

Organization of Urban Guerrillas

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how urban guerrillas armed with short- and medium-range weapons can be organized to function independently at the company level and to also work alongside regular forces with long-range and/or area denial weapons. The organizational chart of both the Chechen militias and regular forces during the First Chechen War is critiqued and a new organizational chart is proposed for the militias currently forming in the Ukraine. Comparison is made to Mongol organization.

Part 1: Chechen Organization

In the [Battle for Grozny](#), Lt. Col. Timothy Thomas records how the Chechen militias were organized: “Mobile squads of ten or twelve people operated relatively independently, each squad consisting of one grenade launcher, two snipers, and the rest with automatic weapons.”

Regular forces had eight-man squads of “two heavy machine gunners, two RPG gunners, one sniper and three riflemen. Three of these [three-squad] 25-man platoons (supported by an 82 mm mortar crew with two tubes) would conduct an ambush as a 75-man company.”

So we see that both the militia and the regular forces distributed all of their available weapons – except mortars – within a squad and then built platoons out of three identical squads and companies out of three identical platoons. Note that this organizational chart does not include forward observers for the mortars. The “aim that-a-way” technique of fire control was built in at the organizational level; even if a mortar gunner read his operator’s manual and obtained radios for forward observers, he would have had to hire militia. Because of the disaggregating effect of urban combat, mortars should be at the platoon level and with dedicated forward observer squads on motorcycles so they can get behind enemy who are behind buildings.

Clearly, 82 mm mortars, that operate best at 600+ yards, are hampered by this organizational chart. But medium-range weapons – heavy machine guns and snipers – that operate best at

200 to 600 yards, are also hampered. They are attached at the hip to short-range weapons – assault rifles and rocket propelled grenades – that operate best at 50 to 200 yards.

Today the Chechens are revered throughout Eastern Europe but – at the risk of seeming an iconoclast – I must point out that their organizational chart was a disaster. It conflates combined arms with versatility. Combined arms are the temporal maneuver of two weapon systems, like following up a sniper attack with close assault; or the spatial maneuver of two weapon systems, like simultaneously using a SCUD on enemy tanks where they congregate and infantry armed with RPGs where they disperse. Versatility is having disparate weapon systems in the same squad so the commander can pick one to use in a given situation, leaving the others idle; this is just wasteful and misses the whole point of presenting the enemy with a dilemma.

Frankly, poor organization alone is sufficient to explain the eventual Chechen defeat. They were using an organizational chart that seems to have been devised in prehistoric times when everybody fought with contact weapons, oblivious to the fact that we now have three distinct classes of infantry weapons: short-, medium- and long-range, as well as area denial weapons. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how urban guerrillas armed with short- and medium-range weapons can be organized to function independently at the company level and to also work alongside regular forces with long-range and/or area denial weapons.

Part 2: Organizational Chart

The most basic necessity of urban guerrillas is the ability to infiltrate and exfiltrate their area of operation. Since a four-door sedan can only carry four soldiers with weapons and gear, this has to be the squad size. (Laskar-e-Taiba deployed two-man teams in Mumbai, but they depended on taxis for transportation.) Crew-served weapons such as heavy machine guns and mortars that are semi-permanently mounted in the bed of a pickup truck have the same squad size because, with two soldiers up front and with the weapon lying flat in the bed with a soldier lying on either side of it and a tarpaulin over them, there is still only room for four.

Since heavy weapon squads have to conduct both offense and defense, regardless of what their primary weapon is, it makes sense to separate these functions. Thus, squads in cars and pickups consist of a two-man team to operate their primary weapon and a two-man security team to defend them. Half of the company is in such vehicles, the other half on motorcycles.

Motorcycle-mounted troops either carry a scoped rifle or have a squad automatic weapon (SAW) with the bipod replaced by a swivel attached to the bike's backrest. Neither can have security riding along and do not need it since they always flee enemy aggression. In

combination, they form a Hunter-Killer squad. Homogeneous scoped-rifle squads are used for reconnaissance or to act as forward observers for mortar gunners; homogeneous automatic weapon squads are used for combined arms maneuvers with RPG squads. The icon SR (Scoped Rifle), not DM (Designated Marksman), and the icon AW (Automatic Weapon, without “Squad”) contrast with the regular army, which always distribute these weapons within squads.

There are eight types of teams, which can be assembled into eight types of squads. Note that, while I use the word “man” throughout, any of these teams may include female fighters.

Two-Man Teams:

Icon	Name	Weapon	Vehicle
CD	Command	Pistols	Four-Door Sedan
AT	ATGW	Dragon, Milan or Kornet	Four-Door Sedan
GR	Grenadier	LAW or RPG-7	Four-Door Sedan
MG	Heavy Machine Gun	M2 or Kord	Compact Pickup
MT	Mortar	Light enough for a civilian pickup.	Compact Pickup
SC	Security	Assault Rifle; Open or Red-Dot Sights	Ride With Others
SR	Scoped Rifle	Accurate Rifle with Mil-Dot Scope	Two Motorcycles
AW	Automatic Weapon	M249 or FN Minimi	Two Motorcycles

Four-Man Squads:

Icon	Teams	Vehicle
CD/SC	Command Team with Security	Four-Door Sedan
AT/SC	ATGW Team with Security	Four-Door Sedan
GR/SC	Grenadier Team with Security	Four-Door Sedan
MG/SC	Heavy Machine Gun Team with Security	Compact Pickup
MT/SC	Mortar Team with Security	Compact Pickup
SR/AW	Scoped Rifle and Automatic Weapon Teams	Four Motorcycles
SR/SR	Two Scoped Rifle Teams	Four Motorcycles
AW/AW	Two Automatic Weapon Teams	Four Motorcycles

By “accurate rifle” I mean a deer rifle with a trigger job; recruits with motorcycles can follow an SR team for on-the-job training. Recruits with assault rifles can ride along with the GR/SC squad, provided the squad’s car is big enough. This organizational chart only works in societies where biker clubs and gun clubs are common; hopefully the Ukraine is such a country, as they have no time to teach basic skills. With the use of my [Sniper Flash Cards](#) and [Mil-Dot One-Step](#), people who are already accomplished at bullseye competition can be ready for combat in a day.

The Mongols had a base-10 system (arban, 10 men; jaghun, 100 men; minqan, 1000 men; tümen, 10,000 men), while I propose a base-4 system. A 64-man Infantry company consists of one each of the four platoons listed below. A company commander has normal, extraordinary and remote units all his own that can conduct combined arms maneuvers independent of his battalion. A 256-man battalion is four companies: Infantry, Armor, Artillery and Headquarters. Only one who just blunders about provoking ambush would want large heterogeneous squads.

Sixteen-Man Platoons:

Name	Icon	Squads	Primary Mission	Vehicles
Headquarters	HQ	CD/SC AT/SC GR/SC SR/SR	Command High Value Targets Security Reconnaissance	Four-Door Sedan Four-Door Sedan Four-Door Sedan Four Motorcycles
Close Combat	CC	GR/SC GR/SC AW/AW AW/AW	Assault Assault Suppression Suppression	Four-Door Sedan Four-Door Sedan Four Motorcycles Four Motorcycles
Stand Off	SO	MG/SC MT/SC MT/SC SR/SR	Attack APCs Indirect Fire Indirect Fire Forward Observers	Compact Pickup Compact Pickup Compact Pickup Four Motorcycles
Hunter-Killer	HK	SR/AW SR/AW SR/AW SR/AW	Hit and Run Hit and Run Hit and Run Hit and Run	Four Motorcycles Four Motorcycles Four Motorcycles Four Motorcycles

Part 3: Function of Platoons

The **Close Combat** platoon has three basic functions:

- 1) The AW/AW squads fire up to 200 rounds from each gun in short bursts from 100 to 200 yards away to pin the enemy down while the GR/SC squads maneuver around their flank to within 50 to 100 yards and fire their grenades. Then everybody withdraws.
- 2) The AW/AW squads fire short bursts from 100 to 200 yards away and then alternately withdraw and fire more short bursts up to a cumulative of 200 rounds from each gun in a feigned retreat to lead the enemy in pursuit to where the GR/SC squads can defile them from 50 to 100 yards away. Then everybody withdraws.

- 3) The AW/AW squads and the GR/SC squads lay in wait to ambush the enemy, as described in (1) and (2) below; then withdraw, or advance as described in (3) below.

The **Stand Off** platoon has four basic functions:

- 1) Pin down an enemy unit that cannot easily break out, provoking them to call for reinforcements that are then ambushed by the Close Combat platoon.
- 2) Hit an enemy unit that can break out and then withdraw in a feigned retreat past where the Close Combat platoon has set an ambush for them.
- 3) Leapfrog the Close Combat platoon to create a rolling barrage of steeply plunging fire.
- 4) In the event that the Close Combat platoon has gotten itself pinned down, distract the enemy with remote fire while the Close Combat platoon breaks out.

The **Hunter-Killer** platoon has four basic functions:

- 1) Roam around looking for dispersed enemy infantry; the SR team tags them and then the AW team performs a caracole from the other direction and sprays them. By caracole, I mean, drive on a street perpendicular to the one the enemy is on, wheel the motorcycle around and then walk it backwards until the rear wheel extends into the enemy street. Crouch behind the rear wheel and fire half a belt of ammunition at them. Then run.
- 2) The SR teams can ascend to the middle floors (the top is vulnerable) of a tall building to snipe and to act as forward observers while the AW teams guard their motorcycles. The enemy may be so focused on the Close Combat platoon, they do not notice the SR team. An unobtrusive killing area covered by a single SR team may account for most of the enemy KIA. Shoot-and-scoot is good but, if they do not know you are there, then stay.
- 3) While the Close Combat platoon is lying in wait for enemy reinforcements along the most likely approach to where the Stand Off platoon has pinned down some enemy, the Hunter-Killer platoon can set similar ambushes on one to four less-likely approaches. Without RPGs they cannot stop the vehicles, but can at least delay them and alert Headquarters that enemy reinforcements are approaching by an unexpected route.
- 4) When either of the other platoons has succeeded in disabling an enemy vehicle, the Hunter-Killer platoon can encircle the vehicle in order to set hasty ambushes.

Part 4: Company Strategy

This section will outline the strategic goals of the tactics discussed in the previous section.

- 1) **Harass.** The first function of the Hunter-Killer platoon is to “roam around looking for dispersed enemy infantry; the SR team tags them and then the AW team performs a caracole from the other direction and sprays them.”

The caracole only works if the SR team has already wounded a soldier and gotten everybody hiding behind cover looking in the other direction, trying to spot the sniper. Timing is crucial; otherwise they will notice you sticking your rear wheel around the corner. “When the strike of a hawk breaks the body of its prey, it is because of timing.” – Sun Tzu.

- 2) **Concentrate.** As the enemy begins to feel harassed, they will concentrate around their APCs. When it is difficult for APCs to maneuver for fear of driving over infantry, it is time for the Stand Off platoon to shell them and hit the APCs with heavy machine gun fire.

The enemy will either break out or they will not. If they break out, the Stand Off platoon retreats past where the Close Combat platoon has set an ambush for them. If not, then the enemy calls for reinforcements that are then ambushed. Either way, the Close Combat platoon defilades a main access road and gets someone coming or going. If it is difficult to get line of sight on the parked APCs and the access road curves, the MG/SC squad may accompany the Close Combat platoon to take the short leg and create an L-Ambush.

- 3) **Overrun.** If possible, assassinate the enemy commander with the ATGW. Then the Stand Off platoon shells the enemy while the AW/AW squads perform a caracole, filtering between the GR/SC squads on their withdrawal, who advance to within RPG range. The AW/AW squads circle around both flanks of the enemy, hitting them again with automatic weapons fire at the same time that the GR/SC squads fire their grenades. This maneuver, made famous by the Mongols – and by Daniel Morgan at Cowpens – is not easy. Practice!

The enemy will either advance or retreat. If they advance, the GR/SC squads attempt to hold their ground while the AW/AW squads continue around their flanks, hitting them with automatic weapons fire from behind. If they retreat, the Stand Off platoon and the GR/SC squads advance in turn, creating a rolling barrage of steeply plunging mortar fire. (The mortars must advance because lowering the tubes loses the ability to hit behind buildings.)

Part 5: Conclusion

The need for a rolling barrage, as described in the previous section, and the fact that mortar tubes bounce off hard surfaces, require that they be mounted in vehicles. The vertical walls of buildings require that forward observers be behind the enemy, which necessitates motorcycles. Vertical walls also require near vertical angles of elevation, which necessitates [spherical shells](#).

[Mortar doctrine](#) is the weak link when armies fight in cities. It assumes that distant targets can be struck by lowering the tubes and using elongated shells with high ballistic coefficients; in fact, this loses the ability to hit targets behind buildings with near-vertical plunging fire. The low ballistic coefficient of spherical shells – long disdained by mortar gunners trying to be howitzer gunners – is actually a good thing because it assures that the angle of descent is steeper than the angle of ascent. Also, their fascination with hitting distant targets led to a tacit assumption that the forward observers are between the gunner and the enemy. When the enemy advances in the well-known (in the East) hugging tactic, the loss of forward observers and the fact that elongated shells cannot be fired at near vertical angles silences the mortars.

A rolling barrage of mortar squads and RPG squads – commonly used in antiquity by the Mongols with trebuchets and archers – is unheard of in America because the mortars are far back at company headquarters with their tubes at 50° and their base plates hammered into the ground. The Americans do not even have a self-propelled mortar and the Russian Nona, with its rifled barrel, is clearly meant to be a sort of miniature Acacia. It was developed in the late 80's to engage retreating Afghans on the reverse slope of hills with gentle (compared to the vertical walls of buildings) slopes; America does this with drones. The Nona is not suited to the close ranges and vertical walls of urban combat, as Bashar al-Assad has learned to his chagrin.

At this time (Spring, 2014) both major powers' mortar doctrine is all about how to fight their last war (coincidentally, both in Afghanistan) and gives no thought to how they will fight their next war. No country has a mortar that meets the requirements of urban combat and, with the Red Army massing on the Ukraine's eastern border, there is no time for the Ukrainians to dawdle. But I already have an [Android application for mortar fire control](#) that assumes spherical shells and forward observers behind the enemy who do not know where the gunner is and thus cannot reveal this information if captured. All that is needed is large caliber spherical shells designed to be fired at low velocities with light enough recoil that the tubes can be mounted in civilian pickups. But, with the aid of 8" 3-D printers to make the shells and other mortar parts except the tube, this can be accomplished in no time. With diligence, the Ukrainians can surpass both major powers in the ability to wage war in cities and be ready to test their new weapon and doctrine when Kyiv comes under siege, probably later this year.