BATTLE OF MOGADISHU, SOMALIA: 1993

The early 1990s saw Somalia in a state of chaos. A civil war between various internal factions and a drought had created a humanitarian disaster. In 1992, the United Nations established UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia) to provide relief supplies and monitor a ceasefire.[56] Despite the UN's best efforts, the supply convoys were difficult because warlords ignored the ceasefire and saw controlling food supplies as a way to bolster their own power and control. The continuing deteriorating situation in Somalia prompted a more aggressive reaction from the United States when it became clear that force would be necessary to ensure humanitarian relief supplies reached the people in need.

America's involvement increased as more military personnel were deployed in an attempt to keep humanitarian supply secure. The death of several US military personnel in 1993 resulted in the deployment of TF Ranger, whose purpose was to cripple warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid's organization.[57] On the afternoon of 3 October 1993, TF Ranger launched a mission to capture two of Aidid's lieutenants. During the operation, Somali militia successfully shot down two UH-60 Blackhawks with RPGs. This changed the nature of the mission, as now TF Ranger had to secure and recover the crews of both helicopters. This turned an hour-long mission into an overnight fight as the almost 100 Soldiers of TF Ranger had to fend off thousands of Somali militia members and othe armed civilians. In the end, TF Ranger lost 18 Soldiers while inflicting 1,500 to 3,000 Somali casualties. 160th Aviation Regiment pilot Michael Durant was captured and held for 11 days.[58]

Lessons Learned

Strategic

- Tactical urban operations can quickly have adverse strategic effects. While the Battle of Mogadishu was a tactical victory for TF Ranger, the televised results of the battle, specifically the desecration of dead U.S. Soldiers, ultimately resulted in the end of the U.S. mission in Somalia. Unlike prior urban battles, there were not excessive U.S. casualties; however, public outcry over the limited casualties that did occur was enough to alter U.S. strategy.[59]

Operational

- While air power can support urban operations, adversaries will see targets such as helicopters as high-payoff. In Mogadishu, the Somali militia deliberately targeted the Blackhawks knowing that downing them would radically change TF Ranger's tactical plans and could have broader messaging impacts. The downing

[56] (Wikipedia n.d.)
[57] (Baumann, Yates and Washington 2004, 140)
[58] (Bowden 1999)
[59] Ibid.

GROZNY, CHECNYA, RUSSIA: 1994-95, 1999-2000

The First Battle of Grozny: 1994-95

Background

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the republic of Chechnya in the Caucuses region of Russia attempted to break away and form its own independent state. As a result, Russia mobilized a force of approximately 25,000 troops to suppress the uprising with the ultimate goal of seizing the Presidential Palace in the Chechen capital of Grozny.[64] Their plan focused on a three-pronged attack with the main battle effort approaching from the north and supporting elements from the east and west. The main focus of the attack was to use armor and mechanized and motorized infantry to suppress the uprising with an overwhelming show of force, dealing with minor engagements as they came about.

The main battle group from the north moved into Grozny, facing minimal resistance from the Chechen layered defense, and began to push towards the Presidential Palace without assistance from the supporting elements from the east or west. As the Russians moved into position, the Chechens used a "hunter-killer" team strategy, operating in small groups comprised of dismounted personnel armed with RPGs, machine guns, and sniper rifles.[65] These teams used the restrictive terrain of the urban environment to move relatively undetected and engage Russian vehicles with relative ease. This Chechen tactic caused the Russians to modify their task organization to provide dismounted and fires support to armored columns moving through dense urban terrain. The Russians eventually reached the Presidential Palace and toppled Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, but were then thrust into an occupation role fighting a determined and well-supported guerilla insurgency for the next two years. President Boris Yeltsin eventually declared victory in 1996, ending the occupation.[66] Chechnya would remain semi-autonomous and a continuous thorn in the side of Moscow for the next three years until Russia suppressed the uprising once and for all using lessons learned from this first fight.

Lessons Learned

Strategic:

- Information operations (IO), especially given the nature of the urban fight, is important for influencing opinion at home, in the area of operations, and across the globe. The Russian military did not have an adequate IO campaign.[67] Heavy casualties sustained by the Russians were reported directly through Russian media, eroding support for the conflict at home. Further, indiscriminate targeting

[64] (McCafferty 2000)
[65] (Rupe 1999)
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

maps and geographic aids to navigate effectively through the urban environment, resulting in their driving into ambush sites and dead ends.

The Second Battle of Grozny: 1999-2000

Background

Following the Russian withdrawal and self-proclaimed victory in the first Chechen War, continued Chechen destabilization operations within Chechnya and Russia at large prompted Moscow to launch a second invasion to suppress the rebel forces.[70] President Yeltsin and new Vice President Putin devised a strategy that focused more on air and artillery firepower and was less dependent on tanks and mechanized infantry, effectively leveling the city of Grozny. This change in tactics, along with an increase of ground forces from approximately 25,000 in 1995 to over 100,000 combined military and police forces, were a direct result of lessons learned in the first battle for Grozny. Other significant changes were the assault plan, control of IO from the battlefront in the Russian media, and a limitation of ceasefires and pauses in the fighting which were frequent in the previous battle in Grozny. These and other changes led to a Chechen withdrawal from the city within two months of fighting and the occupation and de-escalation of violence in the region within two years. The Russians, having effectively broken the majority of the Chechen resistance in this period, controlled the countryside prior to engaging the urban center.

Lessons Learned

Strategic:

- Information operations (IO), especially given the nature of the urban fight, is important for influencing opinion at home, in the area of operations, and across the globe. The Russian military controlled the IO fight from all aspects, allowing them more freedom of maneuver, fires, and tactics at the ground level. They called for the evacuation of civilians from Grozny prior to launching strikes in an effort to minimize casualties. Control of the media helped maintain home-front enthusiasm against an unpopular enemy who had launched terrorist attacks and threatened the Russian populace. Limiting negative headlines allowed for more indiscriminate targeting, leveling the city, and breaking Chechen defenses before the main forces even entered the city.
- Military commanders must identify appropriate objectives, based on centers of gravity, to ensure urban operations do not become prolonged sieges. Key terrain and victory criteria were effectively altered, allowing for Russian strategy to hinge on the destruction of the Chechen forces rather than symbolic locations.[71] This plan focused on control of the Terek River and countryside before ever entering Grozny and engaging in urban conflict.

[70] (Thomas 2000)
[71] Ibid.

THE BATTLE OF BAGHDAD, IRAQ: MAR-APR 2003

Background

The Battle of Baghdad, also known as the Fall of Baghdad, was a military invasion of Baghdad that took place in early April 2003 as part of the invasion of Iraq. On 19 March, offensive operations began with air strikes against Iraqi leadership and strategic targets. Offensive operations combined an air offensive with advancing elements of four divisions: one armored, one mechanized, one airborne, and one Marine. As the U.S. ground offensive approached Baghdad, air attacks on key nodes and Republican Guard positions in Baghdad were intensified.[73] The Coalition seized the Baghdad Airport and then used two "Thunder Runs", fast-moving armored raids to test remaining Iraqi Defenses. The first run involved a mechanized battalion which went north into Baghdad and veered west to Baghdad Airport. The second run, which comprised an entire brigade, followed the original route north into Baghdad but then veered east into the government districts instead of west towards the airport. The brigade easily took control of the government district, in what is known as the "Green Zone", in one day, dramatically speeding up the end of conventional ground combat in Iraq.[74] Three weeks into the invasion of Iraq, CFLCC elements, led by the U.S. Army 3rd Infantry Division moved into Baghdad. The United States declared victory on 14 April. Several thousand Iraqi soldiers were killed in the battle, with only a small number of coalition force casualties.

Lessons Learned

Strategic:

- Urban operations require audacity. The plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom was innovative and transformational—employing an unprecedented combination of speed, precision, surprise, and flexibility.[75]

- Urban operations require surprise to prevent an adversary from preparing adequate defenses. The Iraqi regime expected the war to begin with a sustained bombing campaign. Instead, the ground attack began before the air campaign. Coalition units bypassed many cities and Iraqi units to reach the gates of Baghdad in a matter of weeks—liberating the Iraqi capital and toppling the regime in less than a month.[76]

- Urban operations require adaptability. The plan was adaptable and flexible, allowing the team to turn difficulties into opportunities.[77]

---

[73] (Bowman 31 Mar 2003)
[74] (Gordon and Trainor 2007)
[75] (A. Cordesman 2003)
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

- Military forces must develop a method to differentiate and separate the adversaries from the populace (the good from the bad) that does not alienate the population.[85]
- The media can be leveraged as a part of an effective IO campaign. Do not underestimate the power and importance of the media.[86]
- While intelligence in urban operations is vital, HUMINT is paramount. The local population will be the best source of intelligence.[87]

[85] (Howcroft 2014)
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

Operational:

- Integration of fires within the city amplified the effectiveness of the assault.[91] Though limited to one battery of howitzers and one battery of Paladins, the 1st Marine Division proved that good target identification, well-trained forces, and well-controlled fires can limit the risks to friendly forces within the urban environment.

- Armor remains invaluable in urban operations. Effective implementation of armor created panic among the insurgent ranks and increased the speed of enemy lines penetration.[92] U.S. Marines used armor to lead their assaults and break through IEDs used in defensive belts around the city.[93] This armor force, supported by dismounted infantry, proved an effective balance of heavy and light forces.

- Urban operations should be a combined effort, especially using host-nation forces. Effective integration of host-nation forces and command nodes provided Iraqi amplification to the Marine-led effort. Using Iraqi forces to bolster the assault enabled Marines to train Iraqi counterparts though real-world action, boosting effectiveness in the short term with battle-hardened Iraqi commandos. Integration of Iraqi generals helped motivate Iraqi forces and provided an avenue for the smooth transition from offensive to stability operations.

Tactical:

- Individual Squad techniques were refined and restructured during the battle to effectively combat the urban nature of Fallujah.[94] Wall-lined narrow streets were unlike anything the Marines had trained for prior; however, they quickly adapted to limit casualties and enhance effectiveness. Marines learned the pros and cons of top-down and bottom-up building clearing techniques and how integrating both can enhance the unpredictability of an assaulting force. Small unit tactics discovered or refined in this fight have impacted Marine urban training for the past ten years.

---

[91] (Ballard 2005)
[92] (Burton 2004)
[93] (Learned 2005)
[94] Ibid.

- In the late stages of the battle, Lebanese soldiers on the periphery of the camp were attacked from outside the camp/cordon.

- Engineers are valuable in urban operations to reduce obstacles. In Nahr al-Bared, armored vehicles and heavy construction equipment was used to demolish booby-trapped houses.

- Adversaries will use deception to gain tactical advantages. In Nahr al-Bared, militants used army uniforms to deceive Lebanese soldiers and the populace.

- Adversaries will use noncombatant people and locations to gain tactical advantages. In Nahr al-Bared, militants used civilians and religious sites as shields during the confrontation.

Operational:

- Navigation in the urban environment can be difficult, especially if navigation tools are inoperable. In Georgia, the failure of the GLONASS (Global Navigation Satellite System) impeded navigation. Russian units attempted to use the GPS platform but were thwarted by a global block on Georgia during the time of the conflict[100] Instead, Russian troops relied on maps and compasses from the 1940s to navigate effectively. A lack of GLONASS also limited the effectiveness of precision-guided munitions.

- Russian implementation of electronic warfare (EW) systems was sub-standard at best.[101] Russian leaders felt that EW platforms were not effectively used to suppress the Georgian air defense systems. They wanted to make EW systems more readily available to commanders at lower echelons.

- Military forces must leverage their lessons learned to improve for future fights. Communications systems that had issues identified eight years earlier in Grozny were being used by Russian forces in Georgia. Instead, commanders were using commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) satellite phones and unsecured communications platforms.

- Urban operations often require decentralized execution. Russian forces readjusted from a Division-based to a Brigade-based alignment similar to U.S. realignment to BCTs. This allowed better command and control at the battalion and below levels.

Tactical:

- Russian forces suffered issues with survivability of weapons platforms and vehicles, even in such a short conflict. They lacked adequate reactive armor. Also, some of their equipment was of poor manufacture and lacked adequate maintenance.[102]

[100] (McDermott 2009)
[101] (Donovan 2009)
[102] (Cohen/Hamilton 2011)

and released videos of IDF response while minimizing reporting on Hamas use of neutral sites.[106]

Tactical:

- Adversaries will use complex ambushes with multiple weapon systems to delay, deny, or defeat friendly forces. Hamas intended to leverage dense systems of IEDs, anti-tank forces, mortars, and snipers to prevent IDF from penetrating into Gaza. In densely populated areas, Hamas defense forces established close-combat, direct-fire engagement areas integrating IEDs, short-range anti-tanks rockets and guided missiles, and snipers.[107]

- Adversaries will increasingly use natural and manmade subterranean avenues to hide their presence. Hamas extensively used tunnels to move undetected and attack when and where unexpected, specifically penetrating beyond Israel's border defense to attack inside Israel. In urban environments, they could move unseen between fighting positions in different buildings using tunnels. Finally, Hamas use of tunnels served as a psychological weapon against the IDF. [108]

- Adversaries will use deception to further their goals. Hamas was able impersonate IDF to sow panic in urban environments. For instance, in Kibbutz Nahal Oz, Hamas fighters dressed as Israeli soldiers and killed five IDF soldiers and panicked the local Israeli population.[109]

[106] (Gleis 2015)
[107] (Kim 2016)
[108] (Gleis 2015) (Kim 2016)
[109] (Gleis 2015)

- Military forces should use UAV platforms for reconnaissance and fire support.[111] Russian platforms were improved significantly since 2008, providing better real-time reconnaissance of Ukrainian positions and providing another forward observer option to coordinate fires. Russian UAVs would fly in pairs, one at low altitude to draw fire and one at high altitude to locate the threat and facilitate responding fire.[112]

- Urban operations often require specialized equipment to enhance unit effectiveness. Russian-supplied enhanced optics, heavy armor, artillery, and air platforms enhanced the capabilities of the separatist forces[113] by creating a new "beyond peer" force within the separatist ranks.[114]

Tactical:

- Small unit tactics within the confines of a modern airport terminal were an example of the modern challenges presented by combat in urban terrain. Ukrainian forces used every aspect of the terminal for any possible defensive advantage. Russian forces countered with increased artillery and direct fire from tanks.

[111] (IPSC 2015)
[112] Ibid.
[113] (Karber 2015)
[114] (TRADOC 2015)

popular support. This will include establishing security, using vetted locals as much as possible; reintegrating displaced persons; and rebuilding infrastructure all with the goal of reestablishing faith and trust in the Iraqi government.

Felix, Kevin M., Frederick D. Wong, Michael Evans, and William G. Adamson. 2015. "Megacities: Pros and Cons." *Parameters*, 19-54.

Gleis, Joshua. 2015. "Ten Lessons Learned by Hezbollah From Israel's Summer War in Gaza." *Huffington Post*, January 30. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-gleis/ten-lessons-learned-by-he_b_6564850.html.

Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. 2007. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq.* New York, New York: Vintage Books.

Howcroft, James. 2014. "Intelligence Challenges in Urban Operations." *Small Wars Journal* (Small Wars Foundation). http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/intelligence-challenges-in-urbanoperations.

IPSC. 2015. "Ukrainian Leadership Discussion and ATO Lessons Learned." AAR/ LL Synopsis, Yavoriv TA, UKR.

Karber, Dr. Phillip A. 2015. *Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukrainian War, Personal Observations.* Academic, Washington, D.C.: The Potomac Foundation.

Kim, Michael B. 2016. *The Uncertain Role of the Tank in Modern War: Lessons from the Israeli Experience in Hybrid Warfare.* The Institute of Land Warfare, Arlington, VA: The Association of the United States Army.

King, Major Curtis S. n.d. "The Siege of Sarajevo, 1992-1995."

Kreps, Sarah. 2007. "The 2006 Lebanon War: Lessons Learned." *Parameters*, 72-84. http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/07spring/kreps.pdf.

Learned, Marine Lessons. 2005. *Marine Lessons Learned: Infantry Squad Tactics in Military Operations in Urban Terrain during Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah, Iraq.* Military Lessons Learned, Unknown.

Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. 1999. "Operation Peace for Galilee: Israel's Intervention in Lebanon." *Urban Warfare Study: City Case Studies Compilation* 21-34. http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/urbancasestudies.pdf.

McCafferty, Sean. 2000. "Lessons Learned from the Battle of Grozny 1994-95." Academic, West Point, NY.

McDermott, Roger N. 2009. "Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War." *Parameters*, Spring: 65-80.

2006. *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland.* Ministry of Defense .

Riedel, Bruce, and Bilal Y. Saab. 2007. "Lessons for Lebanon from Nahr el-Bared." *Brookings.* October 4. https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/lessons-for-lebanon-from-nahr-el-bared/.