Conflict Studies Research Centre

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The Use Of Russian Airpower In The Second Chechen War

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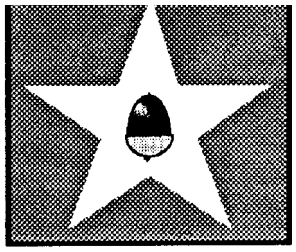

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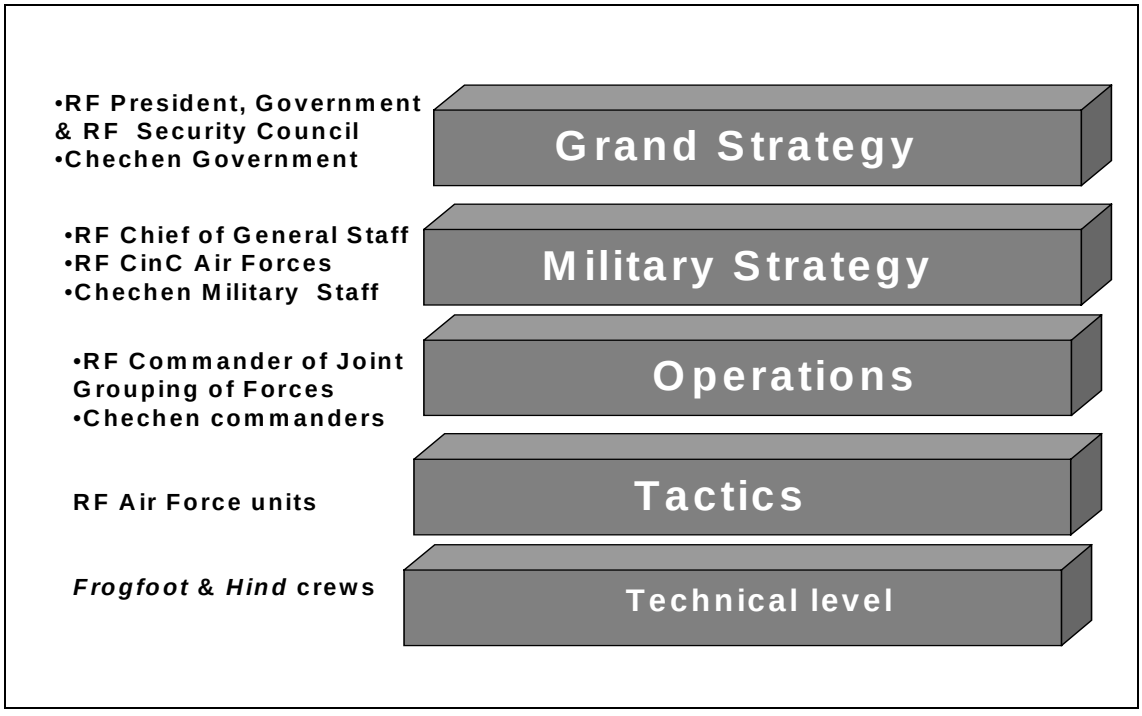
Introduction

This paper describes part of the second Chechen conflict, which started in autumn 1999. The purpose of this document is not to provide a comprehensive study of this conflict. This study offers an analysis of the use of Russian airpower and the Chechen response to the use of military force, in order to assess the characteristics of this case of low-intensity conflict.

For pragmatic reasons I have divided the conflict into two parts. The first part comprises three military actions in Dagestan, from August-September 1999. The second part describes the second conflict in Chechnya, which started in September 1999 and still continues. In my assessment I will provide a comparison of the use of airpower between the present conflict and the first Chechen conflict (1994-1996) and seek to establish whether this type of conflict is a new phenomenon, a traditional form of insurgency or an example of conventional warfare.

Figure 1: Levels Of Strategy In The Conflicts In Dagestan & Chechnya (1999-)



Marcel de Haas

The Use Of Russian Airpower In Dagestan (August-September 1999)

First I will provide a brief overview of the conflict. Following this, I shall elaborate on the different levels of strategy of the Russian forces and of the Chechen insurgents. I will end with a few conclusions.

Background & Course Of The Conflict

Dagestan is a republic within the Russian Federation, three times the size of Chechnya, with a population of just over two million and 30 different, primarily Muslim, ethnic groups. In August and September 1999 Russian forces conducted three operations in Dagestan, to counter assaults from Chechen Islamic insurgents.[1]

Tensions had risen in the border region between Chechnya and Dagestan early in August 1999. The **first** operation of the Russian forces was in response to an invasion by groups of armed Islamic fighters, possibly around 1,500 men, led by the Chechen field commanders Basayev and Khattab, who from 2 August had infiltrated from Chechnya into the Botlikh and Tsumadin districts of western Dagestan, occupied some villages, and declared the area to be under Islamic law. The **second** operation of the Russian forces, commencing on 29 August 1999, was in an area consisting of the villages of Kadar, Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi in the central Dagestani district of Buynaksk. The aim of this operation was to bring an end to Islamic control, which had been installed there a year before. On 5 September federal forces for the **third** time were employed, on this occasion to counter a second incursion by a force in the order of 2,000 Chechen Islamic fighters in the Novolaksk district, north of the earlier invaded districts. After two incursions and a number of sniper attacks on Russian troops on the border between Dagestan and Chechnya, the conflict escalated to Chechnya. On 7 September Colonel-General Valery Manilov, First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, officially announced the first air attack on Chechnya.[2] After some 45 days of fighting the insurgents were driven back to Chechen territory. According to Russian authorities, 1,500 rebels were killed during the operations. The joint federal forces lost approximately 300 men and close to 1,000 were wounded.

Russian Grand Strategy: Actors & Objectives

At the political-strategic level of the Russian Federation (RF) two actors were deeply involved in the operations in Dagestan. Vladimir Putin, just appointed as Prime Minister, regularly expressed his views in the media on the official policy towards the conflict and visited the area together with the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Army General Anatoly Kvashnin, on 27 August. CGS Kvashnin kept a close watch on the execution of the military operations and accompanied visits of Putin and of the Minister for Internal Affairs (MVD), Vladimir Rushaylo, to the conflict area. As early as 17 August Kvashnin announced that if necessary, enemy bases inside Chechnya would be targeted.[3]

From the start of the counter-insurgency operations media coverage was restricted. According to official sources the reason for media limitations was to prevent the enemy from acquiring intelligence on the course of action. Another reason must have been to give the Russian population the impression of a smooth operation and to keep up the morale of the forces. A third reason was to prevent the rebels from spreading propaganda.[4]

The objectives that the military-political leadership had laid upon the federal armed forces in what they consistently described as a counter-terrorist operation were to cut off the rebels' fuel and financial base in Chechnya (illegal gasoline trading), to destroy their main arsenals and training centres in Chechnya and to prevent further incursions.[5] Another objective was to put an end to the independent Islamic rule in a central district of Dagestan. In sum, federal law and order over all of Dagestan was to be restored.

Russian Military Strategy: Command & Control Structure

The Russian forces involved in the operations in Dagestan initially consisted of Ground and Air Forces of the RF Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Internal Troops of the MVD (VV). The ground component, with an original strength of 4,000 which rose to 10,000 men at the end of the operations, was at the start made up of two brigades, 136 Brigade (MoD) and 102 VV brigade (MVD). During the conflict reinforcements were sent comprising airborne and naval infantry units from distant locations such as the Siberian Military District and the Northern Fleet.[6]

At first, operational command of the federal forces was given to the MVD. However the Commander in Chief of the VV, Colonel-General Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, who himself led the operation, had no experience in commanding troops of different RF departments.[7] During the conflict the inadequacies of the MVD troops and their failure to properly coordinate became public when a commander of the Ground Forces uttered this complaint in the media. MVD troops had to cope with fierce resistance, and were not used to procedures of calling in the necessary artillery fire support or close air support. Therefore the situation demanded a change of command. On 17 August the command was transferred from MVD to MoD in order to improve the conduct of the operation. CGS Kvashnin put Colonel-General Viktor Kazantsev, Commander of the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD), in command of the Joint Grouping of Forces in Dagestan. On 27 August, after finishing the first operation in the Botlikh and Tsumadin districts, operational command was returned to the MVD to start the second operation in the Buynaksk district of central Dagestan. On 4 September, following a meeting attended by MVD Minister Rushaylo, CGS Kvashnin and Commander NCMD Kazantsev, command of the Joint Grouping of Forces was once more transferred from MVD to MoD. Lieutenant-General Gennady Troshev, Deputy Commander NCMD, would now lead the second operation of the Russian forces, in the Buynaksk district.[8]

Russian Operational Level: Organisation Of Airpower

Command & Control Structure The Russian air component in the Dagestan operation consisted of two parts. The Russian Air Forces (*Voyenno-Vozdushnyye Sily*, VVS) formed the larger part of the air component of the Russian troops. The other was army aviation (*Aviatsiya Sukhoputnykh Voysk* [ASV] or *Armeyskaya Aviatsiya*). The VVS component operating in Dagestan was commanded by the 4th Air Army, headquartered at Rostov-na-Donu. Later a forward HQ for the VVS component was placed in the Dagestani capital Makhachkala. Coordination was established with MVD forces, to make preparations for cooperation between ASV, VVS and air assets of the MVD. Mozdok, close to the western border of Chechnya and earmarked as the main operational base, was linked to mobile command and coordination posts in the front line of the ground troops.

Force Build-Up Assets that ASV deployed in the Dagestan operation were especially the Mi-24 *Hind* combat helicopter and the Mi-8 *Hip* transport helicopter.

ASV also employed the Mi-26 *Halo* heavy lift helicopter. VVS' input consisted of the Su-25 *Frogfoot* fighter-bomber, Su-27 *Flanker* fighters, Su-24M/MR *Fencer D/E* fighter-bomber/reconnaissance aircraft, An-30 *Clank* photorecce aircraft and A-50 *Mainstay* early warning aircraft. The backbone of the air component in Dagestan consisted of *Hip* and *Hind* helicopters (ASV) and Su-25 *Frogfoot* fighter-bomber aircraft (VVS). VVS quickly sent reinforcements to the conflict area. Between 12-15 August 16 aircraft were flown over to the airfield of Makhachkala.[9] In the end the number of *Hinds* had risen to more than 120 helicopters. The total number of air assets used in the Dagestan operation amounted to 300 by mid-September.[10]

Russian Tactical Level: Application Of Airpower

Counter-Air Operations *Flankers* fulfilled Combat Air Patrol (CAP) missions, to prevent reinforcements of the rebels by air. The Chechen rebels did not have an organised air-defence system with radar and missiles. Their air-defence armament essentially consisted of some man-portable SAMs (Surface-to-Air Missiles), heavy machine-guns and ZSU 23/2 twin barrel anti-aircraft guns on trucks. The Chechens did not posses an air component, so the Russian air forces had air supremacy in this operation. Therefore counter air operations could be limited to CAPs, and occasionally Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD), during Offensive Air Support (OAS) missions and supporting air operations.

Anti-Surface Force Air Operations *Fencer-D* and *Frogfoot* aircraft and *Hind* helicopters conducted OAS and Air Interdiction (AI) missions. *Frogfoots* attacked targets such as bunkers and mortar positions. Apart from attacks against strongholds, *Frogfoots* were also used to mine mountain roads. Another task was to cut off the supply routes of the rebels between Dagestan and Chechnya. To achieve this objective *Frogfoots* carried out missions on rebel camps and supply bases in the border area. By performing Tactical Air Reconnaissance (TAR) missions, and thus supplying targeting, terrain and other intelligence, *Fencer-E* aircraft supported OAS and AI of fighters and combat helicopters.

Supporting Air Operations ASV's *Hip* helicopters were used to deliver special (*Spetsnaz*) and conventional airborne units behind enemy lines, transporting airborne command and control posts, for medical evacuation (medevac), (Combat) Search and Rescue (CSAR) and lastly recce purposes. In these missions *Frogfoots* provided cover for the *Hips* by means of SEAD and close air support (CAS). *Halos* took care of supply and transport tasks. The *Clanks* conducted photorecce missions, and *Mainstays* provided airborne early warning over Dagestan and Chechnya.

Tactics *Hinds* operated in combat groups of two or four, attacking from a height of 3,500 to 4,000m, with steep diving descents down to tens of metres, followed by surprise pop-ups from different directions, with one pair covering the other two after attack. Thus suppressive attacks on rebel positions were conducted. Two to four *Fencer-Ds* or two to four *Frogfoots* generally carried out tasks such as "search-and-destroy" or "bomb-storming" missions. The former, flying at high altitudes (at least 3,500m), and therefore protected against portable air defence systems, often bombarded with high precision weapons. The *Frogfoots* attacked from lower altitudes (1,000-3,000m) and with their high manoeuvrability, normally used conventional arms in the bombardments.[11]

Failures
On 12 August due to a lack of enemy awareness one MVD *Hip* came under fire, and among others three MVD generals were wounded.[12] Two other helicopters were destroyed approaching the Botlikh landing strip. A second mistake was the accidental bombing of a village in Georgia, by a VVS *Frogfoot*. A third error was a friendly fire incident, when a MVD detachment was attacked by VVS.[13] To a large extent these failures were the result of shortcomings in cooperation between VVS, ASV and MVD. In reviewing the operations in Dagestan the Russian military leadership concluded that in future operations these shortcomings could be avoided by creating a single system of aviation control in joint operations. Another measure to improve the coordinated use of airpower was to instal air support controllers in ground component units.[14]

Successes
ASV and VVS flew more than 1,000 combat sorties in which four to six helicopters and one to three fixed-wing aircraft were destroyed.[15] By demolishing fortifications, bridges, supply and ammunition stores, and destroying or mining all major routes between Dagestan and Chechnya, the air component had taken its share in achieving the expressed military-political objectives.

Chechen Insurgents: Strategy & Operations

With regard to the **political-strategic level** (grand strategy) it must be stated that both commanders of the Chechen insurgents, Basayev and Khattab, seemed to operate independently of the Chechen government of President Maskhadov. The Chechen fighters invaded Dagestan with the objective to change it into an Islamic state, seceded from Russia. Following this, their next objective would be unification with Chechnya in order to form an Islamic republic. The Chechen intruders misjudged their potential support in Dagestan. The ethnic diversity in Dagestan and historic confrontations between Chechens and Dagestanis worked against local support. In some villages the Chechen fighters had to face resistance from local inhabitants even before federal forces arrived. Since Basayev and Khattab apparently operated independently, the **military-strategic level** was absent. Both commanders were only active on the lower levels of strategy.

Concerning the **operational and tactical level** it is worth noting that the Chechen insurgents in Dagestan changed their way of warfare a number of times. At first they invaded in the form of an irregular raid, not as conventional armed forces. This was of course also due to their mostly light armament. Because of the lack of local support after occupying some areas of Dagestan, they took advantage of and developed fortified strongholds there to defend themselves against federal troops. This can be considered as a form of regular warfare. Being out-numbered and badly equipped, the insurgents were not capable of launching counter-offensives against the Russian forces. However, being aware of the limitations of the Russian forces under bad weather and night conditions, they took advantage of this by operating especially under these circumstances. After they had been forced to leave the occupied villages and return to Chechnya, the insurgents again changed over to partisan warfare,[16] for instance by using snipers, mining roads and laying ambushes. With regard to air defence it was mainly luck rather than well-prepared defence, which enabled them to shoot down some helicopters and aircraft.

Subconclusions

Assessing the conflict I will follow the same approach, describing the different levels of strategy of both sides.

Russia

On the **grand strategy level** it was remarkable that not President Yeltsin but Prime Minister Putin took the lead in the operations in Dagestan. By tradition the Russian Prime Minister would deal with internal socio-economic affairs and not with (military) security. Two reasons present themselves. First of all, it was indicative of his interest in security affairs, as a former intelligence officer. Secondly he was climbing the ladder of political hierarchy, under Yeltsin's patronage. Victory in Dagestan would promote his career.

Another point of interest at the political-strategic level was how the media were dealt with. The RF authorities restricted media coverage on the operations in Dagestan. In the first Chechen conflict the unrestrained reporting by the press, especially of civilian casualties, had a negative impact on public opinion and on soldiers' morale. Due to political demands it also limited military operations, especially with regard to targeting. By controlling the media the Russian authorities gained a success in information warfare.

At the **military-strategic level** it turned out that the command and control structure of the joint federal forces failed on various occasions. Since the MVD forces were not capable of handling the situation, operational command was moved a number of times between MVD and MoD. Undoubtedly this must have had a negative influence on the course of the operations. Bearing in mind similar experiences in the first Chechen conflict, the failures in coordination during the operations in Dagestan proved that cooperation between MVD and MoD troops was still insufficient. Just like in 1994-96, MoD and MVD units learned to cooperate with each other only when involved in real combat.

On the **operational level** the conclusion must be made that the original ground component of the federal forces, consisting of two brigades, was not capable of defeating the insurgents. Reinforcements had to come from distant peacetime locations and from elite forces such as airborne and naval infantry troops. This was an indication of the low level of combat readiness of a large part of the Russian armed forces.

Another observation at this level is that the air component made a number of mistakes, mostly due to shortcomings in the coordination between VVS, ASV and MVD. With regard to the use of airpower, coordinated mission planning between VVS, ASV, Ground Forces and MVD troops should already, prior to the Dagestani operations, have been considered imperative for achieving joint military objectives and avoiding blue-on-blue attacks.

Overall, in spite of a number of shortcomings, the operations in Dagestan were successful. This was especially due to a change of conduct at the **tactical level**, compared to the 1994-96 conflict. Only after heavy artillery and air bombardments did ground forces start their assault to destroy the rebels.[17] Modern, high-tech precision arms, part of the RF defence capability, were used, especially in the initial bombardments. In the first Chechen conflict modern weapons were less used and ground forces were often from the very beginning in direct contact with the enemy. This approach had resulted in a high casualty rate and had affected morale. The

new approach of employing ground troops only after initial artillery and air bombardments seems to have been more successful.

The Chechen Insurgents

At the **political-strategic level** the Chechen insurgents incorrectly assessed popular support for Islamic rule in Dagestan. Not only did they lack support, in some cases Dagestanis actively resisted them. The lack of Dagestani support was probably due to the ethnic diversity of the population, who were not united in favour of secession from Russia. Nor did the majority of the Dagestani people feel drawn towards the radical Islamic ideas propagated by the Chechen intruders.

At the **operational-tactical level,** after losing the battles in three successive operations, the intruders were driven back to Chechen territory. It can be concluded that apart from defending fortified strongholds, which was an example of regular warfare, the Chechens mainly operated as insurgents, using tactics of irregular warfare.

The Second Chechen Conflict (October 1999-Present)

Background

Chechnya is a small republic in the Russian Federation. To really understand the Chechen conflict two premises are essential. First, the Chechens have a history of showing fierce resistance against Russian occupation, which goes back to the expansion of the Russian tsarist empire in the 19th century. Second, to the Chechens tribal adherence outweighs a one nation state.

Due to the disorder after the break up of the USSR, it was not until 1994 that Russian President Yeltsin deemed it necessary to respond to Chechnya's attempted secession. From December 1994 until August 1996, Russian forces intervened in Chechnya, later known as the first Chechen conflict. However, as a result of heavy casualties and several hostage takings as well as the recapture of cities such as Groznyy by the Chechens, the Russians were forced to sign a truce. Defeated, the last Russian forces left Chechnya in December 1996. From 1996 until 1999, Chechnya regained its virtually independent status. However, the country became a centre of anarchy, in which abductions, especially of foreigners, became a major source of income for local warlords.[18] In October 1999, Russian forces for the second time invaded Chechnya.

Chechens belong to some 135-150 clans.[19] Recent history makes it clear that as a result of a lack of 'national feeling' and in the absence of the 'foreign invader', Chechens will fight against each other. For instance, President Dudayev as well as his successor Maskhadov experienced a number of assassination attempts. Especially under Maskhadov, central power was lacking and warlords ruled over large parts of Chechnya. These two premises hamper any attempt to establish solid governance over Chechnya, either by the Russians or by the Chechens themselves.

Course Of The Second Chechen Conflict

Phase One: The Air Campaign (September 1999). For weeks Russia mounted an air campaign against Chechnya in which not only the insurgents withdrawing from Dagestan were targeted, but also strategic objectives such as telephone and electricity infrastructure, water reservoirs and the airport of the capital, Groznyy.

Tactical targets destroyed were military bases, bridges, roads and vehicles. Although this was denied by VVS Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Anatoly Kornukov, many civilians were killed as a result of the air strikes.[20]

Phase Two: The Installation Of A Security Cordon In Northern Chechnya (October-November 1999). Putin's statement on 1 October that the authority of Chechen President Maskhadov and of his government was illegimate was the signal to start the ground campaign. The objective was to capture territory to establish a security zone up to the river Terek, north of Groznyy, officially to prevent any further incursions into RF territory. The Russian forces used "slow and steady" tactics, a minimum risk approach, sending in infantry only after heavy artillery and air bombardment, to avoid the heavy casualties of the first Chechen conflict. On 15 October, the Commander of the Joint Grouping of Forces, General Kazantsev, announced that the security zone, comprising one-third of Chechnya, was complete. After this, and although officially denied, Russian troops made efforts to encircle Groznyy in preparation for an invasion of the Chechen capital. On 12 November Gudermes, Chechnya's second largest city, was taken. At the end of that month Russian forces largely surrounded Groznyy and held more than 50 percent of Chechnya.

Phase Three: The Occupation Of The Larger Part Of Chechnya, Including Groznyy (November 1999-February 2000). On 4 December Groznyy was fully blockaded by Russian troops. By 13 December the Russians had regained control of Groznyy's airport. As of the next day, Russian forces met fierce resistance in advancing into the outskirts of Groznyy. On 3 February 2000 the federal forces held half of Groznyy. In the following days 2,000 Chechen fighters pulled out of their capital into the southern mountains. The Russians had recaptured Groznyy.

Phase Four: The Battle For The Southern Mountains (March 2000-January 2001). From mid February 2000, VVS bombed Chechen positions in the southern mountains, where around 8,000 fighters were believed to be hiding. The Chechens benefited from the mountainous terrain in their hit-and-run attacks on the Russian troops. Still lacking a sufficient counter-insurgency doctrine, the Russian forces were unable to deal with the Chechen guerrilla tactics and to complete the operation.

Phase Five: The Switch From A Military Operation To An FSB-Led Anti-Terrorist Operation (January 2001-present). In January 2001, President Putin announced that the military campaign in Chechnya was successfully completed and that this allowed turning over command of the "anti-terrorist operation" from the military to the FSB (Federal Security Service).[21] The FSB would further restore Russian federal law and order in Chechnya by employing special units (*spetsnaz*) in conducting extensive search-and-destroy operations against rebel groups and their commanders. Although Russian officials claimed that the military conflict had ended, the Chechens continued their guerrilla warfare not only in the southern mountains, but also throughout Chechnya and even by bomb attacks and incursions into Dagestan and Ingushetia. In September 2002, three years after the second Chechen conflict had started, the official total (MoD forces and troops of the power ministries) of Russian soldiers killed was 4,500, which exceeded the loss of around 4,000 servicemen in the first Chechen conflict. Also according to Russian officials, 12,500 Russians had been wounded and nearly 14,000 Chechen fighters killed.[22]

Russian Grand Strategy: Actors & Objectives

Economic, internal and external politics, as well as military and ideological grounds gave rise to the second Russian invasion of autumn 1999. The motives for this invasion can be divided into structural and opportunistic ones. Structural motives are present in the fields of economics, geo-strategy and internal politics. The economic drive was the presence of oil in the area of the Caspian Sea and in Chechnya. Oil was and is an important source of income for Russia. Therefore Russia had an economic interest in safeguarding the pipelines through Chechnya and the petrochemical industry on Chechen territory. Furthermore, Russia considers the Caucasus to be of vital strategic importance, as it leads towards Turkey and the Middle East. In order to maintain its influence in that area, a stable southern border, on which Chechnya is situated, is an essential prerequisite. Concerning internal politics, Russia considered the secession of Chechnya as a threat to its integrity. This could create a domino effect; other entities within the RF might follow this example, which could eventually lead to the break up of the RF.

Secondly, opportunistic motives can be found in the fields of internal, military and ideological politics. Putin was on his way to the leadership of the country. A successful campaign in Chechnya would strengthen his position. The military motives were twofold. Firstly, the Russian generals were keen to have their revenge for the humiliating defeat they suffered in 1996. Secondly, the top brass wished to increase the defence budget with the intention of modernizing and strengthening the armed forces. A victory in Chechnya would increase their means of achieving this. Finally, the ideological argument was the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, which is a constant theme in Russian foreign as well domestic policy. Internationally, Russia pointed at the Islamic terror attacks in Central Asia, developments in Afghanistan, and domestically at the incursions by Islamic extremists in Dagestan and the installation of Islamic rule in Chechnya. Often these developments have been portrayed as connected, especially to Osama bin Laden's terror network.

The most likely direct impetus for the decision to use force was the incursions into Dagestan and a number of bomb attacks in Russia. One explosion occurred in Dagestan, three explosions in Moscow, and one in Volgodonsk, all between 31 August-16 September 1999.[23] However, to this day no proof has been given that Chechens were behind the bomb attacks. On the contrary, the FSB is often accused of these attacks. Another point of interest is that the invasion of Chechnya was well-organised, which makes the option of a sudden decision to use military force not so likely. Probably a reason was found for conducting an already planned military campaign.

Russian Military Strategy: Command & Control Structure

At the outset of the second invasion into Chechnya, in October 1999, the estimated number of the forces, the majority being MoD troops, was 100,000. In August 2000 the Joint Grouping of Forces consisted of 80,000 men, of whom 50,000 were MoD troops.[24] In January 2001 it was announced that the total personnel strength of the forces in Chechnya, MoD and MVD troops and *militsia* (military organised police), was to be reduced to 50,000-60,000 men,[25] but in November 2002, they still numbered 80,000.[26]

Initially the Joint Grouping of Forces, under Colonel-General Kazantsev, Commander NCMD, conducted the operations in Chechnya. The Grouping was divided into five parts: the western, northern, eastern, southern and Groznyy (later Argun) groups. Each group consisted of MoD troops (ground, air, naval infantry and airborne forces) and troops of the power ministries (MVD, FSB, Emergency Ministry and border guard forces).[27] The main headquarters of the Grouping was originally in Mozdok, west of Chechnya, and then moved to Khankala, near Groznyy.[28]

When the FSB took command of the operations in Chechnya, a Main Staff of Operations was formed, consisting of the Director of FSB, the heads of the ministries which had troops employed in Chechnya, and members of the Joint (military) Staff. The Joint Staff had until then been in command of the Chechen campaign. Furthermore a Regional Staff of Operations was formed, led by a Deputy Director of the FSB, and made up of representatives of the power ministries and of the local authorities in the southern district of the RF. For the command and control of military units the Joint Staff was continued.[29]

Russian Operational Level: Organisation Of Airpower

Command & Control Structure All air assets, both MoD and those of the power ministries, were under unified command of Lieutenant-General Valery Gorbenko of the Joint Staff.[30] Just as in the Dagestani conflict, the air component of the Joint Grouping was made up of fixed-wing aircraft of VVS and rotary wing aircraft belonging to army aviation. The VVS component comprised air regiments assigned to the 4th Air Army, and some separate units from the Moscow Air and Air Defence District.[31] Roughly half of the ASV helicopters were divided among the different groups of the Joint Grouping of Forces; the remaining half was a reserve of the Joint Grouping.[32]

The former bomber base of Mozdok, North Osetia, some 90 km northwest of Groznyy, was again the primary staging base for the fixed-wing part of the air component, as well as the main airhead for supplies from elsewhere in Russia. Clearly, military operations in this region had been planned in advance. The airbase had received an order that within two months, June and July, the runway had to be prepared for operational use.[33] Other bases used by the air component were Budennovsk and locations in the republics of Dagestan and Ingushetia.[34]

Force Build-Up The aircraft of the air component were for the most part similar to those used in Dagestan. Rotary wing aircraft employed by ASV were the Mi-24 *Hind* combat helicopter, the Mi-8 *Hip* transport helicopter and the Mi-26 *Halo* heavy lift helicopter. The latter was extensively used for the forward movement of troops. In September 1999 the contribution of ASV to the operation was 68 helicopters, consisting of 32 *Hinds*, 28 *Hips* and 8 *Halos*. Three years later, in September 2002, the number of helicopters was down to 40, 22 *Hinds*, 17 *Hips* and 1 *Halo*.[35] VVS' fixed-wing aircraft were the Su-25 *Frogfoot* fighter-bomber, Su-27 and Su-30 *Flanker* fighters and Su-24M *Fencer-D* fighter-bomber aircraft. For air recce Su-24 MR *Fencer-E* and MiG-25RBK *Foxbat-D* aircraft were utilized. From Mozdok operated at least a squadron each of *Fencers* and *Frogfoots*. Intelligence gathering was conducted by AN-30B *Clanks* (photo surveillance), A-50 *Mainstays* (AWACS) and by Il-20 *Coots* (signals intelligence).[36]

Russian Tactical Level: Application Of Airpower

Counter-Air Operations At the outset of the conflict, the Chechens were reported to use two helicopters for flying in supplies. In order to prevent this, VVS carried out Offensive Counter-Air (OCA) missions, by keeping two *Flankers* and two *Frogfoots* on constant alert for conducting CAPs. In these missions *Mainstay* AWACS aircraft provided aerial radar cover. To secure RF airfields and cities against possible air attacks, Defensive Counter-Air (DCA) missions were conducted.[37]

Anti-Surface Force Air Operations *Fencers* and *Frogfoots* took a large share of the strike sorties. Initially, the missions were conducted in support of the ground campaign and were targeted against bridges, major roads and buildings. Another task was to mine mountain roads and areas, in order to cut off supply routes and diminish freedom of movement. *Hinds* carried out missions of tactical suppression of suspected rebel positions. With the start of the fourth phase, missions were directed against camps and hardened shelters in the mountains and to cut Chechen supply routes from Georgia. Pairs of *Frogfoots* conducted "free-hunt" missions, to suppress new strongholds in conquered territory.[38]

Strategic Air Operations Although initially VVS authorities suggested that the strategic bomber force (*strategicheskaya aviatsiya*) might be employed, VVS commander Kornukov repeatedly insisted that there was no necessity to do so. There is no evidence that the Russian strategic bomber force was ever used in the conflict. However, in addition to OAS missions, ASV and VVS conducted offensive missions to destroy strategic targets. Thus the air component carried out missions against targets such as telecommunications (telephone, radio and TV) installations, command, control and communications networks, as well as against the oil refinery and the airport of Groznyy.[39]

Supporting Air Operations *Hips* were extensively used to transport ground forces (for instance s*petnaz* units of MoD and MVD), to interdict communications and supply lines, to react to guerrilla raids, CSAR missions, as well as to transport supplies and ammunition into the mountains. In these missions *Hinds* or *Frogfoots* provided cover for the *Hips*.[40] In the second Chechen conflict more than in the first one, emphasis was placed on effective recce and intelligence collection. *Clanks*, *Mainstays* and *Coots* were used to gather (electronic) intelligence and *Fencer-Es*, *Frogfoots and Foxbat-Ds* conducted air recce missions. However, entering phase four of the conflict, intelligence gathering became complicated, because enemy bases in the mountains, without meaningful signals to intercept, were hard to detect.[41]

Tactics As in the Dagestani conflict, ASV operated in groups of two to four *Hinds* and one or two *Hips*. These formations were described as aviation tactical groups (ATGs). In an ATG *Hips* would direct *Hinds* to their targets. Another task of the *Hips* in the ATGs was CSAR, in support of downed *Hinds*. ATGs were assigned to regiments, together with a forward air controller (FAC) in the regimental HQ. FACs were also posted at lower levels, at battalion and sometimes even at company level. Two-thirds of the CAS missions of ASV were organised in this way. In addition to this tactic, without support of *Hips*, pairs of *Hinds* also carried out "free hunt" missions, which comprised the remaining third of the total number of missions. Targets of these missions were similar to those of the "free hunt" missions of *Frogfoots*.[42] Helicopter strikes involved energetic manoeuvring, simultaneous

attacks from opposing directions and dives from a formation outside anti-aircraft defence range.

Tasks & Lessons Learned

In July 2000, reviewing the operations in Dagestan and Chechnya, VVS commander Kornukov gave an explanation of the tasks and lessons learned so far.[43] He defined the tasks of the air component as follows:

- Air support for ground forces (Anti-Surface Force Air Operations);
- Security against air attacks (Counter-Air Operations);
- Psychological warfare, by harassing the enemy;
- Air recce of assigned areas (Supporting Air Operations);
- Relay of command and control (Supporting Air Operations);
- Transport of troops and supplies (Supporting Air Operations).

According to Kornukov, the effectiveness of airpower had to be increased by improvements in the field of maintenance of aircraft and equipment, training and number of pilots and troops, upgrading of aircraft with state-of-the-art avionics, procurement of newly developed aircraft, combat readiness of units and airbases, command and control structure of airpower as well as manuals on the application of airpower. However this 'shopping list' would not prove very realistic given structural cuts in the defence budget.

Failures, Problems & Losses

A number of **failures** arose in using airpower. Although fewer than in the earlier conflicts, friendly fire now and then still occurred. For instance in March 2000 an OMON (special police unit) detachment was wiped out by friendly fire from VVS.[44] Although improvements had been made since the first Chechen conflict, coordination between forces/troops still was not optimal.

Airpower was mostly used as air support for ground troops operations. However, using aircraft as 'flying artillery', instead of platforms for precision weapons, caused collateral damage in the form of numerous civilian casualties, which subsequently left a negative impression with the public.[45]

In the fourth phase of the conflict, the lack of sophisticated equipment thwarted effective application of airpower against the mountain hideouts of the Chechens. Dispersed troops were hard-to-find targets and therefore difficult to detect and to destroy. Airpower was not an effective weapon against guerrilla warfare and urban terrorism.

Problems in the areas of finance, arms as well as personnel, owing to constant cuts in the defence budget, had affected the operational capabilities of the forces. The air campaign in Chechnya influenced the combat readiness of the VVS as a whole; in February 2000 it had usurped up to 60% of the VVS' annual budget. Deputy Prime Minister Klebanov noted that VVS had not received any new aircraft since 1992, and was not likely to receive any the coming year. The federal forces, and especially its air component, were not capable of operating either in bad weather or during the night.[46] Just as in Dagestan and in the first Chechen conflict, the shortage or absence of expensive precision guided munitions (PGMs), high-tech communications, navigation and targeting systems, as well as all-weather and day/night capabilities, made airpower less effective than it could have been. According to the commander of the air component of the NCMD, another negative

development influencing combat readiness was the fact that federal forces lacked fuel, spare parts and maintenance. In official as well as independent newspapers, VVS commander Kornukov openly admitted and discussed a number of these problems. Air component commander Gorbenko confirmed them.[47]

As a result of the low funding levels pilot training and combat experience were insufficient. In 1999 average annual flying hours for attack aviation were around 23 and for bombers around 25, whereas during the Cold War average Soviet flying hours were 150. By Western (NATO) air force standards the minimum flying hours for a skilled pilot are 180.[48] The lack of flying hours resulted not only in a higher rate of aircraft losses but also in less effective fulfilment of missions, for instance by dropping bombs too early.

The **losses** of the air component were as follows. Before March 2000 the air component lost two *Frogfoots*, one *Fencer-E* and 18 helicopters. In addition to this 24 aircraft had suffered combat damage. Only half of the helicopters were lost as a result of enemy fire. By June 2000, the number of helicopters lost was up to 22, including 10 *Hinds*. In three years, from September 1999-2002, ASV would lose no fewer than 36 helicopters, which was an average of one per month.[49] This large number of rotary wing losses was only partly caused by enemy fire; other causes could be found in insufficient pilot training and lack of maintenance, due to reduced funding.

Successes

Airpower (CAS) took care of a large share of the bombardments prior to employing ground forces. VVS and ASV conducted 70-80% of the fire missions, as opposed to 15-17% by artillery.[50] Between October 1999 and February 2000 airpower was used in more than 4,000 combat sorties, of which the majority were strike sorties. The air strikes caused the destruction of a huge amount of armoured vehicles, anti-aircraft guns, armament-production facilities, weapon storage bunkers, oil refining factories, fuel warehouses, as well as radar and relay stations.[51] Conclusively, airpower, above all by providing air support to the operations of ground forces, formed a vital contribution to the successful Russian campaign during the first three phases of the conflict.

Chechen Strategy & Operations

To reach a good understanding of the **political-strategic level** (grand strategy), some background explanation of the Chechen resistance is necessary. Russian authorities have always portrayed all Chechen fighters as “bandits and terrorists”. However a distinction can be made between three different groups of Chechen armed resistance.[52] First, the official Chechen government, represented by President Aslan Maskhadov, a former Soviet army Colonel.[53] The government was mainly made up of moderate, pro-Western people. The objective of the Chechen government was to maintain an independent Chechnya. Second, there were small, uncoordinated locally orientated armed groups, whose main interest was the revenge of killed relatives. They lacked any specific political or military objective. The third group was the militarised and well-structured extremist-Islamic organisation of the so-called *Wahhabis*. The Chechen commanders in charge of the incursions into Dagestan, Basayev and Khattab, belonged to this group. Their objective was not only to throw the Russians out of Chechnya, but also to instal Islamic rule in Chechnya and in Muslim areas on Russian territory.

At the **operational and tactical level** the personnel strength of the Chechen resistance was estimated at 20,000 men, of which between 3,000-6,000 fighters defended Groznyy.[54] When the fall of Groznyy was imminent 2,000 Chechen fighters pulled out of their capital into the southern mountains, where around 8,000 fighters were believed to be based.[55]

From the outset of the Russian ground campaign, Chechen fighters offered little resistance, apart from defending prepared strongholds, realising that they were no match for the large and heavily armoured Russian forces. However, in December 1999 Chechen militants started counter attacks, employing guerrilla tactics. From areas where they could not cope with the strength of the Russians, Chechen fighters withdrew, with the intention of attacking the enemy in and from the southern mountains. The Chechen militants exploited the deteriorating weather conditions to step up attacks on federal troops and made good use of the mountainous terrain. After the recapture of Groznyy in February 2000, the Chechens continued their guerrilla warfare not only in the southern mountains, but throughout all of Chechnya and even in the neighbouring RF republics of Dagestan and Ingushetia. The guerrilla tactics employed by the Chechens were hit-and-run attacks, mining, ambushes, assassination of individual soldiers, urban terrorism in the occupied villages and cities, as well as sniper and (suicide) bomb attacks.

At the beginning of the conflict, the Chechen air component reportedly possessed two transport helicopters and one utility aircraft, an An-2 *Colt*, which was supposedly used for transport of arms and ammunition. At the end of September 1999, during the attack on the airport of Groznyy, the aircraft was destroyed.[56] No further mention has been made of the two helicopters. So again, the Russians had air supremacy in this conflict. The air defence capability of the Chechens was similar to that used in Dagestan. An organised air-defence system with radar and missiles was absent. Man-portable SAMs, heavy machine-guns and ZSU 23/2 twin barrel anti-aircraft guns on trucks were the arms available for air defence.[57]

The Chechens were successful in disturbing the interface between Russian air and ground operations, by waging information-electronic warfare against the Russian FAC system. Chechens, as former RF conscripts, used their experience, by monitoring FAC radio transmissions and impersonating Russian FACs, to misdirect CAS missions conducted by ATGs and other formations of the Russian air component. Furthermore, FACs were prime targets of Chechen snipers.[58]

Subconclusions

Russia

At the **political-strategic level** emphasis was on influencing public opinion, which might also be described as information or psychological warfare. Two objectives lay at the foundation of employing information warfare in this conflict. The first objective was to convince the Russian nation of the inevitability of waging war against Chechnya. The second objective was to sustain public support during the conflict.

The bomb attacks of August/September 1999, as well as the Chechen raids into Dagestan and the traditional dislike of Chechens, created a solid foundation in Russian society in favour of conducting a war against Chechnya for a second time. Putin's leading role in the campaign guaranteed popular support for his election as President in March 2000.

To meet the second objective, tight control of the media was meant to ensure an impression of a smooth operation in Chechnya, and thus sustain support in society. The destruction of Chechen mass-media facilities (radio and TV) was also part of the information warfare, to prevent broadcasting of other information than what the Russians desired. The Russians tried to copy NATO's media campaign in the Kosovo conflict. For instance, VVS commander Kornukov showed pictures and videos to prove that targets were hit without causing any civilian casualties.[59] However, public support decreased as casualties mounted. The authorities were blamed for understating casualty figures and for making the same operational-tactical mistakes as in the first conflict. In addition to this, foreign non-governmental organisations and media reported on human rights abuses and disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force. So in spite of all efforts to control the media, eventually Russian authorities were unable to maintain a strict control on information.

Although the Russian political-military leadership achieved a military victory over Chechnya, they did not win the war politically. The Russians failed in combining military objectives with realistic political objectives. Occupation and oppression will encourage the Chechens to continue a protracted insurgency war against the Russians. As long as the Kremlin does not recognize that this conflict can only end by a political solution, the war will continue.

At the **military-strategic level**, the change in command, from the military to the FSB, was a remarkable move. For two reasons this seems to have been a wrong decision. First, it was an error with regard to the difference in capabilities between the armed forces (MoD) and the troops of the power ministries. The Russians should have learned from the first Chechen conflict and the recent Dagestani conflict that a sound command and control structure was of vital importance for a military campaign. In the aforementioned conflicts command by the MVD had failed, mostly because of poor cooperation with MoD forces, especially with regard to calling in artillery and air support. This time another power ministry, the FSB, was ordered to take over command from the military. The choice of the FSB might have been to do with Putin's background in the security services and could be justified in signalling that the conflict was internal and not a "war". However, it was likely that the FSB would face similar problems to the MVD's, having no experience of conducting above all *military* operations. Secondly, changing the command to the FSB was a mistake regarding command and control. As a consequence of the FSB taking over command of the operation, new staffs were installed. This was another remarkable decision, which went against earlier experience. The first Chechen conflict had shown that a divided chain of command had disastrous results. Now, once again staffs were created in addition to the unified (military) Joint Staff. It was not unlikely that the two staffs, led by the FSB, would compete with respectively the General Staff in Moscow and the Joint Staff in Chechnya. In this case, clearly a lesson was not learned.

Gradually, coordination between MoD forces and troops of the power ministries has improved, especially by creating a Joint Staff consisting of all forces and troops involved, and by installing FACs as an interface between ground and air operations. According to air component commander Gorbenko, after the installation of a unified command no further problems had arisen between MoD and MVD. Blue-on-blue incidents still occurred, but fewer than in the previous conflicts in Dagestan and Chechnya. Coordination and cooperation depended to a large extent on the desire to do so. On several occasions criticism, especially from VVS commander Kornukov

of ASV, Ground Forces and MVD, revealed that a true desire for cooperation, shared by all commanders involved, had not yet been reached.[60]

The 35th loss of a helicopter, a *Halo*, which was destroyed near Khankala airbase on 19 August 2002, would cause a watershed in airpower command and control. A week later MoD sources announced that ASV was to be resubordinated from Ground Forces to VVS by the end of 2002.[61] The reason for this decision was probably the 'misuse' of helicopters by ground forces commanders, for instance by overloading them, as was the case with this *Halo*. This decision would mean a strengthening of VVS in command and control of MoD airpower, as well as a decline in the military power of the Ground Forces. The conclusion can be drawn that this resubordination, which would encourage unified command of airpower, is an important lesson learned from the second Chechen conflict.

In contrast to the command and control problems, Russian psychological warfare was quite successful. They used "hearts-and-minds" tactics, by persuading residents to force the rebels out of their villages and thus save them from destruction. Before Groznyy was invaded VVS aircraft dropped leaflets urging residents to leave, warning them that people staying behind would be destroyed as "bandits" and setting an ultimatum of five days.[62] The Russians had discovered that weapons are not the only way to wage a war.

Reviewing the **operational-tactical level**, it was atypical that the Russians started the invasion in autumn. This meant that the Russian military leadership had to face deteriorating weather conditions. Heavy snow hampered the ground campaign, which gave the Chechens the chance to increase their counter-attacks. Although politically opportune, commencing a military operation in the Caucasus in the autumn was a risky endeavour from a military point of view.

At first the Russian invasion gave the impression of being a smooth operation. The concepts of conducting heavy artillery and air barrages before sending in ground troops, as well as the "go-slow" tactic were successful and preserved the Russian troops from the heavy casualties they suffered in the first Chechen conflict. Nonetheless, after recapturing the larger part of Chechnya, the federal forces, in controlling the area, had to cope with guerrilla tactics. Unfortunately, since the first Chechen conflict the Russians still had not developed a doctrine for a protracted insurgency conflict. As a result they still employed regular warfare tactics against the irregular tactics of the Chechens. Long-range air and artillery firepower, as used in the "go-slow" approach, were no answer to guerrilla tactics. This asymmetric warfare made the conflict undecided. It seemed impossible for the Russians to achieve a final victory over the Chechens.

A clear lesson learned from the first Chechen conflict was improving the command over air support and subsequently improving the coordination between VVS, ASV and MVD. In the Joint Staff all air assets (of MoD and power ministries) were now under unified command. FACs were assigned to regimental levels and even further down to company level. In this way the tactical commander on the ground had direct access to air support, which meant more effective airpower. Yet, the effectiveness of airpower could have been much higher if structural cuts in the defence budget had not affected combat readiness of materiel as well as of personnel.

Chechen

At the **operational level** the Chechen fighters followed an effective approach, offering little resistance. The Chechen militants exploited the deteriorating weather conditions to step up attacks on federal troops and made good use of the mountainous terrain. Although the Chechen fighters were unable to defeat the strong Russian forces, by employing irregular warfare they have been capable of damaging Russian control over Chechnya. Eventually this protracted insurgency conflict might result in the loss of public support and force the Russians to leave, as was the case in the first Chechen conflict. At the **political-strategic level** this would mean a Chechen victory, not only by military force but also by way of patient psychological warfare.

At the **tactical level** the Chechens, in addition to employing guerrilla tactics, also waged a successful war against the Russian air component. They did well in disturbing the Russian FAC system, as well as in shooting down aircraft and helicopters.

Comparison Of The Use Of Airpower In Both Chechen Conflicts (1994-1996 & 1999-date)

The purpose of this paper was to describe Russian airpower in the second (present) Chechen conflict, therefore it does not elaborate on the first conflict. The airpower aspects of the first Chechen conflict have been well documented by others.[63] However, it is worthwhile to make an assessment of the use of airpower based upon a comparison of both conflicts.

Structural Problems

First, annual cuts in the defence budget resulted in limitations of materiel (aircraft) and personnel in the conflict. The consequences were a low level of combat readiness, limited use of airpower during the night and in bad weather conditions, as well as many losses of aircraft for other reasons than enemy fire.

Secondly, coordination and cooperation among MoD forces and between defence forces and troops of the power ministries were improved but were still far from optimal. For instance, friendly fire also occurred in the second conflict.

Thirdly, in both conflicts civilian casualties and collateral damage due to airpower left a negative impression with the public. However, civilian casualties were not only caused by pilot shortcomings and lack of PGMs. The fact that Chechen fighters would often hide in and use air-defence from urban areas also caused innocent victims, for which the Russians were blamed.

Finally, airpower was effective as long as ground forces were advancing. Airpower was not an answer to a protracted guerrilla war.

Improvements

First of all, the establishment of a unified air component of VVS, ASV and MVD air assets in the second Chechen conflict improved coordination and cooperation and thus the effectiveness of airpower.

Secondly, air support for ground forces operations was more successful in the second conflict. I would perceive the following grounds for this improvement. By conducting air barrages prior to the advance of troops, airpower created favourable conditions for ground forces and diminished the possibility of friendly fire. FACs proved to be more effective than in the first conflict. It seemed that more FACs were available this time. Because of their greater number, FACs could be deployed in more units and at lower tactical levels, sometimes even at company level. Finally, FACs were apparently better trained and perhaps better equipped with more sophisticated communications instruments. Another ground for improved air support for ground forces operations was the formation of Aviation Tactical Groups. By combining target-designation and attack helicopters, they proved to be highly effective tactical formations.

A third improvement in the use of airpower was the comeback of rotary wing aircraft as part of the combat force of airpower. In the first Chechen conflict helicopters were mainly used for supporting tasks and were excluded from urban areas for fear of enemy air defence. It was then thought that for combat tasks fixed wing aircraft, such as the *Frogfoot*, would replace rotary wing. However, in the second Chechen conflict, most likely due to the introduction of the successful ATG concept, helicopters were "back-in-business" for combat missions, which broadened the scope of airpower.

Fourthly and finally, the intention of resubordinating ASV from Ground Forces to VVS will enforce central guidance of airpower, which in turn reinforces its effectiveness.

In conclusion, it is evident that the most important structural problem for Russian airpower was funding. Irregular warfare in Chechnya showed that lack or absence of expensive PGMs, high-tech communications, navigation and targeting systems, as well as all-weather and day/night capabilities, limited the effectiveness of airpower. But in spite of the financial problems, Russian airpower demonstrated that it was capable of enhancing its effectiveness without additional financial support, especially by innovations in command and control and by tactical improvements.

Characteristics

In assessing the characteristics of the second Chechen conflict, I will draw some conclusions on the dominating category of warfare.

Russia

Under international law, Dagestan as well as Chechnya were arguably constitutional entities of the Russian Federation. Therefore, according to article 3.1 of the II Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (1949), Russia was entitled to re-establish law and order in both republics.[64]

To what extent they conducted their operations in accordance with the laws of armed conflict is a matter for discussion. However, analysing that subject is not the purpose of this paper. The Russian objectives in this conflict, excluding internal opportunistic goals of Putin and the military, can be described as follows:

- To repel incursions into Dagestan by Chechen commanders;

- To put an end to existing Islamic law in a central district of Dagestan;
- To instal a security zone in the northern part of Chechnya, in order to prevent any further incursions into RF territory;
- To restore Russian law and order in Chechnya as a whole.

In order to achieve these goals, the armed forces of the RF MoD and the troops of the power ministries waged regular, conventional warfare. Their main tactic was to conduct heavy artillery and air barrages on Chechen strongholds, after which ground forces would enter and destroy enemy resistance.

Chechen

The objectives of the Chechens were not unanimous; they varied with the actors involved. The objective of the moderate government of President Maskhadov was to defend Chechnya's de facto independence. The local armed groups did not have any clear objective, except for revenging killed relatives. Finally, the Islamic-extremist *Wahhabis*, under command of Basayev and Khattab, wanted to instal Islamic rule in Chechnya and in Muslim areas on RF territory, starting with Dagestan. After invading Dagestan, they intended to gain local support to overthrow the local government and to instal Islamic law. Subsequently a united Islamic republic with Chechnya would be formed.

The armed formations of these three actors all waged irregular, unconventional warfare. The Chechen fighters of Maskhadov had no other choice, because of the nearly complete lack of armoured vehicles and aircraft. The local armed groups only possessed small arms. The same applied to the *Wahhabis*, who besides using guerrilla tactics defensively, also used them offensively. The tactics used by all three Chechen factions were the following:

- Incursions from Chechnya into Dagestan to occupy villages and territory;
- Building fortifications in Dagestan and Chechnya and subsequently defending these fiercely;
- Avoiding direct confrontations with the overwhelming Russian ground forces;
- Operating especially in darkness and bad weather, which hampered Russian operations;
- Employing guerrilla tactics, such as hit-and-run attacks, mining roads, laying ambushes, assassinating individual Russian soldiers, urban terrorism in the occupied villages and cities, as well as sniper and (suicide) bomb attacks;
- Disturbing the interface between Russian air and ground operations, by waging information/electronic warfare against the Russian FAC system, and shooting down a relatively large number of Russian aircraft, using minimal means of air defence.

Dominant Characteristics

This paper has analysed the features of the second Chechen conflict, as an example of low-intensity conflict, emphasizing the role of airpower. With regard to the guiding principles of the military theory of low-intensity conflicts, one distinction is obvious: this armed conflict was not an example of warfare in the developing world. The conflict occurred in a developed state, the Russian Federation, although Chechnya itself exhibited a number of features of a 'failed state'. The characteristics of low-intensity conflicts lead to a division into three categories of

warfare: a new type of conflict; a conflict similar to other insurgencies; or a case of traditional, conventional warfare.

New Type Of Conflict The main objectives of both parties, Russians as well as Chechens, was not targeting the population, but defending or conquering territory. However, in the second Chechen conflict ethnic differences did play a role. Since the forceful conquest of the Caucasus by the tsarist empire in the 19th century, Russians have always had feelings of resentment towards the Chechens, which were even expressed in a lullaby. Likewise, the Chechens, because of the Russian occupation and their deportation during World War II by order of Stalin, possessed feelings of hatred and distrust towards the Russians. Although the Russians did not specifically target the population, it suffered a large number of casualties, on the one hand as a result of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks by the Russians, on the other hand because Chechens had built strongholds in urban areas. So ethnic differences were present in this conflict but were not an objective of warfare of either party.

Conflict Similar To Insurgencies The aim of an insurgency is to overthrow the existing state power, in order to replace it with one of its own ideology. In this case, a distinction has to be made between the different Chechen actors involved. The moderate, Western orientated government of Maskhadov had in fact the same objective as the Russian government of Putin: maintaining an independent, sovereign state. The *Wahhabis*, however, had religious, ideological objectives. Whereas Maskhadov recognized the authority of state power, the *Wahhabis* rejected this and adhered to an Islamic-extremist theocratic ideology. Another vital aspect is that for most Chechens tribal (clan) adherence was more important than state. The traditional Western idea of nationalism was to a large extent absent. Consequently, most Chechens were not interested in (gaining) state power. One final characteristic was the fact that Maskhadov as well as the *Wahhabis*, due to the Russian superiority in materiel and troops, had to resort to guerrilla tactics.

Traditional, Conventional Warfare The second Chechen conflict also demonstrated features of historic, traditional European warfare. For example, Russian troops allegedly plundered and mistreated non-combatant Chechens. And Chechen fighters, using guerrilla tactics, lived off the land and avoided direct confrontations with the superior Russian forces. However, these features are not coherent with commonly accepted principles of regular warfare, ie deploying large scale armoured formations of ground and air forces, for example in the Gulf War. The Russians used regular warfare, different from historic warfare but consistent with conventional warfare of the 20th century.

Conclusions

These arguments underline that the second Chechen conflict displayed features of all three categories of warfare. However, ethnic objectives did not rule this conflict. Nor did the characteristics of regular warfare. The objective of the *Wahhabi* incursions into Dagestan, as well as the fighting techniques used by the Chechens after Russian forces had re-occupied Chechen territory, were clearly characteristic of insurgencies. Even though not all features of insurgency were present in this conflict, since it was only the *Wahhabis* who waged an ideological war and who were interested in overthrowing the existing system of state power, the conclusion can be drawn that insurgency comes to the fore as the prevailing category of warfare in the second Chechen war.

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[34] David Fulghum, "Air war in Chechnya reveals mix of tactics" *Aviation Week & Technology*, 14 February 2000, p77; Jim Hedge, "Air war over Chechnya" *World Air Power*

Journal, No 42, Autumn/Fall 2000, pp18; Aleksey Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization" *Aviation Week & Technology*, 14 February 2000, p80; Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", *KZ*, 3 November 1999, p3.

[35] Smyshlayev, "Vertolety nad Chechney"; Yevgeny Matveyev, 'Tridtsat' pyatyy: v srednem federal'nyye voyska teryayut v Chechne po vertolyotu v mesyats', *NVO*, No 30 (300), 30 August 2002, p1.

[36] Fulghum, "Air war in Chechnya reveals mix of tactics", p77; *Military Balance 2000-2001*, p114.

[37] Babichev, "Zyeleznyye argumenty VVS", *KZ*, 28 September 1999, p1.

[38] Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", p1; Babichev, "Razvedka s vozdukha", *KZ*, 6 October 1999, p1.

[39] Babichev, "Bandity poluchat po zaslugam", Yuri Golotyuk, "Groznyyy bombili". *Izvestiya*, 24 September 1999, p1; Babichev, "Zyeleznyye argumenty VVS".

[40] Vladimir Georgiyev, "Rol' armeyskoy aviatsii vozrastayet", *NVO*, No 4 (177), 4 February 2000, p2; Nikolayev, "V pylayushchem nebe Chechni", p35.

[41] Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization", p81; Fulghum, "Air war in Chechnya reveals mix of tactics"; p77: *Military Balance 2000-2001*, p114.

[42] Georgiyev, "Rol' armeyskoy aviatsii vozrastayet". NB: RF defence researchers had come to the conclusion that every lowest unit level (*zveno*, 4 helicopters), should have a FAC at its disposal.

[43] Anatoly Kornukov, "Kontrterroristicheskaya operatsiya na Severnom Kavkaze: osnovnyye uroki i vyvody", *Voyennaya Mysl'*, No 4, July 2000, pp5-10.

[44] Sokut, "Udary po banditam ne oslabeyut"; Aldis, *The second Chechen war*, p86.

[45] RF air component commanders, such as VVS commander Kornukov, repeatedly denied allegations regarding civilian casualties of air attacks: Babichev, "Bandity poluchat po zaslugam"; Babichev, "Zyeleznyye argumenty VVS".

[46] Sokut, "Nevostrebovannyy potentsial", p2.

[47] Valery Aleksin & Oleg Finayev, "V nebe nad Kavkazom", *NVO*, No 36 (159), 17 September 1999, p2; Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", p1, 3; Sokut, "Udary po banditam ne oslabeyut"; Nikolayev, "V pylayushchem nebe Chechni", p33.

[48] Fulghum, "Air war in Chechnya reveals mix of tactics", p76; Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization", p80.

[49] Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization", p80; Hedge, "Air war over Chechnya" p22; Smyshlayev, "Vertolety nad Chechney"; Matveyev, "Tridtsat' pyatyy: v srednem federal'nyye voyska terjayut v Chechne po vertoljotu v mesyats", *NVO*, No 30 (300), 30 August 2002, p1.

[50] Orr, "Second time lucky?", p35; Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", p1.

[51] Fulghum, "Air war in Chechnya reveals mix of tactics", p77; Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization", p80.

[52] Charles Blandy, *Chechnya: the need to negotiate*, p10-12.

[53] Ivan Safranchuk, "Chechnya: Russia's experience of asymmetrical warfare", in John Olsen (ed), *Asymmetric warfare* (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy, 2002), p386.

[54] Andrey Korbut, "Ucheba v boyu", *NVO*, No 50 (173), 24 December 1999, p2.

[55] Second Chechnya War, http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/war/chechnya2.htm.

[56] Golotyuk, "Groznyyy bombili".

[57] Komarov, "Chechen conflict drives call for air force modernization", p80; Babichev, "Zyeleznyye argumenty VVS"; Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", p3.

[58] Hedge, "Air war over Chechnya" p22; Georgiyev, "Rol' armeyskoy aviatsii vozrastayet".

[59] Aleksandr Zhilin, "Udary po Chechne". *Moskovskiye Novosti*, 21 September 1999, p5; Babichev, "V lyubykh usloviyakh, v lyuboye vremya sutok", p1, 3.

[60] Nikolayev, "V pylayushchem nebe Chechni", p34; Georgiyev, "Rol' armeyskoy aviatsii vozrastayet"; Kornukov, "Kontrterroristicheskaya operatsiya na Severnom Kavkaze", p5; Sergey Valchenko & Konstantin Yuryev, "Goryachiy vozdukh Kavkaza", *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, No 2, February 2001, p28.

[61] "Peremeny v aviatsii". 2002. *NVO*, No 30 (300), 30 August, p3; Matveyev, "Tridtsat' pyatyy", p1; Army aviation (ASV) was subordinated to VVS until 1990, when it became an arm of the Ground Forces as it had been before, until 1980 (Benjamin Lambeth, *Russia's Air Power in Crisis* [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999], p141; Stephane Lefebvre, *The reform of the Russian Air Force* [Camberley: CSRC, July 2002], p9).

[62] Second Chechnya War, http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/war/chechnya2.htm.

[63] Pavel Baev, "Russia's Airpower in the Chechen War: Denial, Punishment and Defeat", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol 10, No 2, June (1997), pp1-18; Benjamin Lambeth, *Russia's Air Power in Crisis* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999); Dennis Marshall-Hasdell, *Russian Airpower in Chechnya* (Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, March 1996); Timothy Thomas, "Air Operations in Low Intensity Conflict: the Case of Chechnya", *Air Power Journal*, Winter (1997), pp51-59.

[64] "Nothing in this Protocol shall be invoked for the purpose of affecting the sovereignty of a State or the responsibility of the government, by all legitimate means, to maintain or re-establish law and order in the State or to defend the national unity and territorial integrity of the State", Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1996), p91.

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