



Tracking Down Jihadists in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: While defending against attacking brigades of jihadists invading from Norway and Finland is clearly way out there, during the Cold War, US troops stationed in Europe also trained to fight against Viet Cong guerrillas and North Vietnamese regulars. Recently in Russia's Arctic region, "terrorists" and "jihadists" have been featured in training scenarios. Clearly the terrain and weather were not a match in these scenarios, but training needs to take place and a notional, if far-fetched, enemy is needed. It may also be politically more astute than openly training against your neighbor, especially since the Pechenga training area is adjacent to Norway. Either the 200th Separate Motorized Coastal Rifle Brigade or the 80th Separate Motorized Arctic Rifle Brigade had some good combined arms training and employed at least one battalion tactical group in the exercise. These Arctic brigades deploy regularly in support of Arctic riverine landings, amphibious landings and joint and combined arms exercises. The battalion tactical group concept fits well with the maritime transport provided by the Northern Fleet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The BTG-1 commander has two tours of duty to Syria under his belt. He saw from personal experience that in tactical training sessions it is necessary to teach every serviceman techniques of performing additional reconnaissance regardless of the amount of information received from the reconnaissance subunit.”

Source: Marina Shcherbakova: “В Заполярье обезвредили «террористов» на «джихад-мобилях» (‘Terrorists’ in ‘Jihad Mobiles’ Were Neutralized in the Zapolyarye),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 May 2018. redstar.ru/v-zapolyare-obezvredili-terroristov-na-dzihad-mobilyah/

Everything began early in the morning with an alert and short forced march to the area where, according to the exercise scenario, groups of “terrorists” had been detected. They were located along the Russian State Border...The notional enemy had dispersed on the terrain, taking shelter in low-lying areas and on the tops of round top mountains. Taking this into consideration, the motorized rifle subunits took up a defense of a considerable area.

Before the beginning of the active phase of the exercise, the headquarters platoon of the 1st Self-Propelled Howitzer Artillery Battalion posted range guards throughout the territory where combat training activities were conducted and set up communications...

Then the placid stillness was disrupted by the piercing sound of a bugle. Sergeant Vladimir Belousov raised a red flag and a ‘genuine’ battle began on the practice range. Deafening salvos of tank guns and artillery pieces sounded. They thundered unceasingly, and when rare minutes of relative calm appeared, the rattle of machineguns and assault rifles carries from afar...

The “enemy” crossed a water obstacle and began an attack in brigade columns and then in battalion columns. Then the conditional terrorists deployed laterally and launched an attack, but their attempt to take our forward edge of defense brought no success. Our troops successfully inflicted defeat with the weapons of artillery, motorized rifle, and tank subunits...

After some time a new group of “terrorists” had been detected moving in “jihad mobiles” in the direction of the military post of Verkhneye Luostari. Then the fire of artillery pieces destroyed the “enemy” forces. The battle was waged in various phases of the exercise by 10 tanks, 24 artillery pieces, and 15 air defense weapons. This combat training operation was conducted successfully by the 1st Battalion Tactical Group (BTG-1), formed on the basis of the 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion commanded by Major Sergey Boyko.

...A total of 240 pieces of military and special equipment and around 1,200 servicemen were in action in the exercise. All participants of the “battle” were contract servicemen. Many had taken part in the special operation in Syria and made their substantial contribution to the fight against the IGIL [Islamic State]...The BTG-1 commander has two tours of duty to Syria under his belt. He saw from personal experience that in tactical training sessions it is necessary to teach every serviceman techniques of performing additional reconnaissance regardless of the amount of information received from the reconnaissance subunit. This is because in Syria the terrorists often use homemade unmanned aerial vehicles that “IGIL craftsmen” stuff with mines and grenades. That is why drills to detect and destroy them are held regularly in the Zapolyar’ye throughout the year...

After the exercise concluded, Colonel Pelipai, commander of the Northern Fleet separate motorized rifle brigade, remarked that all the personnel’s actions in firing organic weapons were done correctly. The inspection of the level of coordination of the main subunits and attached weapons of the senior commander also provided a positive result...This exercise was one phase of the motorized rifle brigade’s preparation for command and staff exercise Manevr [Maneuver]-2018, planned for September.