



After a decade of neglecting the subject of military operations in urban terrain (MOUT), the Soviets have recently begun to emphasize it again. The September 1982 issue of *Voyenny Vestnik* (a combined arms magazine serving officers at company, battalion, and regimental levels) was devoted to the subject. And it is clear from these articles and others that infantrymen in the United States Army also need to be aware of the MOUT tactics of the Soviet motorized rifle battalion.

Combat operations on urban terrain in the past have usually been characterized by limited advances, limited

visibility, and marked increases in logistical requirements. Since these characteristics are the antithesis of modern, fast-paced mobile warfare, most commanders would now prefer to avoid such combat and to bypass urban terrain whenever possible. If warfare should break out in western Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations, however, neither side will be able to avoid combat on urban terrain.

The terrain of western Europe is dominated by cities that have expanded since 1945 to connect with the suburbs of other cities, and these form significant

obstacles to the free movement of military forces. The Soviets' military doctrine stresses the achievement of a speedy victory in war—a doctrine they can adhere to only if they conduct and maintain a rapid, surprise thrust deep into their enemy's territory to neutralize his armies and paralyze his economy. Such an assault, of course, would be slowed considerably by towns and cities—particularly in cases where operational surprise had not been achieved and the enemy had had a chance to deploy his forces and to convert built-up areas into strongpoints.

It would be comforting for us to assume that any future land battle in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) would be fought on the rolling, fairly vacant, northern plains. Unfortunately, all of the logical invasion routes through the FRG pass through several major cities and population belts. Even the smaller towns and villages create terrain obstacles that frequently cannot be bypassed. Indeed, in the average U.S. brigade sector in Germany today there are approximately 25 villages, each with a population of 3,000 or less, and the average distance between these villages is only three and one-half kilometers. The road networks that connect these population centers would have to be used and it would be impossible to bypass many of them. Indeed, the Soviets may deliberately use "urban hugging tactics" to reduce their vulnerability to NATO nuclear strikes.

In short, it is clear that any future war in western Europe will not be conducted solely on rolling plains with 3,000-meter kill shots considered to be normal. And the Soviets realize this as well as we do. Even in 1971, Soviet General-Major Shovkolovich wrote that there were "one or two large cities for every 200-300 square kilometers," and that "in the course of an advance, forces will have to fight to seize a city every 40-60 kilometers." He also understood the importance of these cities to the economical and political life of the country and their consequent military importance in any future conflict.

The Soviets classify built-up areas in various ways—by shape, population, and perimeter. The relative importance of such areas is determined by their size, economic and political life, and location, and by the characteristics of their buildings. By Soviet definitions, a "large" city contains 100,000 or more inhabitants and has a perimeter of more than 25 kilometers; an "average" city has between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants with a perimeter of 12 to 25 kilometers; and a "small" city has fewer than 50,000 inhabitants and a perimeter of less than 15 kilometers. The Soviets further classify built-up areas by street patterns. (They classify actions against towns and villages as actions against strongpoints.)

The Soviets see nuclear weapons as being ideal for destroying built-up areas that can be bypassed and for destroying a town's economic potential. But they recognize, too, that the built-up area then becomes a massive obstacle to any future maneuvering they may need to do. Furthermore, economic, political, or tactical considerations may militate against the employment of nuclear weapons against built-up areas. Soviet com-

manders, therefore, may attempt to bypass, blockade, suppress or seize built-up areas.

A Soviet division that is advancing to contact or exploiting a breakthrough can be expected to deploy an advance security detachment of its advance guard. This detachment normally will consist of a motorized rifle battalion reinforced with an artillery battalion, a tank company, an engineer platoon, and an antiaircraft detachment. The advance security detachment normally will be employed 20 to 30 kilometers in front of its parent unit. If the enemy is retreating, the advance security detachment will try to advance on a route parallel to the retreat and attack the enemy to keep him from withdrawing into a built-up area. If the enemy is retreating in good order and is in sizable strength, the advance guard will try to overtake him and, instead of attacking, seize and occupy the undefended perimeter of an adjacent built-up area and prepare to defend it against the enemy's entry. In either instance, this tactic will allow the division to engage the enemy in open terrain. If the enemy is already in the built-up area, the Soviet division's advance security detachment can be given the mission of seizing all or part of that area.

Soviet tactics and U.S. tactics are similar for conducting operations in built-up areas in that both consider a hasty and a deliberate attack. Only the implementation of the two types of attack varies.

HASTY ATTACK

In trying to seize a built-up area, the Soviets prefer to attack from the march, or immediately after enveloping the built-up area. This kind of attack is a rapid movement designed to achieve tactical surprise and to seize an undefended or a lightly defended area. The attackers try to avoid costly house-to-house fighting and to seize critical areas and installations within the built-up area.

A motorized rifle battalion that is involved in an attack from the march may be from the advance security detachment, the advance guard, the first or second echelon, or even the reserve, but most probably, it will be from the advance security detachment battalion. Although this battalion will usually attack as part of its regiment, it may be given an independent mission.

The regimental reconnaissance BRDMs and motorcycle elements will approach the built-up area and try to draw fire to determine the strength and the positions of the enemy. If this fails, the reconnaissance elements will advance until they come under effective fire, and then they will try to determine where the enemy's flanks are. Artillery strikes will be used against discovered positions on the edge of the built-up area. The lead motorized rifle platoon of the advance party that usually precedes the battalion will assault any discovered defensive positions to gain more information and to serve as a point unit to attract the defender's attention and fire. (The advance party itself normally consists of a motorized rifle com-

pany, an attached artillery battery, a tank platoon, and antitank, engineer, and chemical detachments.)

The regimental commander will then decide whether to envelop the area or take it by a frontal and flanking attack. The attack will be launched as rapidly as possible to achieve tactical surprise. The urban area will be sealed off (by ground, airborne, or airmobile forces) to prevent the enemy's withdrawal or reinforcement.

The regimental commander will then direct his advance detachment to move rapidly into the city and to capture and hold the important objectives until the main forces arrive. Short artillery strikes of five to twenty minutes in duration may be delivered on discovered positions as the attacking tank-infantry team moves into position.

Following the seizure of strongpoints on the edge of the built-up area, Soviet infantry and tanks will attempt to advance rapidly along the streets to seize important objectives within the built-up area. Dismounted infantry will follow a tank platoon (or a self-propelled artillery platoon) wedge in which one tank (or howitzer) moves down the center of the street to provide mutual fire support. Normally a squad of infantry will follow each tank (or howitzer), hugging the sides of the buildings and delivering small arms fire on the windows of buildings on the opposite side of the street. BMPs or BTRs may follow this force to provide additional firepower.

In case of weak resistance, infantry mounted on either tanks, personnel carriers, or trucks will speed along the

streets, firing on the move, to reach and seize the important objectives. Once the important structures and thoroughfares have been seized, pockets of resistance can be pinned down and bypassed, to be eliminated by follow-up forces.

DELIBERATE ATTACK

If the attack from the march should fail, any areas already seized will be consolidated and preparations for a deliberate attack will begin.

The deliberate attack is characterized by detailed planning, thorough reconnaissance, isolation of the urban area, intensive artillery preparation, and the use of assault detachments (battalion strength) and assault groups (company strength).

The motorized rifle battalion is the basic unit for the urban battle. A battalion will normally attack along several parallel streets with a frontage of 400 to 600 meters (the width of two or three city blocks) and will normally have an initial objective of one or two blocks in depth. Ordinarily, the battalion will be assigned a direction of advance instead of subsequent objectives, and will normally attack in a single echelon; a second battalion may be in a second echelon to exploit any successful breaching operations. A company will normally attack in two echelons.

The battalion commander will control his attack in several ways: He will use detailed planning; identifiable, timed phase lines; and (because of the decreased reliability of radios in urban terrain) messengers and wire communications. In addition, he will position his command post well forward (normally within 200 meters of his forward positions).

The assault units usually will be organized into assault groups (each of which is capable of independent action). These assault groups will consist of one or more attacking elements (a motorized rifle platoon reinforced with a tank platoon, for example); a covering and consolidation element (a motorized rifle squad or platoon with antitank guns, grenade launchers, and medium mortars); a fire support element (artillery and heavy mortars); and an obstacle-clearing party (combat engineers and mine-sweeping tanks). A small reserve of one or two motorized rifle squads may be withheld to influence the action during the course of the attack. Chemical warfare and flamethrower personnel will be attached as needed.

Artillery preparation is vital to the success of a deliberate attack on urban terrain. Contrary to U.S. doctrine, up to 40 percent of Soviet artillery may be employed in direct fire roles; self-propelled artillery may even lead the assaults by serving as armor. Artillery will

be attached down to motorized rifle platoon level. Short, heavy preparatory fires (five to twenty minutes in duration) will be delivered to disrupt the enemy defenses, but care will be taken to avoid creating excessive rubble on the major thoroughfares. Under the cover of artillery and tank fire, the combat engineers will clear passages in the enemy's obstacles with mine-clearing tanks, explosives, bulldozers, grapples and winching gear, direct fire (including BM-21 multiple rocket launchers), breaching teams, and vehicular ramming.

Attacking troops will assault under the cover of artillery and smoke. When the assault group is within 150 meters of its objective, direct and indirect supporting fires will be shifted to the rear and the flanks of the buildings under attack. The riflemen will assault using automatic fire and hand grenades. The accompanying engineers will use explosives to clear positions.

Once the objective has been seized, it will immediately be prepared for defense against counterattack and used to support actions against neighboring buildings. Engineers will clear mines and booby traps from buildings and bring up defensive materials. Buildings on street corners or those that command large, open areas will be turned into strongpoints.

Finally, it should be noted that, when possible, the battalion will push its attack along streets to seize objectives and bypass pockets of resistance. These pockets of resistance will be dealt with by follow-up forces.

The Soviets in World War II suffered extremely heavy losses in their infantry and armor forces during their fighting in built-up areas, and they expect to take such losses in future urban engagements as well. They expect a battalion, for example, to suffer 70 percent losses before being relieved.

Our own Field Manual 90-10, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT), provides excellent guidance for meeting and defeating Warsaw Pact forces in urban combat. We infantrymen would do well to study that manual and to become as proficient in this type of warfare as we are in high-speed mechanized warfare. If we can't avoid combat in cities, and we probably can't, then we'd better be ready for the battles that we may have to fight there.



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