia pravda*, as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 4 December 1995, p. 49.

88. *AFP*, 6 July 1995 as cited in *FBIS-SOV*, 6 July 1995, p. 30.

89. *Associated Press*, 24 November 1995.

90. Shamil Basayev believed in shifting the Chechen war onto Russian territory and even into Moscow where the federal advantage in combat equipment would play no role. See *Flag rodiny*, 21 June 1996, p. 3 as quoted in *FBIS-UMA*, 2 August 1995, p. 21. For more on Basayev’s background, see Artem Vetrov, *Segodnia*, 21 June 1995, p. 3 in *FBIS-SOV*, 27 June 1995, pp. 34–35; “Shamil Basayev: Rebel With a Cause?,” *Transition*, 28 July 1995, pp. 47–50; and also Lieven, pp. 33–39.

91. Fortunately, the human capital required to undertake such a task still remains intact in places like the U.S. Army’s Foreign Military Studies Office and War College, whose analysts have provided many of the insights into the war in Chechnya that have informed this study.

92. Alexei G. Arbatov, “Military Reform in Russia: Dilemmas, Obstacles, and Prospects,” *International Security* 22(4) (Spring 1998), pp. 83–134.