

# Threat Tactics Report *Compendium*

ISIL, North Korea, Russia, and China



TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration  
Fort Leavenworth, KS

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## Introduction

TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration (ACE-TI) is the source of the Threat Tactics Report (TTR) series of products. TTRs serve to explain to the Army training community how an actor fights. Elements that contribute to this understanding may include an actor's doctrine, force structure, weapons and equipment, education, and warfighting functions. An explanation of an actor's tactics and techniques is provided in detail along with recent examples of tactical actions if they exist. An actor may be regular or irregular, and a TTR will have a discussion of what a particular actor's capabilities mean to the US and its allies.

An important element of any TTR is the comparison of the real-world tactics to threat doctrinal concepts and terminology. A TTR will also identify where the conditions specific to the actor are present in [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\)](#) and other training materials so that these conditions can easily be implemented across all training venues.

## Volume 1: ISIL, North Korea, Russia, and China

This compendium of Threat Tactics Reports, Volume 1, features the most current versions of four TTRs: ISIL (Version 1.4, published February 2015), North Korea (Version 1.0, published July 2015), Russia (Version 1.0, published July 2015), and China (Version 1.0, published September 2015). ACE-TI plans to publish four more TTRs later this year: Boko Haram, Iran, Syria, and Pakistan. Each of these, once published, is eligible for update as appropriate so the product stays relevant.

*Cover photos (clockwise): [Soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Amphibious Mechanized Infantry Division](#), 12 July 2011; Photo of a missile by [Stefan Krasowski](#) at a Victory Day parade in Pyongyang on 26 July 2013; [ISIS Flag](#), August 2014; [Russian Airborne Troops](#), 5 April 2015.*



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# THREAT TACTICS REPORT: ISIL

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TRADOC G-2 ACE THREATS INTEGRATION

VERSION 1.4  
FEBRUARY 2015





## Executive Summary

- ISIL is an evolution of an insurgent group that has changed its name to reflect an increasing geographic vision.
- ISIL's advantage to date has been an increasingly large number of fighters and deep cash reserves to fund its operations. This provides greater capacity to organize, train, and equip like a military organization.
- ISIL executes military tactics to the best of its capability. This is a greater capability than that shown by previous insurgencies in the area, but still not best practice in a number of warfighting functions and key tasks.
- High value targets for ISIL have included such infrastructure as dams and oil refineries, which also contribute to its cash flow.
- Social media use has reached a new level of refinement.
- ISIL's rapid mobility, due to control of key lines of communication (LOCs) in Eastern Syria, is a key strength of the group.<sup>1</sup>
- ISIL's command and control is superior to most other insurgent groups in Iraq and Syria.<sup>2</sup>
- ISIL's command and control is being negatively impacted by coalition airstrikes.
- Fluctuations and reductions in revenue sources, such as oil, have been disruptive.
- ISIL is escalating to higher levels the violent images it distributes via social media.

This (U) **Threat Tactics Report (TTR)** was produced in accordance with (U) **Intelligence Community Directive Number 203: Analytical Standards** (Effective: January 2015). This TTR was coordinated with:

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon S. Cleaves'.

Jon S. Cleaves  
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## Introduction

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has risen to prominence as a danger to peace and a regional threat with global impact. This perception comes, in large measure, because of its successes in Syria and then a rapid takeover of northern Iraq. Its military victories are largely due to successful recruiting, intra-insurgent conflict, large cash reserves, an advanced information warfare (INFOWAR) campaign to win the local populace's support, and ineffective opponents. There is much to learn from how ISIL is fighting. The ready availability of recruits, many of whom are foreigners attracted to ISIL successes, and large amounts of money for payroll and purchasing war materiel are critical considerations, but it is also important to consider how ISIL is fighting on the ground.

This report is intended to identify key aspects of tactics and techniques used in ISIL's actions in Iraq and Syria. ISIL, unlike its predecessors and competitors, is a paramilitary insurgency. While the baseline techniques being used by ISIL do not differ significantly from those it has employed since its early days as an al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq, its capabilities have increased in scope and complexity. Techniques making use of suicide vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIED) and vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIED) have become more sophisticated. ISIL's use of INFOWAR has become more refined and pervasive with the adaptation of social media technology and increased technical competency among recruits. ISIL has targeted infrastructure such as dams, oil refineries, and power plants for use in population control and financing. ISIL has also demonstrated the ability to execute military tactics that require a level of competence and control uncommon in recent experience.

Two major shifts in the ISIL operational environment resulted from Operation Inherent Resolve airstrikes against key ISIL targets and a significant drop in revenue, due in part to decreased oil prices. These two variables have caused serious disruptions in the freedom of movement enjoyed by ISIL for most of 2014 and limited its capacity to service areas under its control. Between 8 August 2014 and 7 January 2015, US and allied coalition forces conducted a total of 1,676 air strikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria in an ongoing campaign to destroy the organization. Air strikes damaged or destroyed 3,222 targets between August and January, to include 58 tanks, 184 HMMWVs, 673 fighting positions, and 980 buildings or barracks.<sup>3</sup>

ISIL's success has been due, in part, to extensive revenues from robbery and extortion, oil sales, ransom payments, stolen assets from banks in occupied areas, and, to a lesser extent, donations from abroad. While revenues from robbery, extortion, and ransoms may remain unchanged, other revenue sources will likely remain volatile and decrease over time. Money from banks can only be replenished by expanding its boundaries where new banks can be plundered. Volatility in the oil market, particularly the recent significant drop in the world-wide price of oil, has cut into a lucrative ISIL revenue source.<sup>4</sup> Coalition air strikes have targeted infrastructure such as refineries and hydroelectric plants, further hampering delivery of basic public services.<sup>5</sup>

While still controlling significant land, the changing operational environment it finds itself in will cause ISIL to look less like a state and more like a traditional insurgency. The Iraqi military, with air support and

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training from US and coalition forces and further involvement by Shia militia groups, has at least stalled ISIL's further progress toward Baghdad. Plans are developing to take back key areas currently occupied by ISIL, such as Mosul. Air strikes have limited ISIL's freedom of movement and forced it to move more cautiously and slowly. Communication between key leaders and fighters will be slow and less effective as leaders are forced into hiding to avoid being captured or killed.<sup>6</sup> Dissatisfaction among people in the occupied areas will drive the ISIL occupiers to become more brutal in their enforcement of rules and regulations, causing even more dissatisfaction and passive and active resistance.

## Section 1: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

The Islamic State (IS) began as a Jordanian-led extremist organization formed in 1999. It moved to Iraq in 2004 under the leadership of Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Zarqawi named the organization Jamaat al Tawhid wal Jihad or the "Group of One God and the Holy War." After pledging loyalty to al-Qaeda, Zarqawi initially renamed the organization Tanzim Qaedat al Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn or "al-Qaeda in Iraq." The Zarqawi-led organization created front groups, the longest surviving of which was the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) under the leadership of Hamid Dawud Muhammad Khalil al-Zawi, more commonly known as Abu Omar al Baghdadi. In 2013 under al Baghdadi's leadership, AQI became the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL briefly allied itself with al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate al Nusra, but disagreements led to a split between the two groups.<sup>7</sup> In early 2014, the al-Qaeda central leadership rejected ISIL at which time it became an entity unto itself. After significant success in both Syria and Iraq, ISIL changed its name to the Islamic State, underscoring its determination to not be limited by geographic borders in restoring its vision of the caliphate.<sup>8</sup> Al Baghdadi then changed his name to Caliph Ibrahim and demanded the Muslim world recognize him as the leader of the world-wide Islamic caliphate.<sup>9</sup>

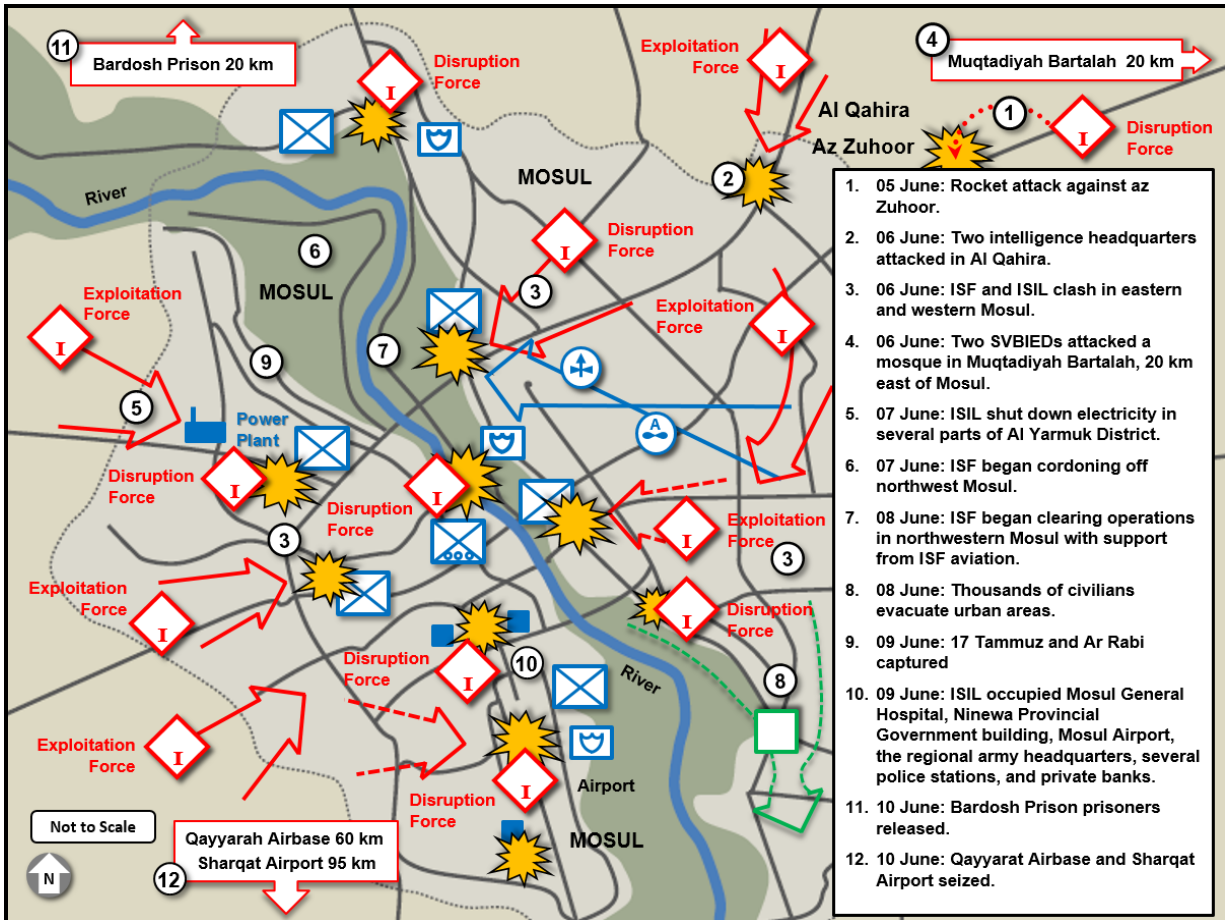
It is worth clarifying at this point some confusion evident in the media and other places over the naming designation of ISIL. The name ISIS is commonly interpreted as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. This is incorrect as ISIS should be interpreted as the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham or, if fully translated, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. ISIL is more appropriate as it does not mix two languages in the acronym. ISIL is the acronym used by both the president of the United States and the US State Department. Its self-proclaimed latest name, the Islamic State, is not currently used in US government communications, therefore, this report follows that pattern by using ISIL. Understanding this larger vision of a caliphate beyond just Iraq and Syria is important in understanding ISIL.<sup>10</sup>

## Section 2: ISIL Tactics

### Dispersed Attack

The following graphic illustrates some of the actions over several days that resulted in the capture of the city of Mosul by ISIL forces.

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**Figure 1. Dispersed attack on the City of Mosul**

ISIL placed enabling forces in key areas of the city in the form of disruption forces. These forces facilitated the attack by providing reconnaissance information and intimidation of security forces and the civilian population. Support forces used by ISIL included mortar and rocket units that conducted attacks on command and control (C2) headquarters and cells that manipulated electricity output. Outside the limits of Mosul, ISIL assault forces seized the Qayyarah Airbase and the Sharqat Airport, limiting air support against the attack. North of Mosul, prisoners in the Bardosh Prison were released, providing recruits to join the fight and creating further confusion and diverting attention and resources away from the main action. Assault forces entered the city of Mosul and occupied key areas of the city—specifically the Mosul General Hospital, Ninewa Provincial Government building, Mosul Airport, Regional Army Headquarters, police stations, and private banks. Exploitation forces then entered the city and defeated remaining isolated enemy units.

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Iraqi forces did not immediately capitulate, initially conducting clearing operations supported by air assets. ISIL exploitation forces contended with these until capture or retreat of the Iraqi security forces. Within a matter of a few days, ISIL forces were able to take complete control of Mosul.<sup>11</sup> Iraqi forces were completely defeated by the dispersed attack tactical offensive action, which is characterized by—

- Isolation of enemy combat units
- Disruption of effective C2 and sustainment
- Simultaneous attack by multiple action forces

## Area Defense



Figure 2. Area defense of the Mosul Dam

ISIL established an area defense of the Mosul Dam in August 2014. ISIL defenses integrated urban areas, their remaining civilian population, and manmade structures into complex battle positions. ISIL disruption forces ranged from small tactical cells to larger groups of insurgents appearing as paramilitary units with weapon systems captured from occupied military facilities. Armored vehicles and heavy weapons were integrated into the area defenses in simple and complex battle positions. ISIL INFOWAR focused on the message that enemy forces would be destroyed if they entered the conflict, and threatened an expansion of the conflict into their respective homelands.



Emplacement of obstacles and numerous improvised explosive devices (IEDs) reinforced disruption operations intended to slow and stop state and coalition forces in kill zones. ISIL maintained a degree of mobile reaction in its ambushes, and small-scale counterattacks by transporting insurgents with small arms and rocket propelled grenades in commercial vehicles, using “technicals” mounting heavy-caliber weapons, and occasionally employing military armored vehicles and heavy-caliber weapons. The disruption forces and main defense forces utilized camouflage, cover, and concealment, and deception (C3D) to improve survivability. Battle positions were coordinated among positions to provide overlapping and concentrated fires into a kill zone or kill zones. Reserves were concealed or camouflaged in complex battle positions or individual hide positions, but readily available to senior ISIL leaders in order to reinforce battle positions, respond to state or coalition attacks, and/or react to other offensive actions.

## Section 3: ISIL Techniques

### Command and Control

Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the ISIL-appointed caliph, governs through a bureaucratic organization that includes close advisors and specialty, regional, and local councils.<sup>12</sup> Al Baghdadi requires a theologically-based pledge of loyalty and fealty.<sup>13</sup> Until recent US airstrikes, ISIL had relatively unfettered movement capabilities along a corridor spanning northern Syria and Iraq. Command and control under these circumstances did not require the kinds of considerations now necessary with the US airstrikes targeting ISIL communication nodes. The use of couriers is likely to become an important part of communicating to ISIL’s network of fighters.

ISIL’s growth has come from its ability to coopt, dominate, or absorb competitor organizations. Some of these organizations may only be fair-weather friends and leave the coalition when the time is deemed right. There is a very real chance that ISIL leadership will lose control through splintering and infighting. With a varied and diverse demographic of foreign fighters, Sunni tribes, former Baathist leaders, etc., the challenge for ISIL will be controlling both the message and the fight.<sup>14</sup>

An element of ISIL’s command and control infrastructure is social media. During the attack on Mosul, for example, ISIL sent tens of thousands of tweets in a way that avoided the Twitter spam trigger.<sup>15</sup> While social media companies are constantly identifying and deleting questionable accounts, it is easy to simply open a new account. A new, tech-savvy generation of jihadists opens up new means of communicating to vast audiences for recruiting, propaganda, and bureaucratic control.

Months of airstrikes against key command and control sites and leaders has created challenges for ISIL.<sup>16</sup> Many of those on al Baghdadi’s council of trusted leaders were killed in 2014. ISIL’s self-proclaimed caliph, al Baghdadi, is faced with a smaller number of trusted confidantes at the same time he is the single most targeted person by coalition forces. Reclusive and secretive by nature, his inability to move





about freely further isolates him and forces an even more decentralized leadership, leaving many decisions to local leaders. With such a vast number of personalities and demographics within its organization, ISIL will face greater vulnerability and risk the more decentralized it becomes. ISIL, in contrast to al-Qaeda, has the added challenge of governing a vast contiguous area with varying degrees of support and compliance.<sup>17</sup>

ISIL is forced to use relatively primitive means to communicate. Using technology that can be monitored such as satellite and cell phones, emails, etc. creates a vulnerability ISIL cannot afford. Use of landline phones for internal communication and encoded electronic messages, couriers, and personal meetings, creates inefficiencies and slows the speed at which decisions can be made.<sup>18</sup>

## Air Defense

As a result of ISIL's successful campaigns to overrun Syrian and Iraqi military installations and arms depots and its support from other international actors, it has a tactical air defense capability. Through the combination of systems procured from various Syrian and Iraqi military installations and through its international partners, it is assessed that ISIL has access to air defense systems such as ZU-23s, FN-6, SA-7s, and SA-16s.<sup>19</sup> These systems are considered very short-range with a maximum effective range of 6km and a maximum effective altitude of 4.5km.

ISIL will use these weapon systems in an effort to minimize opposition force air advantage. They will do so by employing the systems to target both air systems and ground systems. Also, because these systems are in limited supply and require trained personnel to operate, it is likely that they will be used to defend key urban areas and safe havens for ISIL forces.<sup>20</sup> To defend these areas, ISIL will likely use multiple systems and high volumes of fire.



Figure 3. [Iraqi Defense Ministry has confirmed ISIL has MANPADs](#)



Figure 4: [Truck-mounted ZU-23](#)



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Much like a regular force entity, ISIL is actively training its recruits on the operation of air defense systems. As of October 2014, ISIL has published an online guide describing the best techniques and procedures to use to down Apache attack helicopters. The guidance provided in the document calls on operators to seek high terrain and solid surfaces to fire the systems.<sup>21</sup> The high terrain is intended to

provide better visibility and line of site of the target, while the solid surface is intended to reduce the appearance of dust following a launch.



Figure 5. [Images released by ISIL of an attack on an Iraqi helicopter](#)

While ISIL's current air defense arsenal gives them a robust capability to destroy low-flying systems such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and helicopters, it does not provide them

any capability for targeting systems that fly at higher altitudes. This means that ISIL lacks the capability to destroy US aircraft currently conducting bombing campaigns in Iraq. For this reason, the Pentagon has released statements that say ISIL lacks an anti-aircraft capability.<sup>22</sup>

ISIL has claimed that it has successfully destroyed a number of helicopter systems throughout Iraq this year. For one incident in particular, ISIL released video proof of its capability. This incident occurred on 3 October 2014 near Baiji Iraq. In the first documented use of an FN-6 by ISIL, one of ISIL's fighters targeted an Iraqi Army Mi-35M helicopter and successfully destroyed the helicopter, killing all the crew members. The helicopter was reportedly in the area conducting bombing missions on behalf of the Iraqi government.<sup>23</sup> Days after this successful attack, ISIL, again using a man portable air defense system (MANPADS), shot down a second helicopter, a Bell 407, that was conducting a surveillance mission northeast of Baiji. This attack also resulted in the deaths of both crew members.

While the incidents discussed here provide evidence of ISIL's capability to destroy Iraqi helicopter systems, it is important to highlight that ISIL is actively training and procuring systems with the intent to counter US forces' operations in the region. Situation reports on ISIL's training and procurement efforts demonstrate this.

## Anti-Armor

ISIL's anti-armor arsenal now contains a number of highly effective weapons that can be used against Iraqi and Syrian security forces. Anti-armor weapons with shape charges increase the likelihood of targeted armor vehicle crew casualties, but may not completely destroy the targeted vehicle during the engagement.<sup>24</sup> However, due to Iraqi Security Forces' (ISF) challenges in maintaining larger armored

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vehicles like the M1, it is possible this platform has been denied future use.<sup>25</sup> The most common systems in use right now are the Kornet, the M79 Osa Rocket Launcher, and the ubiquitous rocket-propelled grenade launcher the RPG-7. In addition, ISIL has also captured a number of Russian and US tanks which, while more difficult to maintain and larger targets, can be used to attack enemy convoys.<sup>26</sup>

Not surprisingly, these weapons are of choice use for the prosecution of offensive actions like assaults and ambushes. In July 2013, ISIL fighters ambushed an ISF convoy in the Khalidiyah area in Anbar Province. The convoy consisted of at least three M1A1 Abrams tanks and nine M113 armored personnel carriers. The attack occurred on a rural dirt road, initiated with IEDs and followed with anti-tank fire.<sup>27</sup> The graphic below shows the missile hitting the tank. Even more recently, on 20 April 2014, ISF lost a formation with mixed armored vehicles including T-62 tanks.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 6. [ISIL anti-tank missile fired at an M1 Abrams tank near Ramadi](#)

ISIL also carefully considers the use of these weapon systems in the prosecution of the defensive actions, such as simple and complex battle positions, emplaced to protect personnel or equipment, restrict enemy freedom of movement, control terrain, or gain time. Surely this becomes even more



complex when those positions are overlaid against complex terrain like urban centers. For instance, after taking Jalula on 11 August 2014, ISIL established well-armed battle positions to defend routes through canalized and obstacle-riddled terrain that included “T-55 or T-62 tanks, recoilless rifles, [and] shoulder-fired anti-tank weapons.”<sup>29</sup> The combination of these systems, and considering their anti-armor weapon portability and multi-use character, presents numerous challenges while also demonstrating ISIL’s tactical savvy.

## Improvised Explosive Devices (IED)

### Tunnel IEDs

ISIL primarily uses tunnel networks for communication and safe passage, particularly in Raqqa province where the Syrian Air Force uses its air superiority to conduct airstrikes. Tunnel IEDs are being widely used by members of the Islamic Front in the Aleppo area of Syria where it is attempting to compete with the Syrian military’s superior capabilities.<sup>30</sup> Aleppo, with urban infrastructure and embedded government security forces, lends itself to tunnel IED attacks. Given the right conditions, ISIL, already skilled in constructing tunnels for safety and communication, can execute tunnel IED attacks.

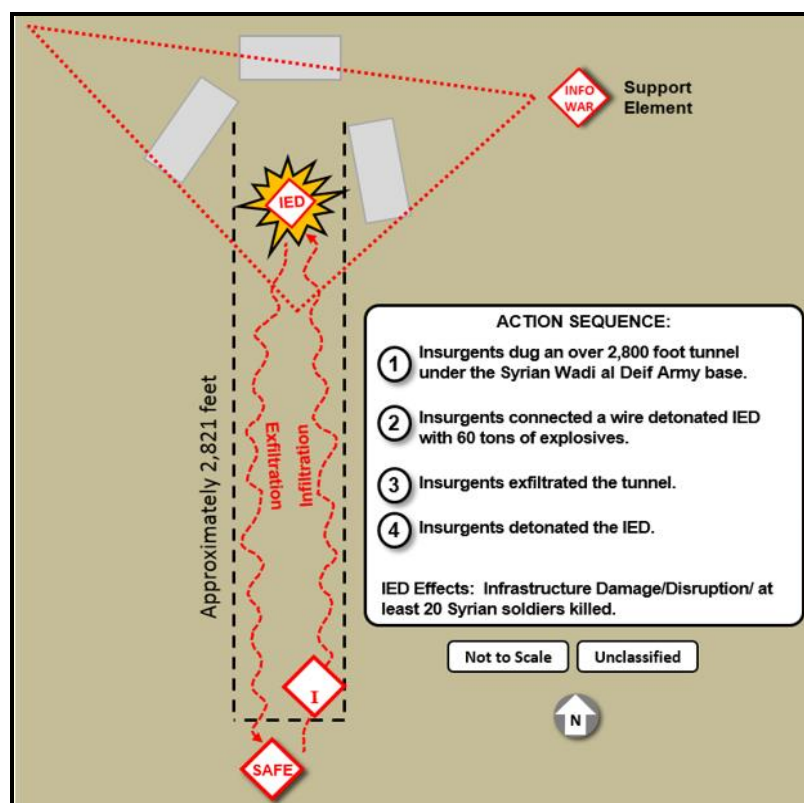


Figure 7. Wadi Deif attack

Subterranean tunnels of any distance are both time- and labor-intensive. For this reason, their use, while not widespread, is significant. Insurgents in Syria, though no match for the regime’s superior military strength in head-to-head engagements, are finding safety and success in destroying infrastructure and killing enemy personnel through the use of tunnels. Recent targets for insurgent

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attacks have been the Court of Justice, the Hanono army base, the Carlton Hotel, and the Chamber of Industry; each of these housed Syrian security forces command headquarters. Tunnel construction requires only limited understanding of engineering concepts and utilizes readily-available tools such as a compass, a tool for measuring distance, a spade, a pick axe, and a cart to move dirt.

The attack depicted above was executed on 14 May 2014 by Suqur al-Sham in coordination with the Islamic Front. Insurgent forces in Syria had been trying to capture the Wadi Deif military base for at least a year. The base is a major launching point for Syrian army artillery attacks on the insurgents and protects the Syrian regime's supply route from Damascus to Aleppo. Insurgents used 60 metric tons of explosives and a hand-dug tunnel length of over 2,000 feet. In addition, the insurgents included an INFOWAR element to record the explosion.

## Suicide Water-Borne IEDs

Iraq's rivers with multiple bends are potential avenues of approach for attacking bridges. Pontoon bridges, in particular, are easy targets, impacting lines of communication and movement, particularly in rural areas. This technique has been used in the Dhuluiya area north of Baghdad. On 6 September 2014, ISF successfully fired on and detonated an explosive-laden boat with a suicide bomber onboard before it reached its target. The boat was targeting a pontoon bridge south of the volatile city of Dhuluiya.<sup>31</sup>

## Armored IEDs

For a year beginning in August 2012, insurgents fighting the Syrian government conducted a siege and executed multiple attacks on the Menagh Airbase. On 5 August 2013, insurgents finally captured it. After a three-day long barrage of artillery, mortars, and machinegun fire, a Saudi suicide bomber drove a specially-outfitted BMP loaded with explosives and detonated it close to where the last remnants of the



Figure 8. [Armored IED](#)

government troops were concentrated. ISIL claimed it had taken the lead in attacking the airfield, supported by other units from Syrian insurgent forces. The airbase was little more than an outpost with only about 75-100 defenders still remaining when it finally surrendered to the insurgent forces.

As part of the attack, the insurgents reinforced a BMP and equipped it as a VBIED. Workers welded metal piping to the sides of the BMP to both provide protection against RPGs and other weapons to

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ensure the BMP could reach its target and as a wall to ensure the containers holding the explosives stayed in place as the BMP moved.

The following description corresponds to the figure below.

1. The invasion began with enabling elements disrupting the Syrian security forces with a three-day barrage by artillery, mortar, and heavy machinegun teams.
2. A Saudi suicide bomber drove the specially-prepared BMP VBIED close to the buildings where the government troops resided and detonated it as the initial assault element.
3. Other assault elements attacked along three axes towards the center and prevailed after a day of heavy fighting.<sup>32</sup>

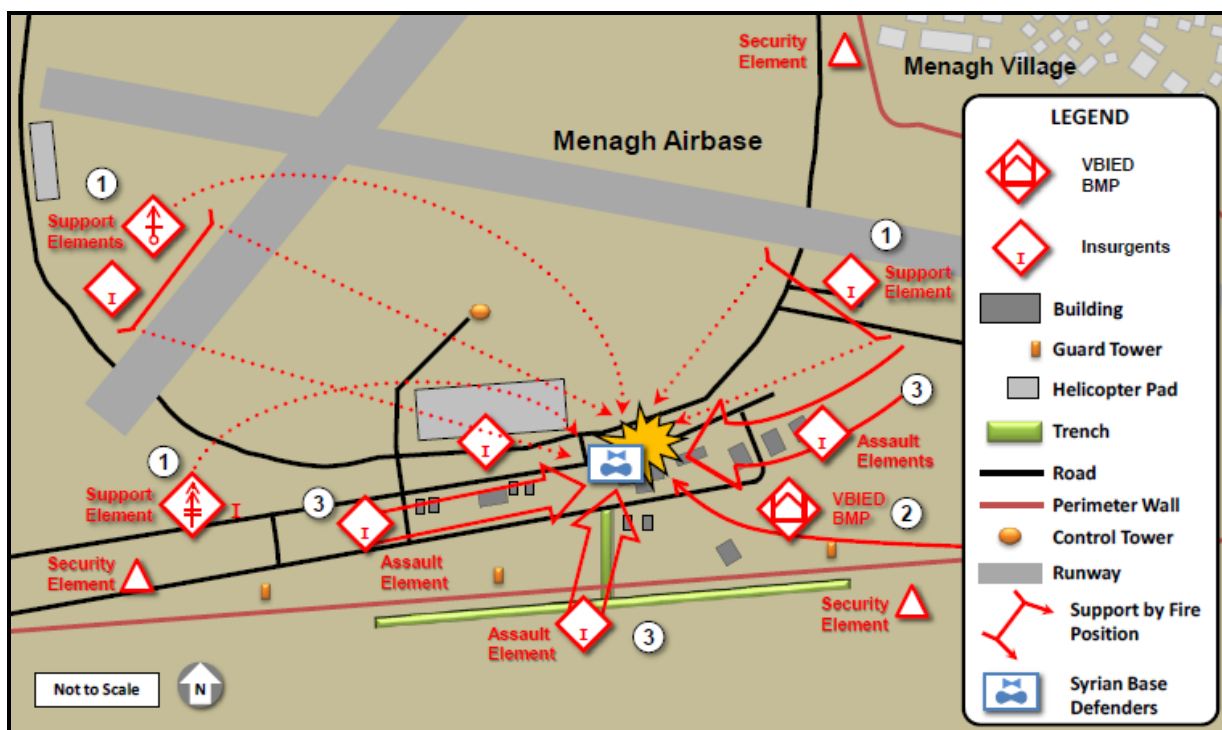


Figure 9. Menagh Airbase

## Suicide Vehicle-Borne IEDs (SVBIEDs)

An integral part of the ISIL battle plan often includes utilization of SVBIEDs. These kinds of attacks, while not always definitive, when well-positioned can cause serious damage to and weaken fortified positions.



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The additional psychological effect can be equally damaging. As part of an initial assault, it can weaken entry gates and open the way for other assaulting units to enter fortified positions.

This was true of an attack on the Tabqa airbase, the last fortified position in the ISIL stronghold of Raqqah Province, Syria. The Tabqa base is key terrain for both ISIL and the Syrian regime. Both sides fought tenaciously with Syrian forces using air assets and ISIL using its suicide bombers and exploitation element to attempt breaches at the main gate. Around 10 August 2014, ISIL began attacking the base. On 17 August, the Syrian Air Force (SAF) conducted over 20 air strikes in and around Tabqa and the city of Raqqah. On 18 August, SAF continued air strikes in Raqqah City, damaging the Raqqah city water plant. Anticipating sustained ISIL attacks, the Syrian regime sent reinforcements and large quantities of ammunition and food to the Tabqa airbase. In the preceding days, ISIL captured nearby villages from which to launch attacks.

The first main assault began on the night of 20 August. ISIL used rockets and mortars as a disrupting element. A breaching composed of two SVBIEDs attacked the main gate and were followed by an exploitation element of up to 200 fighters. This assault was stopped at the gate by Syrian defenders. The first SVBIED was detonated at a distance from the gate by either the Syrian guards or was caused by a premature detonation. The second SVBIED detonated close to the gate, but produced little damage. The exploitation element met with sufficient resistance from airbase defenders, and withdrew from the immediate area.

Fighting subsided during the morning of 21 August 2014 after which a second assault was launched. This second assault included a disrupting element of rockets and mortars and an action element with the

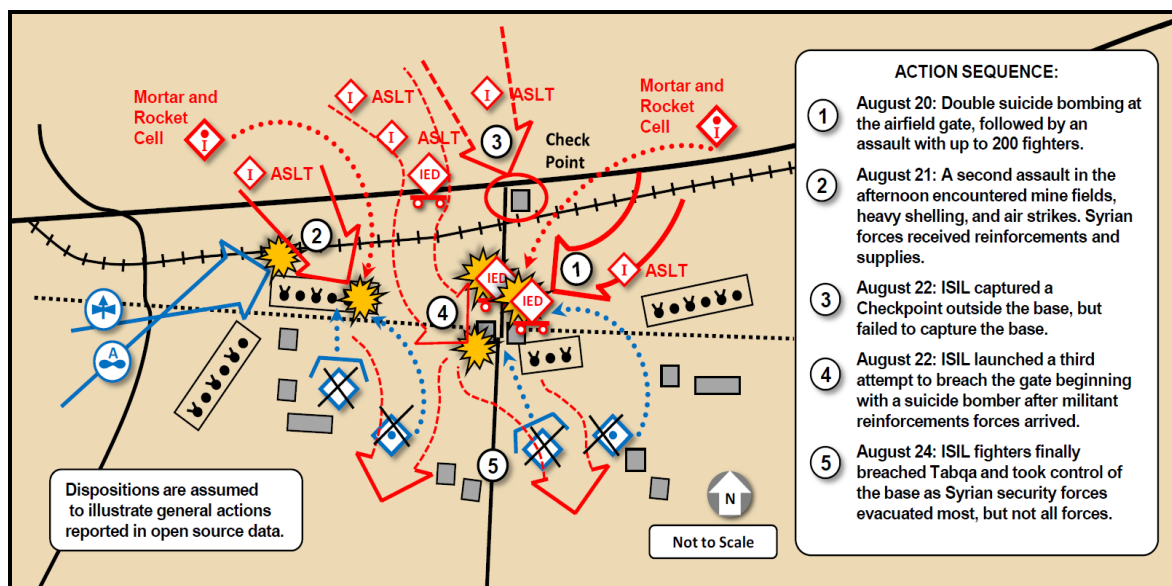


Figure 10. Tabqa attack

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mission of attacking and penetrating the front gate. Syrian special operation forces, recognizing the staging of ISIL fighters, anticipated their movement and planted mines in their attack axis. In addition, Syrian forces massed heavy indirect fires and air strikes against the ISIL combatants. The ISIL force retreated again. Fighting continued into the morning of 22 August 2014 when ISIL managed to capture a checkpoint outside the base. ISIL failed, however, to capture the base.

On the evening of 22 August 2014, ISIL received reinforcements and attempted to breach the entry to the base in the same manner it had begun the attack on the Tabqa airbase on 20 August. An SVBIED attempt to breach the gate failed again, and the exploitation element failed to penetrate the gate. Over the next two days, the SAF began evacuating the base. On 24 August 2014, ISIL finally breached the front gate to the Tabqa base. To this point, approximately 170 government forces were killed and 150 were captured. Around 346 ISIL fighters were killed in the attacks. ISIL executed the Syrian defenders that were captured. Both ISIL and the SAF sides attempted to explain the events at Tabqa Airbase to their advantage. The Syrian regime painted the evacuation as a planned regrouping of forces. ISIL claimed victory and used it as further evidence of its growing strength.

## Chemical Weapons

Recent revelations of chemical weapon caches in Iraq have raised the specter of ISIL's use of chemical weapons. In June 2014, ISIL gained access to hundreds of tons of potentially deadly poisons including mustard gas and Sarin when it occupied the al Muthanna facility 60 miles north of Baghdad. In the 1980s and 1990s, the facility was a central location for Saddam's chemical weapon development efforts. Although transforming these chemicals to a military-grade weapon and delivery system is probably beyond the current capability of ISIL, chemicals could be used as part of IEDs.<sup>33</sup> As an example of what might occur in future actions confronting ISIL, reports indicate the 2 July 2014 deaths of three Kurdish fighters in Kobani, Syria that may have been caused by a chemical agent.<sup>34</sup>

According to CENTCOM, chemical weapons engineer Abu Malik was killed near Mosul, Iraq on 24 January 2015. Malik worked in Saadam Hussein's chemical weapons' program. He affiliated with al-Qaeda in 2005 and subsequently with ISIL. There is no indication ISIL has a chemical weapons program. There have been, however, allegations ISIL has employed chlorine gas, a choking agent. Malik's death has degraded ISIL's capability to build a chemical weapon program.<sup>35</sup>

## Deception

ISIL uses deception in two ways. First, ISIL has the ability to blend-in with the population. Air strikes have had the predictable result of causing ISIL fighters to shed military uniforms in favor of less identifiable clothes.<sup>36</sup> Sunni tribal support, either directly or passively, has facilitated this by allowing ISIL fighters to move freely and hide in some areas. With the increase in US airstrikes and the involvement of other nations, ISIL will inevitably continue to hide among the population and begin to look much more like an insurgency than a state army.

ISIL has put captured equipment to good use as well. In September 2014, Camp Saqlawiyah in Anbar Province had been under siege with supply and logistics routes controlled by ISIL. With food, medicine,



water, and ammunition in short supply for the five battalions trapped in the camp, officers made desperate calls to commanders and even members of parliament for relief. When camp defenders saw uniformed Iraqis in military vehicles they assumed it was the promised relief and let them pass through the gate without proper security checks. After entering the camp, the first ISIL SVBIED exploded in the middle of the camp while two others detonated on the perimeter. The gate security tried to hold back the rest of the convoy, but was hit with more SVBIEDs. The camp was overrun with only a minority able to escape.<sup>37</sup>

## Snipers

ISIL-captured, high-powered precision rifles have allowed ISIL to utilize snipers in a variety of roles and situations. A withdrawal by defenders of the Syria-Turkey border town of Kobani was hampered by ISIL snipers in October 2014. Equipped with night vision equipment, ISIL snipers kept Kurdish fighters pinned down and unable to withdraw, even under cover of night.<sup>38</sup> In October 2014, Kurdish troops moved out of the town of Jalula to defend positions in Baquba against ISIL attacks. Six soldiers and a BBC reporter left behind were pinned down by snipers firing from multiple positions. The snipers created chaos, fear, and the perception of a larger attacking force.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 11. [ISIL Snipers attacking Kurdish Soldiers in Jalula](#)

ISIL snipers have been observed at the height of a battle and not in marginal, clandestine attacks. One observer stated that during a heavy barrage of mortars and RPGs, ISIL snipers were positioned to fire on resisters and other targets.<sup>40</sup> Coupling heavy firepower, suicide bombers and snipers creates a formidable complex attack.





## Social Media

The speed of ISIL's June 2014 takeover of northern Iraqi cities was matched only by the speed of its social media campaign. The seemingly incongruous match of a brutality rarely equaled by other terrorist organizations and a nuanced and sophisticated social media capability combine to allow ISIL to mold and nurture a multi-audience narrative of both intimidation and success. It has used a number of social media programs to push out a message of cruelty to its enemies and evidence of success to supporters and potential recruits. ISIL has shown an understanding of such platforms as Twitter and Facebook that has allowed it to significantly increase its audience reach, dwarfing money and recruit competitors such as al Nusrah.



Figure 12. ISIL cartoon tweet

ISIL's ongoing strategy of encouraging fear among occupied populations and enemies while simultaneously inspiring would-be jihadis to join the fight through brutal images has only increased. Jordanian pilot Lieutenant Moaz al-Kasasbeh crashed in Raqqa province in December 2014 and became the subject of intense negotiations for his release. Negotiations stalled over proof to Jordanian officials that he was still alive. It is widely believed al-Kasasbeh had been killed before or during the negotiations. A 22 minute video of his death posted on 3 February 2015 showed him in a cage being burned alive. The gruesome death and the theatrics wrapped up in the video were intentional and fit the continuing ISIL narrative.<sup>41</sup>

In a world somewhat numbed and accustomed to beheadings, the intentional burning alive of al-Kasasbeh re-ignited an emotional response ISIL has come to crave. After ISIL posted the video, Jordan ordered an immediate airstrike as many Jordanians hailed the pilot a martyr and vowed vengeance for his death.<sup>42</sup> The visceral reaction of Middle Eastern political leaders to ISIL's provocations may work to ISIL's benefit as it is likely to create further schisms within its volatile populations.

A group calling itself the CyberCaliphate hacked into several online sites, claiming to be ISIL. In January 2015, the CyberCaliphate hacked into US Central Command's (CENTCOM's) Twitter and YouTube accounts, posting warnings from ISIL, unclassified documents, and propaganda videos. One posted document included the names and addresses of US military officials. A tweet posted under the CENTCOM Twitter name stated, "We won't stop! We know everything about you, your wives, and



children.”<sup>43</sup> The CyberCaliphate accessed the Twitter feed of Maryland CBS affiliate WBOC-TV. The cyber group also hacked into the Albuquerque Journal newspaper’s Twitter feed, posting pro-ISIL messages and personal information including New Mexico residents’ driver’s license photos.<sup>44</sup> It is not possible to know if the CyberCaliphate has a real relationship with ISIL or if it is just a cyber-vandal, but it does show a potentially growing sophistication and intent to use cyberattacks.

## ISIL Media Organization

The ISIL media department, Al Hayat Media Center, under the authority of its official propaganda arm, the Al Itisam Establishment for Media Production, has seen recent success in recruiting Westerners in general and Americans specifically. The products being generated include English-language videos, pamphlets, and a magazine. Competent English speakers are creating the products which are free from spelling and grammatical errors generally common in such materials, and sprinkled with Arabic words and phrases. German materials are also finding their way into areas with German-speaking potential recruits.

## Twitter

ISIL continues to use Twitter effectively to engage supporters and control the organization’s narrative. Prior to entering Iraq, ISIL had already developed digital tactics in Syria. Upon entering Mosul, the social media campaign began by tweeting, among other things, a consistent ominous prediction, “#ISIS we are coming Baghdad.”<sup>45</sup> Subsequent tweets included a cartoon with trucks filled with militants rushing to Baghdad.<sup>46</sup> ISIL Twitter accounts have also carried gruesome pictures and narratives of mass killings, enhancing its image as conqueror and discouraging resistance from those in its path.

ISIL has capitalized on Twitter features such as hashtags to expand its audience. A hashtag is a way to create a grouping of discussions in a mostly unmonitored ad hoc discussion forum. Any combination of characters preceded by a pound sign, or hashtag (see quote in previous paragraph as an example), allows anyone to sort all discussions with a particular hashtag into one place. If promoted by enough people, a hashtag will appear in Twitter’s “Trending Topics.” Hashtags are not registered or controlled by any one user or group of users and are not retired from public availability. A hashtag is a title arbitrarily assigned by the author that may or may not have anything to do with the message associated with the hashtag. ISIL uses faux hashtags in order to get its message to a larger audience. Capitalizing on the World Cup soccer fervor, ISIL used a number of hashtags associated with the event to gain a larger audience and improve its trending potential. As an example, ISIL has used hashtags associated with premier English soccer league clubs such as #MUFC, #WHUFC, #LFC, and #THFC.

ISIL has also doctored images to present a message. In one such post, ISIL or one of its supporters used the White House’s hashtag message on behalf of the kidnapped Nigerian girls to its advantage. The original Obama Administration hashtag featured Michelle Obama with a sign that said “#Bring Back Our Girls.” In a tweet, the picture was altered to say “BringBack Our Humvees,” an obvious reference to equipment and vehicles seized by ISIL in its takeover of northern Iraqi cities.<sup>47</sup>



For several weeks in early 2014, ISIL supporters were able to download a Twitter app from the Google Play Store called "The Dawn of Glad Tidings" or "Dawn" for short. The app was advertised as a way to receive updates on ISIL's efforts. Once a user downloaded the app, it would automatically post ISIL materials to each user's Twitter account, spacing the tweets out at a rate and in numbers that would not alert Twitter's anti-spam detectors. Each user essentially became a server for dissemination of ISIL propaganda materials. When ISIL stormed Mosul, the app posted 40,000 tweets in a single day. The app has since been removed from the Google Play Store after being available for several weeks.

## Facebook

Facebook has long been used by terrorist and insurgent groups. ISIL is no different, using it to share information and garner support. Facebook and other social media platforms have policies requiring these types of pages to be taken down; however, new accounts can be easily set up under different names. A new twist on the old approach is utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook to sell ISIL-branded products. For a reasonable price, a person can purchase shirts with the ISIL logo and phrases such as, "We



Figure 13. ISIL branded sales merchandise on Facebook

are all ISIS" and "Fight for Freedom, Until the Last Drop of Blood."<sup>48</sup> Other products such as t-shirts, hoodies, and toys can be purchased. Many of the websites promoting these products come from Indonesia, a base of support for ISIL and other militant groups. One of these sites, Zirah Moslem, had over 9,000 likes before it was removed from Facebook. While it is not clear if ISIL is actually selling the merchandise, there is reason to believe it is receiving at least some support from the profits and publicity.

## Videos

The ease with which events can be captured on video and disseminated via any number of digital media allows ISIL to distribute messages world-wide within minutes. Videos have been used for the purpose of recruiting disaffected Muslims in the West and sending messages designed to terrify, including graphic tweets of beheadings and mass killings. Whatever the purpose, ISIL has a willing network of people anxious to spread the visual images. News organizations, looking for images to tell stories, and people simply captivated by the images, also become participants in the distribution of the ISIL story.



## Dams and Barrages

Water and water infrastructure are critical to Iraqis, providing mobility, irrigation, and needed drinking water. For this reason, ISIL has used and targeted water related infrastructure in order to shape the battlefield in its favor. *ISIL will use this control of infrastructure to exert control over the local population.*

Iraq depends on its intricate system of dams and barrages to control the flow of water from the Euphrates and Tigris



**Figure 14. Dams and barrages in Iraq**

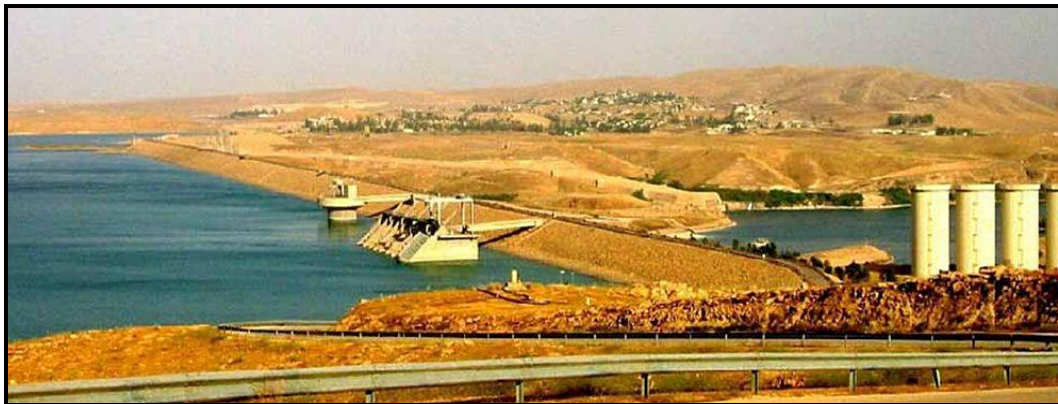
ivers to ensure crops are irrigated and water flows throughout the country. The key difference between a dam and a barrage is the purpose for which it is created. A dam is built for water storage in a reservoir, raising the water level significantly. A barrage is used primarily for irrigation, raising the water only a few feet, and for diverting water. Barrages are usually built on flat terrain across meandering rivers.<sup>49</sup> Barrages are often referred to as dams, but their definitions point to different reasons why they might be attacked.

The Mosul Dam, the largest in Iraq, was a key strategic target once ISIL captured the city of Mosul. Located about 50 kilometers north of Mosul, the dam controls the water and power supply to most of Iraq. Its generators can produce 1,010 megawatts of electricity. Behind the dam is over 12 billion cubic



meters of water. Capturing the dam offers both a threat and a means to generate more cash through controlling a critical infrastructure.

The Mosul Dam, while ISIL's largest water infrastructure target, is not its first attempt to use water infrastructure to its advantage. The Fallujah Barrage is located about five kilometers south of Fallujah in the Nuaimiya area of Anbar Province. In February 2014, ISIL took control of the dam and fortified it with concrete blast walls and sand bags. The barrage allows ISIL to flood certain areas, impede Iraqi security force movement, and control the flow of water to other areas of Iraq. Reduction in water levels in the Euphrates River has also led to shortages of electricity in towns south of Baghdad. Government officials have warned about the negative effect on agriculture production if irrigation water is cut off.<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 15. Mosul Dam**

In April 2014, ISIL began using the Fallujah Barrage to shape the battle in its favor. The Ministry of Water Resource announced that ISIL gunmen closed eight of the ten gates of the Fallujah Barrage on the banks of the Euphrates River, effectively shutting off the supply of water into the southern Iraqi provinces.<sup>51</sup> Closing the gates also caused flooding upstream and forced the evacuation of families. By 10 April 2014, ISIL re-opened five of the barrage's gates, fearing the flooding in their own stronghold in Fallujah.<sup>52</sup>

## Rivers

### Gunboats

Captured Iraqi gunboats are a useful tool for ISIL in attacking river cities. Dhuluiya, lying 75 kilometers north of Baghdad on the Tigris River, is key to ISIL's plan to capture Baghdad. It has changed hands numerous times over the recent past as ISIL has had some success with local Sunni tribal leaders who are suspicious of the Shia-led government in Baghdad.<sup>53</sup>



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ISIL attacked the town of Dhuluiya on July 31, 2014 using a combination of gunboats and VBIEDs. The assault on Dhuluiya began at dawn and lasted for two hours before ISIL was pushed back by Iraqi security forces.<sup>54</sup> The gunships, acting as enabling elements, provided fixed Iraqi security elements while two VBIEDs and other assault elements attacked Iraqi security elements in the city.



Figure 16. Map of Dhuluiya

## Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)

In the recent Raqqa Governorate fighting, ISIL added a new recon-naissance capability to its fighting by employing UAVs. A recent ISIL video, meant for propaganda, shows that it is capable of and interested in using technology to gain an advantage. The released video shows a recon-naissance flight over the Tabqa airbase prior to a successful attack on that base.

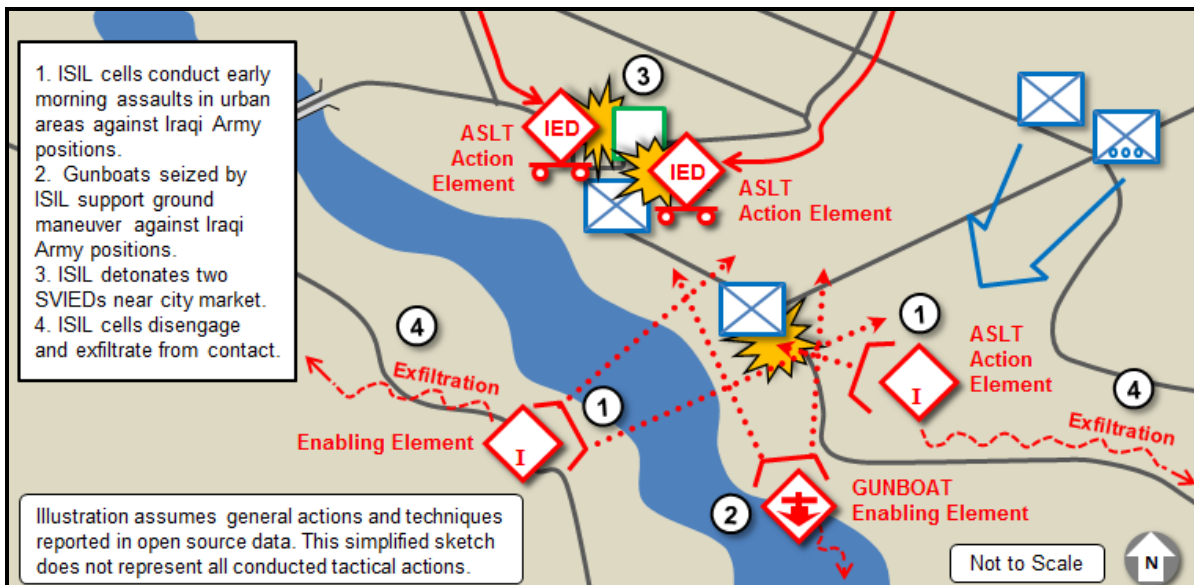


Figure 17. Dhuluiya gunboat attack



**Figure 18. UAV flight over Syrian airbase**

The Phantom FC40 Quad Copter, believed to be used by ISIL, can be purchased commercially for about \$500. The UAV has an attached smart camera which supports 720p/30fps HD video. It can be controlled through an iOS or Android app running over a 2.4G Wi-Fi connection. While the video is useful, the capabilities of the quad copter do not allow it to see from long distances in real time. Even with its

limitations, the video retrieved from the quad copter gave ISIL a view of the area it was attacking it would not otherwise have had.<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 19. Phantom FC40 Quad Copter**

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## Section 3: ISIL Weapons and Equipment

Successes in occupying Syrian and Iraqi military bases and facilities has given ISIL access to a large inventory of military weapons and equipment. The inventory includes tactical equipment, small arms and light weapons, light tactical and utility vehicles, heavy machine/anti-aircraft guns, artillery, and armored vehicles.<sup>56</sup> This is alarming in the short term, however, it is yet to be seen if ISIL can properly maintain the equipment and weapons and obtain spare parts and ammunition. Training in proper use is also a critical unknown. Additionally, a tank may be intimidating in a city, but it also offers a larger target. These considerations do not completely eliminate the serious nature of an organization such as ISIL obtaining a large arsenal of sophisticated military weapons and equipment, but may minimize some of the danger over time. *Despite the large amount of heavy and medium equipment, ISIL relies on light and fast methods of movement and attack. Speed and agility have been their main force multiplier in combat.*<sup>57</sup>

The following table is representative but not inclusive of weapons and equipment captured or acquired by ISIL.<sup>58</sup>

ISIL WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT			
Armored Equipment	Artillery	AT Weapons	Anti-Air Systems
T-55	M198 Howitzer (limited) <sup>59</sup>	M79 Osa Rocket Launcher	ZU-23-2 Anti-Aircraft Gun
T-72	Type 59-1 Field Gun	RPG-7	SA-16 MANPADS
T-62	SCUD Missile (propaganda – not functional) <sup>60</sup>	RPG-29	SA-7 MANPADS
HMMWV	BM-21 MRLs	M79	FN-6 MANPADS
MRAP		Kornet	
BMP-1 (primarily used as VBIEDs) <sup>61</sup>		HJ-8	
		DShK Machine Gun	

## Section 4: ISIL Organization

ISIL has grown from a small terrorist organization founded by the late Abu Musab al Zarqawi to an organization that gives the outward appearance of an organized state spanning northern Syria and Iraq.





After declaring a new caliphate named the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi announced his new role as caliphate. Emerging captured documents are giving a clearer picture of ISIL's organization.

## Governance

Al Baghdadi governs through a network of subordinate leaders. These leaders conduct much of the day-to-day management of affairs. A Leadership Council consists of trusted advisors with direct access to him and tasked with handling religious contentions and policies, executions, and other issues of doctrine and governance. A cabinet manages departments such as finance, recruitment and transport of fighters, prisoners, media, etc. ISIL also has an organized hierarchy of provincial and local leaders that handle the heavy lifting on the ground. Once a city is taken over, ISIL leaders seek to keep services working while strictly and violently enforcing adherence to ISIL's vision of an Islamic state.<sup>62</sup> There is a definitive difference between delivering effective governance and public services and the life of a fighting jihadi. ISIL's ability to maintain a restrictive government, deliver needed services, and keep the peace will be tested over time.

ISIL's governance strategy depends largely on intimidation and fear. In Mosul, for example, ISIL has constructed an organization that incorporates legislative, judicial, and executive/enforcement responsibilities. At the heart of governance is enforcement of strict obedience to the religious rules. Security organizations include the relatively mundane traffic police and tax collectors. The Islamic moral police, Hisba, is more feared and intrusive as it enforces strict adherence to religious law. This elite security committee gathers intelligence and enforces observance of prayer times, bans on smoking and t-shirts with English writing, and veils on women and girls, among other things.<sup>63</sup> Governance overreach will make the areas under ISIL's occupation more difficult to manage and encourage more restrictive and violent responses by local ISIL leaders.

## Financing

ISIL is arguably the wealthiest terrorist organization, having developed revenues from a number of sources. Its capture of oil-rich areas have allowed ISIL to create steady revenue streams.<sup>64</sup> Revenue estimates of the dozen or so oil fields and refineries under its control in Iraq and Syria are as much as \$1 million to \$2 million a day. One of the first targets for occupation when ISIL invaded Mosul was banks where millions of dollars were taken. Coupled with confiscation of properties of internally displaced people leaving areas of occupation and extortion of businesses and individuals, ISIL is able to keep fairly large payrolls and services functioning.<sup>65</sup>

The shift from an invading force to an occupying force has brought the inevitable need to provide services and manage an economy. The age-old problem of rebels not making the best administrators is now staring ISIL in the face. Two challenges facing ISIL are a poor economic foundation and harsh and restrictive policies that increase volatility. Main funding sources include oil, gas, extortion, phosphate and sulfuric acids, cement, wheat and barley, ransoms, and donations. Oil, by a factor of two over the next source of income, is the largest revenue generator for ISIL. Other sources of income include



redistribution of property, either confiscated or acquired from those who fled their homes, and taxes. Bank accounts carry a 5% income tax and withdrawal limits.<sup>66</sup> Taxes are often collected daily. Butchers, for example, pay around \$4 a day to enter slaughterhouses to buy cattle and sheep. Shop rents are paid directly to ISIL.<sup>67</sup>

ISIL-occupied areas are subject to increasing economic volatility. Access to such basic needs as food, energy, and water are more difficult. The costs of these basic needs is increasing, even as food subsidy programs are being dismantled. Due to the reduction in public services and public projects, unemployment is increasing. The much-touted ISIL currency will be unsustainable over time. While initially metal-backed, the government will likely risk inflation by printing currency in order to fund projects for which it does not have cash on hand. This, coupled with increasing shortages, will cut significantly into the purchasing power of Iraqis and Syrians.<sup>68</sup> Economic volatility has caused the displacement of over two million Iraqis and countless numbers of Syrians. This continuing volatility, particularly as airstrikes continue to destroy and disable economic infrastructure, will affect ISIL's ability to control a large population remaining in its occupied areas.

## Military

ISIL has gained a reputation as a winning organization. This has attracted many to the cause. Estimates of how many fighters ISIL now has under its command in Iraq and Syria range from as low as 10,000 to a high of 31,500. The number of foreigners fighting for ISIL is estimated at up to 15,000. Countries represented include Canada, United States, Britain, Sweden, Germany, France, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, China, Indonesia, and Australia. The majority of the ISIL fighters are from Muslim countries, but there is a disturbing trend toward Western country representation.<sup>69</sup>

The trend toward more foreign fighters arriving in Syria and Iraq is continuing with an increasing number of Westerners joining the fight. While the exact numbers of foreign fighters may not be known, it is certain that the conflict which began in Syria has caused the greatest mobilization of foreign fighters since the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s.<sup>70</sup> The FBI is tracking close to 150 Americans who have traveled to Syria for a variety of reasons. The FBI believes over a dozen of these have joined ISIL.<sup>71</sup>

As ISIL stalls in Iraq, it is likely to look west from its stronghold in Raqqa province, Syria to make further geographic gains for the caliphate. With Jabhat al Nusra (JN) gaining strength in Syria, ISIL will have to decide whether to fight JN or strike a devil's bargain for the sake of a common enemy. ISIL's more aggressive and violent view of how to prosecute the jihad and confidence in its successes points to clashes between the two organizations rather than accommodation. Without JN's pledge of fealty to al Baghdadi, the organizations will eventually begin to fight over the same ground.

## International Expansion

Similar to an earlier al-Qaeda, ISIL is enjoying the fruits of its success in gaining affiliates in other countries.<sup>72</sup> On 16 February 2015, ISIL's Libya organization beheaded 21 Egyptian Christians. Following immediate airstrikes from the Egyptian air force, ISIL claimed responsibility for suicide bombings

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claiming the lives of 45.<sup>73</sup> ISIL pamphlets have been seen in Afghanistan and Pakistan where it is competing with al-Qaeda for adherents.<sup>74</sup> Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban, fired its spokesman, Abu Omar Sheikh Maqbool, and five commanders after they pledged allegiance to ISIL's al Baghdadi.<sup>75</sup> ISIL's spokesman, Abu Muhammad al Adnani, called on supporters to attack from within their countries, thereby encouraging lone wolf attacks in America and Europe as well as against coalition partners.<sup>76</sup> At least one of the Paris Charlie Edo attackers pledged allegiance to ISIL in a video. In the video, Amedy Coulibaly stands in front of the ISIL flag and defends the forthcoming attacks as retribution for attacks on ISIL.<sup>77</sup>

## Implications

ISIL fits the definition of a hybrid threat, effectively using tactics and techniques in a manner similar to other threat actors. It is better funded than many groups the US has faced recently and has attracted a large number of recruits to its cause. ISIL's success so far is due to its ability to control large numbers of fighters, many of whom are recruited foreigners, against ineffective opponents. It is yet to be determined if ISIL will be able to capitalize on captured weapons and equipment over a longer term, which will require training, maintenance, and repair parts. ISIL's techniques continue to include heavy use of IEDs in various forms, and a focus on suicide attacks which achieve psychological effects on those being attacked. More refined social media strategies capitalizing on readily available technology have given ISIL the means to advertise its successes to potential recruits worldwide and to threaten its enemies through graphic images.

Training should focus on tactics outlined in the Hybrid Threat doctrine described in the [TC 7-100 series](#). These publications describe hybrid threats and summarize the manner in which such future threats may operationally organize to fight US forces. They also explain the strategy, operations, tactics, and organization of the Hybrid Threat that represents a composite of actual threat forces as an opposing force (OPFOR) for training exercises.

## REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS APPLIED TO TRAINING

The [TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series](#) and the [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\)](#) provide training resources for applying real-world conditions to training. ISIL tactics and techniques are readily accessible through these resources as referenced throughout this report. ISIL uses the principles of offense and defense present in the TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series when employing its fighters. The operational environment outlined in the DATE also provides an ISIL-inclusive framework.

ISIL's dispersed attack tactics are found in [TC 7-100.2, Opposing Force Tactics](#).

3-74. *Dispersed attack* is the primary manner in which the OPFOR conducts offensive action when threatened by a superior enemy and/or when unable to mass or provide integrated C2 to an attack. This is not to say that the dispersed attack cannot or should

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not be used against peer forces, but as a rule integrated attack will more completely attain objectives in such situations. Dispersed attack relies on INFOWAR and dispersion of forces to permit the OPFOR to conduct tactical offensive actions while overmatched by precision standoff weapons and imagery and signals sensors. The dispersed attack is continuous and comes from multiple directions. It employs multiple means working together in a very interdependent way. The attack can be dispersed in time as well as space.

3-75. The primary objective of dispersed attack is to take advantage of a window of opportunity to bring enough combined arms force to bear to destroy the enemy's will and/or capability to continue fighting. To achieve this, the OPFOR does not necessarily have to destroy the entire enemy force, but often just destroy or degrade a key component of the enemy's combat system.<sup>78</sup>

ISIL's area defense tactics are also found in [TC 7-100.2](#).

4-85. In situations where the OPFOR must deny key areas (or the access to them) or where it is overmatched, it may conduct a tactical area defense. Area defense is designed to achieve a decision in one of two ways:

- By forcing the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before he can achieve his objectives.
- By denying the enemy his objectives while preserving combat power until decision can be achieved through strategic operations or operational mission accomplishment.

4-86. The area defense does not surrender the initiative to the attacking forces, but takes action to create windows of opportunity that permit forces to attack key components of the enemy's combat system and cause unacceptable casualties. Area defense can set the conditions for destroying a key enemy force. Extended windows of opportunity permit the action of maneuver forces to prevent destruction of key positions and facilitate transition to a larger offensive action. INFOWAR is particularly important to the execution of the area defense. Deception is critical to the creation of complex battle positions, and effective perception management is vital to the creation of the windows of opportunity needed to execute maneuver and fires.<sup>79</sup>

Care should be taken not to adopt a precise replication of ISIL tactics for all decisive action training events. Significant capability gaps exist that would leave a number of typical mission essential tasks unchallenged.

ISIL does not have the full capabilities of hybrid threat. ISIL is a capable *insurgent paramilitary* force that demonstrates a degree of tactical coordination and line of effort intent, but, as of this writing, lacks the

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collective ability for consistent combined arms maneuver and decisive operations. ISIL has demonstrated an “organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region” and employed “forces or groups distinct from the regular armed forces of any country, but resembling them in organization, equipment, training, or mission” (JP 1-02). However, gains in occupying critical infrastructure, terrain, and controlling local populations appear temporal based on the example of ISIL’s inability to protect and retain control of the Mosul Dam. ISIL also has no association or affiliation with a regular military force as it conducts tactical actions in the trans-border Syria and Iraq region.

Significant gaps in ISIL combat power capabilities are most evident in an absence of integrated fires command and control, and the types of weapons systems to be coordinated in a focused combat power manner. Although ISIL social media displays armored vehicles, artillery pieces, and other associated equipment captured from state forces, there is not yet evidence of fully integrated cannon, gun, multiple rocket launcher, and surface-to-surface missile capability by ISIL. The presence of ISIL short-range air defense in MANPADS can be assumed but has not been reported in open-source documentation during the Mosul Dam occupation.

Use of an ISIL replication for a mission rehearsal exercise (MRX) developed for a unit deploying into contact with ISIL is precisely appropriate. For decisive action training, care must be taken to ensure all training objectives are addressed by challenging conditions. For training objectives not covered by a single actor’s capabilities, whether ISIL or some other group, use of the best practice composite models developed for the TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series is required.

## Conditions in DATE and Doctrine

As the [DATE](#) and Hybrid Threat Opposing Force are composite models synergized from real-world actors and actions, ISIL’s capabilities can be found throughout these products. The following table assists the exercise planner with the locations of key elements in these products of the actions and techniques described in this report.

Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Page(s) in <a href="#">DATE</a>	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
<b>Insurgents capture an airbase</b>	South Atropian People’s Army attacks Rimzi Airbase	DATE 2.1, 2B-2-8 DATE 2.1, 1-I-17	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force Tactics, p 3-1
<b>Insurgents use river gunboats to</b>	South Atropian People’s Army	DATE 2.1, 2B-7-2 DATE 2.1, 1-I-17	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force

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Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Page(s) in <a href="#">DATE</a>	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
<b>attack a city</b>	attacks a city on the Kura River			Tactics, p 3-1
<b>Insurgents capture a chemical cache</b>	Coalition of small anti-government groups	DATE 2.1, 2E-2-23 DATE 2.1, 1-I-20	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100</a> , Hybrid Threat, p 3-1
<b>Insurgents defend takeover of a dam</b>	Arianian Freedom Movement defend an occupied dam against Arianian security forces in Ariana	DATE 2.1, 1-I-19 DATE 2.1, 1-I-16	Defense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force Tactics, p 4-1

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## Related Products

Follow these links to view related products:

- [Menagh Airbase Siege: Menagh, Syria, Red Diamond \(September 2013\)](#)
- [ISIL Attack on the Tabqa Airbase, Red Diamond \(September 2014\)](#)
- Wadi Deif Attack, Global IED Study (December 2014 [To be published])
- [ISIL's Use of Social Media, Red Diamond \(July 2014\)](#)
- [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\) 2.1 \(February 2014\)](#)
- [TC 7-100 Series](#)

See also the [Red Diamond Newsletter](#), which contains current articles on a variety of topics useful to both soldiers and civilians ranging from enemy TTP to the nature and analysis of various threat actors.

For detailed information on weapons and equipment, see the [Worldwide Equipment Guide](#).

To see more products from TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration, visit the Army Training Network (ATN) with CAC access: [https://atn.army.mil/dsp\\_template.aspx?dplID=377](https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dplID=377)

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# THREAT TACTICS REPORT: NORTH KOREA

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TRADOC G-2 ACE THREATS INTEGRATION

VERSION 1.0

JULY 2015





## Executive Summary

- North Korea is an oligarchy with Kim Jong Un as its supreme leader.
- The DPRK is a militaristic society with about 1.2 million active duty personnel in uniform out of a population of 24 million with another 7.7 million in the reserve forces.
- All military personnel serve under the umbrella of the Korean People's Army (KPA); the Korean People's Air Force (KPAF) and Korean People's Navy (KPN) primarily support the KPA ground forces.
- The KPAF focuses on homeland defense and close air support to the KPA.
- The KPN's primary mission is to protect the North Korean coastline and support the KPA special purpose forces (SPF) in mission execution.
- Much of the equipment in all military branches is old and obsolete, but the KPA has concentrated its modernization efforts on missile technology that may provide the means to successfully launch a nuclear warhead.
- North Korea possesses a nuclear weapon and is modernizing its missile fleet in order to increase the attack range for its nuclear arsenal.
- North Korea possesses both chemical and biological weapons.
- The KPA practices both passive and active camouflage to hide its units, headquarters, and other important resources from the air.

This (U) **Threat Tactics Report (TTR)** was produced in accordance with (U) **Intelligence Community Directive Number 203: Analytical Standards** (Effective: January 2015). This TTR was coordinated with:

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon S. Cleaves".

Jon S. Cleaves  
Director, TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration





## Introduction

The Korean peninsula is a location of strategic interest for the US in the Pacific Command (PACOM), and many observers note that North Korea is an unpredictable and potentially volatile actor. According to the Department of Defense in its report to Congress and the intelligence community, the DPRK “remains one of the United States’ most critical security challenges for many reasons. These include North Korea’s willingness to undertake provocative and destabilizing behavior, including attacks on the Republic of Korea (ROK), its pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles, and its willingness to proliferate weapons in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolutions.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the latest evidence of irrational behavior is the elevation of Kim Jong Un’s 26-year old sister to a high governmental post late in 2014, the computer hacking of the Sony Corporation supposedly by North Korea during late 2014 over the possible release of a film that mocked Kim Jong Un, and the April 2015 execution of a defense chief for allegedly nodding off during a meeting. Over the past 50 years, North Korea has sporadically conducted operations directed against its enemies, especially South Korea. These actions included attacks on South Korean naval vessels, the capturing of a US ship and holding American hostages for 11 months, the hijacking of a South Korean airline jet, electronic warfare against South Korean signals including global positioning satellites (GPS), and assassinations or attempted assassinations on South Korean officials including the ROK president. The attempted 1968 Blue House Raid by North Korean elite military personnel resulted in the death or capture of all 31 infiltrators involved in the assassination attempt as well as the death of 71 personnel, including three Americans, and the injury of 66 others as the North Korean SPF personnel attempted to escape back to DPRK territory.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this North Korean Threat Tactics Report (TTR) is to explain to the Army training community how North Korea fights including its doctrine, force structure, weapons and equipment, and the warfighting functions. A TTR also identifies where the conditions specific to the actor are present in Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) and other training materials so that these conditions can easily be implemented across all training venues.



## Section 1: Introduction to North Korea

The US military has been learning about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly referred to as North Korea, since 1950 when the US, in conjunction with the UN, went to war against Kim Il Sung's military forces. The DPRK is a country in Asia run by an oligarchy led by Kim Jong Un. Most DPRK military and civilian leaders consist of second and third generation leaders who are familial or close friends of the DPRK's founder, Kim Il Sung; his son, Kim Jong Il; or grandson, Kim Jong Un. The Kim family has ruled North Korea since the end of World War II. Historically, the Korean peninsula has found itself ruled by outside forces for significant periods of time to include China and the latest, Japan, which occupied the entire Korean peninsula at the conclusion of the 1905 Russo-Japanese War until Japan's surrender to the allied powers in August 1945.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1950, North Korea invaded its southern neighbor in an attempt to unify the peninsula under Kim Il Sung. With the intervention of the UN, after the Soviet Union boycotted a UN Security Council meeting, the international coalition led by the US pushed the North Korean military back across the pre-1950 boundary between the two countries in September 1950. American General Douglas MacArthur then drove the UN forces all the way to the Yalu River where China, feeling threatened by anti-communist forces, interceded on behalf of North Korea with organized Chinese forces. The Chinese-led counterattacks pushed the American military and its allies back to the 38th parallel, the original dividing line between the two Koreas. Over the next two years, a stalemate ensued with only minor changes of territory between the warring sides. In late July 1953, the military commanders of the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the United Nations Command (UNC) signed an armistice that ended the fighting and created a demilitarized zone (DMZ) 2,000 meters wide on either side of the then current unit disposition or what is known as the military demarcation line (MDL). Over 60 years after the armistice or ceasefire, the warring sides have yet to sign a formal peace treaty, and the MDL and the 4,000 meter wide DMZ still exists from the peninsula's east coast to the west coast. The DPRK, however, still seeks its ultimate goal, which is to unify all of Korea under its control. With a population of only 24 million people, over five percent or 1.2 million personnel serve on active military service in the DPRK. Another 7.7 million North Koreans serve in the reserve forces. Besides military operations, the DPRK government often uses its uniformed personnel for public service projects or to harvest crops.

The presence of the US military in South Korea deters the DPRK from crossing the border to reunite the two Koreas by force. Since the armistice was signed, North Korea has broken it many times with incursions into the DMZ and South Korea by land, sea, air, and even underground by tunnels. Today, the DPRK faces off against the Combined Forces of the ROK and the United States with a conventional regular force backed with a nuclear deterrent. North Korea also emphasizes SPF units that primarily use irregular tactics. The KPN uses a combination of tactics based on old Soviet doctrine, Chinese developments, and/or lessons learned by the North Koreans during the 1950–53 Korean War as well as the US's most recent actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations around the world. North Korea, however, has no issues with initiating provocative actions against South Korea, Japan, or the US's in defiance of the armistice's terms. These actions, however comedic they are seen as by outsiders, are often used prior to international meetings in an attempt to obtain concessions from the other side of the negotiating table.<sup>4</sup>

# Threat Tactics Report: North Korea



While the military hardware owned by North Korea is vast, much of it is outdated. The DPRK military loathes to abandon any hardware as evidenced by the retention of the T-34/85, a World War II-era tank, in some of its armor units. The age and variety of equipment from the former Soviet Union, Russia, or China and its own internally produced equipment generate major logistical issues for the KPA to effectively keep the assortment of weapons systems fully functional.

## Strategy and Goals

The DPRK espouses three primary goals with additional second-tier objectives that support its principal aims. From Kim Il Sung through Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un, North Korea's overarching intention is the unification of all of Korea under control of the DPRK government. While this ambition is probably not obtainable in the near future—as long as American forces remain on the peninsula—a unified Korea under the Kim family's control remains the DPRK's ultimate objective. North Korea's second goal is to remain an independent state free of outside interference, especially from the Western powers. North Korea's possession of a nuclear arsenal and its pursuit of missile technology is an attempt to ensure that external powers do not interfere with the DPRK's internal affairs for fear of a nuclear reprisal. North Korea's third goal is for Kim Jong Un and his family to maintain its position of authority in the regime through the ideological control of the country's population. The Kim family and its supporters will likely pursue any strategy necessary to remain firmly in power in the DPRK.<sup>5</sup>

North Korea's strategy is focused on the control of the DPRK government by the Kim family in pursuit of the long-term goal of the reunification of the entire Korean peninsula under the same government. The large military is not only used as a threat to North Korea's neighbors, but to maintain control of its own citizens. The DPRK uses limited military provocations to obtain diplomatic concessions at the negotiating table with South Korea, Japan, the US, and other countries. North Korea uses threats of possible war to obtain not only diplomatic concessions, but to obtain economic aid for its people. The North Korean government knows that the Western powers and South Korea do not want another active war on the peninsula so the DPRK's threats often lead to success at the negotiating table. The North Korean nuclear arsenal and fear by other countries that the DPRK will initiate a nuclear attack often serves as the trump card that forces the DPRK's enemies to acquiesce to the Kim regime's demands.<sup>6</sup>

While North Korea's leaders may seem cartoonish at times to the outside world, the Kim family is treated reverently and seen as almost godlike in its almost non-religious country. Kim Il Sung developed a personality cult around himself during his long period in power. His son, Kim Jong Il, continued to cultivate the myth of the Kim family during his time as the DPRK's supreme leader. The North Korean people treat the current ruler, Kim Jong Un, with almost the same awe the DPRK citizens held the previous two rulers or are too afraid not to do so. The Kim family cult status is a major component of the glue that holds the DPRK together.<sup>7</sup>

## Key Leaders

While the DPRK professes to still be a communist country where the people are in charge, North Korea is actually an oligarchy where a small number of people control the country. The DPRK supreme leader is currently Kim Jong Un—the grandson of the original founder of North Korea, Kim Il Sung—who took power in December 2011 upon the death of his father, Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Un is not the only third generation leader in the DPRK as many of the current governmental officials' parents or grandparents



also loyally served the Kim family. In his mid-30s, Kim Jong Un has been busy over the last three years easing out an older generation of officials that owed their allegiance to Kim Jong Il or Kim Il Sung and replacing the old guard with younger supporters of himself. To take ultimate control of the DPRK, Kim Jong Un perpetuated the arrest, trial, conviction, and execution of his uncle, Jang Song Taek, then the second most powerful person in North Korea.<sup>8</sup>

Members of the government wield their power through the station a bureaucrat holds in the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), the Korean People's Army (KPA), the National Defense Committee (NDC), or a cabinet post. The most powerful North Korean leaders often hold more than one position in their portfolio. Military personnel will also hold civilian positions and bureaucrats that rise through the civil service ranks may eventually receive a military title, for appearance purposes, upon reaching a certain senior level in governmental service or prior to the assumption of a more military-related job. The NDC is the most important group in the country with Kim Jong Un as First Chairman, three vice-chairman positions, and six additional members. The vice-chairmen include Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong So, currently considered the second-most powerful person in the DPRK; General O Kuk Ryol, a second-generation bureaucrat whose father fought with Kim Il Sung; and Vice Marshal Ri Yong Mu, the husband of one of Kim Jong Il's aunts. The other NDC members include Cho Chun Ryong, a civilian with an economics background; General Choe Pu Il, Minister of the People's Security; General Hyon Yong Chol (executed in late April 2015, but only announced on 13 May 2015), Minister of the People's Armed Forces; General Kim Won Hong, Minister of State Security; Colonel General Pak To Chun, a civilian with an industrial background and recently awarded a military rank; and General Ri Pyong Chol, a relatively unknown officer. Hwang Pyong So and several other North Korean leaders made an unexpected and last-minute visit to South Korea in early October 2014 when Kim Jong Un was unseen for several weeks. This led to some speculation on Kim Jong Un's status, but the North Korean ruler emerged several weeks later, still in charge, with the excuse for his absence from the public eye that he was recovering from foot surgery. See the [March 2015 Red Diamond](#) article on North Korean Leadership for additional details on most of these DPRK leaders.<sup>9</sup>

## Key Alliances

While North Korea practices an ideology of independence called *juche*, the DPRK does possess a few, but important, allies. Kim Il Sung began *juche* in 1972 and this national ethos places an emphasis on self-reliance, independence, resourcefulness, a display of one's strength, and self-defense, with the responsibility to internally solve problems without outside assistance. Despite the bravado of self-reliance, North Korea's most important ally and major benefactor is China. About 63% of DPRK exports go to China while the DPRK receives 73% of its imports from its northern neighbor. China usually opposes any economic sanctions that other countries may try to enact on the DPRK for its military and nuclear provocations. North Korea serves as a buffer state between the economically capitalistic and democratic South Korea and the communist People's Republic of China (PRC). China has ruled over the Korean peninsula at various times during the past 4,000 years and this somewhat disharmonious relationship between China and the peninsula continues. Both current regimes share a common foundation as the PRC and DPRK both arose by revolutionary means based on the Marxist model and both countries profess to still somewhat follow these communist teachings. The historical ties between North Korea and China continue to bind the two countries together and China's fear of a unified,



economically powerful Korean peninsula under a democratic-style government is probably enough motivation to continue to support the status quo on the Korean peninsula.<sup>10</sup>

The second-most important ally for North Korea is Russia. While the closeness between the two countries is not the same as it was between North Korea and the Soviet Union, there are still some residual feelings based on the North Koreans' long-term relationship with the Russian leadership. In the early 1990s, the relationship suffered under then-Russian president Boris Yeltsin before rebounding later in the decade. During the Cold War, North Korea sent its military officers to the USSR to attend officer, technical, or aviation schools. Much of the North Korean conventional weapons and vehicles were produced in the USSR or former Soviet bloc countries, but are now produced in Russian or Eastern European factories. Due to the DPRK's inability to pay its financial debt to Russia, North Korea provides up to 10,000 construction workers and loggers to work in eastern Russia. For the near future, Russia will likely continue to tenuously support North Korea.<sup>11</sup>

North Korea has developed a relationship with a number of countries due to the export of weapons, especially ballistic missiles, and missile technology to states and actors willing to evade the various sanctions placed on the DPRK by the international community. These countries include Egypt, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. A North Korean ship, sailing from Cuba, was caught trying to cross the Panama Canal with MiG-21 jets and spare airplane parts. UN inspectors seized the weapons, but there has been no final disposition of the case. It is likely that North Korea will continue to engage in legal and illegal arms trades in order to gain much-needed hard currency.<sup>12</sup>

## Organizational Size and Structure

### General Information

While the DPRK operates both a navy and air force, all military forces technically fall under control of the Korean People's Army. North Korea is one of the most militarized countries in the world with 1,193,000 active duty and 7.7 million reserve personnel. The DPRK spends between 15.9% and 22% of its GDP on its military and about 25% of all North Koreans serve in some military capacity. Of the active duty personnel, approximately 1,020,000 serve in the army while 110,000 work for the air force, and 60,000 support the navy.<sup>13</sup>

### Army

The army comprises the largest portion of the North Korean military with 85% of all personnel serving in the ground forces. The army is responsible for all KPA ground units, the Special Purpose Forces (SPF), and low-level air defense missions. The KPA positions about 70% of all ground forces along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. Much of the KPA artillery is located in hardened positions located forward along the border in order to maximize its weapons systems' ranges without needing to reposition to fire its opening salvos. While useful for offensive operations, the closeness of the artillery to the DMZ may make it vulnerable during defensive operations.<sup>14</sup>

The KPA features a combination of armor, mechanized, and basic infantry units. Besides the major units listed on the chart below, the KPA also fields seven tank regiments and five to eight independent river crossing regiments. The rocket brigades operate FROG [free rocket over ground], KN-02, KN-08, KN-09

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No Dong, or Musudan missiles. The KPA specializes its units for the tasks they are expected to complete if and when the war on the peninsula resumes between North and South Korea.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1. KPA Units<sup>16</sup>**

Corps/Divisions		Brigades	
Mechanized Corps	2	Armor Brigade	11-15
Infantry Corps	9	Infantry/Motorized Infantry Brigade	68
Capitol Defense Corps	1	Mechanized/Mechanized River Crossing Brigade	14-20
Armor Division	1	Light Infantry Brigade	12
Mechanized Division	4	Airborne Brigade	3
Infantry Division	27	Sniper Brigade	7
Light Infantry Division	7	Reconnaissance Brigade	3
Artillery Division	1	Coastal Security/Border Security Brigade	10
Reserve Infantry Division	40	Artillery, Multiple Rocket Launcher, Heavy Mortar	21-26
Reserve Military Training Unit	10	Engineer River Crossing Brigade	1
		Rocket Brigade	4-7

The KPA also fields a large SPF of approximately 200,000 personnel that consists of eight Bureau of Reconnaissance Special Forces (SF) battalions; a reconnaissance group with 17 additional battalions; a light infantry group with nine light infantry brigades and six sniper brigades; an air maneuver group with three airborne brigades, one airborne battalion, and two sniper brigades; and an amphibious group with two sniper brigades. Despite the KPA's large size, much of its training is conducted without vehicles due to the lack of fuel and the high cost to properly maintain vehicles.<sup>17</sup>

Equipment issues as well as the lack of spare parts and fuel hinder the ability of the KPA, especially the armor and mechanized units, to conduct a large number of realistic training exercises. Units that would normally move in vehicles must conduct its training as dismounted forces. Further reducing training time is the requirement that certain KPA units must send their soldiers to the countryside to help the farmers bring in the rice crop at harvest time.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the KPA reserve consists of ground forces personnel. The army reserve consists of about 940,000 Red Youth Guard (RYG) participants, 620,000 Reserve Military Training Unit (RMTU) members, 5.7 million Workers' Peasants' Red Guard (WPRG) members, and 420,000 members of other paramilitary groups. The RYG began in 1970 and, similar to the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program in the US, the participants consist of male and female students from the age of 14 to 17. The RYG conducts 450 hours of classroom training and seven days of military training each semester. The RYG seeks to locate potential anti-government militants or counter-revolutionaries, and can even be called upon to defend the country at a time of war. The ages of RMTU members range from 17 to 45 for males and 17 to 30 for females. The RMTU inducts those 17-year olds who did not join the regular army or who have completed their active-duty obligation. The Ministry of People's Armed Forces (MPAF) controls the 37 RMTU infantry divisions, which conduct 30 days of mobilization training and 10 days of self-defense training annually. When males reach the age of 46, they are transferred to the WPRG until discharged at the age of 60. Begun in January 1959, the WPRG provides basic military training to the North Korean people and is responsible for internal security, rear area defense, guerrilla warfare, and support to the active duty KPA. The WPRG's structure mirrors the military with regiments, battalions, and companies based on the available population. Company-size WPRG units can be found in the rural areas while the larger units are found in the more urban areas. The WPRG conducts 15 days of mobilization and 15 days of self-defense training annually. The MPAF is responsible for other





paramilitary training units that consist primarily of former soldiers. Units from squad to division are based on the unit's location, its association with a factory or business, or a university. About 35-40% of the members come under control of one of the 36 MPAF Paramilitary Training Unit divisions. These units provide a trained reserve for the KPA and can be incorporated into the KPA in time of war, serve as fillers or replacements for KPA units, deploy as independent units directly subordinate to the MPAF, or provide security for large government facilities, rear area defense, or security missions. Most of the units operate as infantry, but there may be some specialized units such as anti-aircraft, artillery, rear service, or possibly even armored units.<sup>19</sup>

## Air Force

The KPAF's primary mission is to defend its homeland from the air with secondary missions to provide tactical air support to the army and navy, transportation, logistical support, and SPF insertion/extraction. To accomplish its mission, the KPAF fields three air combat divisions, two air transportation divisions, and a single air training division. Subordinate combat units include eighteen fighter regiments, three light bomber regiments, one fighter/ground attack regiment, one ground attack regiment, and one attack helicopter regiment. In addition, the KPAF operates a number of transportation regiments, helicopter regiments, training regiments, and nineteen surface-to-air missile (SAM) brigades.<sup>20</sup>

There are approximately 110,000 personnel in the KPAF with approximately fifty percent of the aviation assets located within 100 km of the DMZ. Many of the forward deployed air force regiments operate from underground airfields, or as a minimum, the airplanes are stored in underground bunkers. The KPAF can convert several stretches of road in North Korea to auxiliary airstrips. The SAM brigades operate in three sectors—northeast, northwest, and south—with most of the SA-2 and SA-3 battalions in position along the coasts with the newer SA-5 battalions near Pyongyang or the DMZ. The KPAF operates over 50 ground-based early warning radar systems that provide overlapping coverage throughout the country, but with extra emphasis on the west coast and the DMZ. There are fewer radar systems, however, along the North Korea/China border in the north. The mountainous terrain of North Korea causes problems with radar and is the reason for the large number of overlapping systems needed to prevent dead space in the KPAF radar coverage.<sup>21</sup>

The 84th Air Division (Training) conducts all KPAF training. Both pilots and ground personnel attend the same ground school training. When pilots head off to learn how to fly, the ground personnel receive their training in an aviation specialty. It takes about four years of instruction for a KPAF pilot to learn how to fly. The pilots receive about 70 hours of primary flight instruction training, mostly in a CJ-6 aircraft, before they are assigned to a unit. Fewer than five years ago, pilots flew only 20–25 times per year for a total of 15–25 flight hours annually due to the cost, the shortage of aviation fuel, and the lack of spare parts. Each training flight usually lasted only 30–45 minutes and focused mainly on taking off and landing the aircraft safely. There were few resources available to devote to actual air combat maneuver training or close air support training. Some units, usually those that fly the MiG-29, the MiG-23, or the Su-25 may have received more flight time than the others. Since Kim Jong Un took power over three years ago, however, the number of hours each pilot flies increased from 25 to approximately 50 hours annually. While the doubling of flight hours in the last three years is impressive, the KPAF pilots still do not receive the flight hours to become truly proficient in their aviator tasks. KPAF pilots are likely sub-standard when compared to most Western military pilots who receive many more flight hours than their North Korean counterparts.<sup>22</sup>



## Navy

The KPN is essentially a brown water force, with little capability to operate more than 50 miles off the North Korean coastline. Even with approximately 60,000 personnel, the KPN fields no aviation units as almost all aircraft come under KPAF control. The purpose of the navy is to primarily support SPF missions and to conduct amphibious assaults. To accomplish its clandestine missions, the KPN deploys 40 SANG-O 37-meter Class special operations midget submarines, 33 YUGO 20-meter Class special operations midget submarines, and ten YONO 29-meter submarines. The KPN also can deploy 20 Romeo-class attack submarines against surface ships. To support landing operations of ground troops, the KPN operates four HANTAE-class medium landing ships, four HANCHON-class utility landing craft, 60 NAMPO-class personnel landing craft, and 40 KONG BANG-series personnel landing craft. Between 10 to 20 percent of all KPN vessels are stored in dry dock, on land, or in tunnels, and many of the KPN ships would need significant repairs to make them combat ready. The major exceptions to the poor readiness rates are the submarines and small combatant ships that are often used to support the KPA's SPF units.<sup>23</sup>

The KPN is also responsible for protection of its shores through the use of coastal defense guns and surface-to-surface missiles. The KPN fields a large, but unknown number of coastal artillery ranging from 122-mm to 152-mm guns as well as missiles including the SSC-2B Samlet, HY-2, and SS-N-2 Styx. Most of these guns are in hardened sites and would be very difficult to reposition during combat operations. One of the KPA's newest missiles, the KN-08, is a mobile launcher with a range of 9,650 km. This distance places California within the outer fringes of the KN-08's maximum range.<sup>24</sup>

The KPN is known to conduct aggressive patrolling and has been known to accost fishermen from other countries outside of the internationally recognized territorial waters and trespass south of the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the boundary on the west coast that is supposed to serve as the demarcation between the two Koreas. Notable naval incidents between North Korea and South Korea occurred in 1999, 2002, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 including one North Korean vessel sailing 3.7 km south of the NLL where it remained for two hours in South Korean waters. The KPN was also likely responsible for one of its submarines sinking the South Korean corvette, *Cheonan*, in March 2010, even though the DPRK denied any culpability in the incident.<sup>25</sup>

## Strengths

While analysts may debate the North Korean military's capabilities, the KPA does possess some strengths. First is the sheer size of the active and reserve military. With over a million active duty personnel and over seven million more in reserve, the DPRK can mobilize higher percentage of its population for military service than almost any other country in the world. Second is the idea that the military comes first. Any resources that the country possesses goes to the military before it is provided to the North Korean people. In a country where starvation is at times rampant, the DPRK military personnel receive their larger rations before most civilians. During any war, the KPA would only take even more of any available resources in order for the DPRK regime to survive. Third, both the North Korean military personnel and civilians are used to hardships. Due to the tough life most North Korean people already endure, the ravages of war would not have the same effect that military conflict would cause most other countries. Lastly, the DPRK possesses nuclear weapons as well as chemical and offensive biological weapons. The fear of a CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear) attack,

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especially nuclear, may cause Western inaction as North Korea's enemies debate whether to act or not due the high possibility of the DPRK's threats of weapon of mass destruction (WMD) reprisals.<sup>26</sup>

## Weaknesses

Although the North Korean military may feature some positive attributes as a fighting force, the KPA also suffers from many weaknesses as well. Much of the military's equipment is old and obsolete. The North Korean military consciously refuses to rid itself of any equipment and still operate tanks that date back to World War II. This wide range of military hardware from many generations of warfare also generates logistical issues. The KPA's supply personnel must not only find the spare parts for a large variety of equipment, the KPA maintenance personnel must be well-versed in the repair of a great assortment of vehicles and weapons. In addition, the DPRK lacks the logistical capability to support the KPA beyond a few months. Due to the shortage of fuel and the cost to operate vehicles for a cash-strapped country, many of the KPA soldiers find themselves involved in public works projects or helping farmers bring in their rice crops. Any time spent in non-military support is less time that the KPA soldiers can spend training for combat. Even the mechanized and armor forces, due to resource restraints, spend much of their training time doing light infantry training instead of mounted operations. While KPA soldiers may be well trained in individual skills or small unit tactics, the amount of time spent on larger exercises pales in comparison to most Western militaries. Without adequate time and resources to practice large scale military operations, the KPA will always face a steep learning curve when the KPA is forced to perform them in actual combat for the first time.<sup>27</sup>

## Current Locations

While North Korean military units are scattered throughout the country, approximately 70 percent of the ground forces are located between Pyongyang and the DMZ. The KPA ground forces are often located in hardened positions and their artillery can easily reach South Korea with nearly every artillery piece situated so that two-thirds of the weapon's range covers South Korea's side of the border. The South Korean capital city, Seoul, is within range of some of some 250 of DPRK's longest-ranging artillery and missile systems. The KPAF is also focused on South Korea with many of its runways in the southern third of the country. The KPN operates off the east and west coast of the country as North Korea possesses few navigable rivers. There are very few military units located along the DPRK's northern border with China. See the map in the military organization section for locations of major bases of the army, air force, and navy as well as most runways throughout North Korea.<sup>28</sup>

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Figure 1. North Korean military installations. Numbers correspond with the map numbers under Section 4, Military Organizations, below. Locations on map are approximate.



## Section 2: KPA Tactics and Techniques

The DPRK believes that the average KPA soldier is physically, mentally, militarily, and politically better trained and prepared for war than any individual soldier the North Korean will meet on the battlefield—American, South Korean, Japanese, or other Western army. Due to the materiel weakness that the DPRK will face in any war on the Korean peninsula, the KPA teaches its soldiers that the next war will not be decided by technology or weapons, but by the revolutionary spirit as the soldiers fight for the liberation of their comrades. The KPA soldiers are also indoctrinated with the idea that one of them is more than a match for 100 of the enemy. The KPA trains every soldier to serve one level up from his current position. With this type of mental indoctrination, it is likely that many KPA military personnel would rather fight to the death than surrender.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout this TTR, North Korean doctrinal terms, when known, will be used instead of the terms found in TC 7-100.2, **Opposing Force (OPFOR) Tactics**. Where there is collation, the TC 7-100.2 OPFOR term will be inserted in parenthesis to demonstrate the connectivity between real-world actors to the composite OPFOR in the TC.

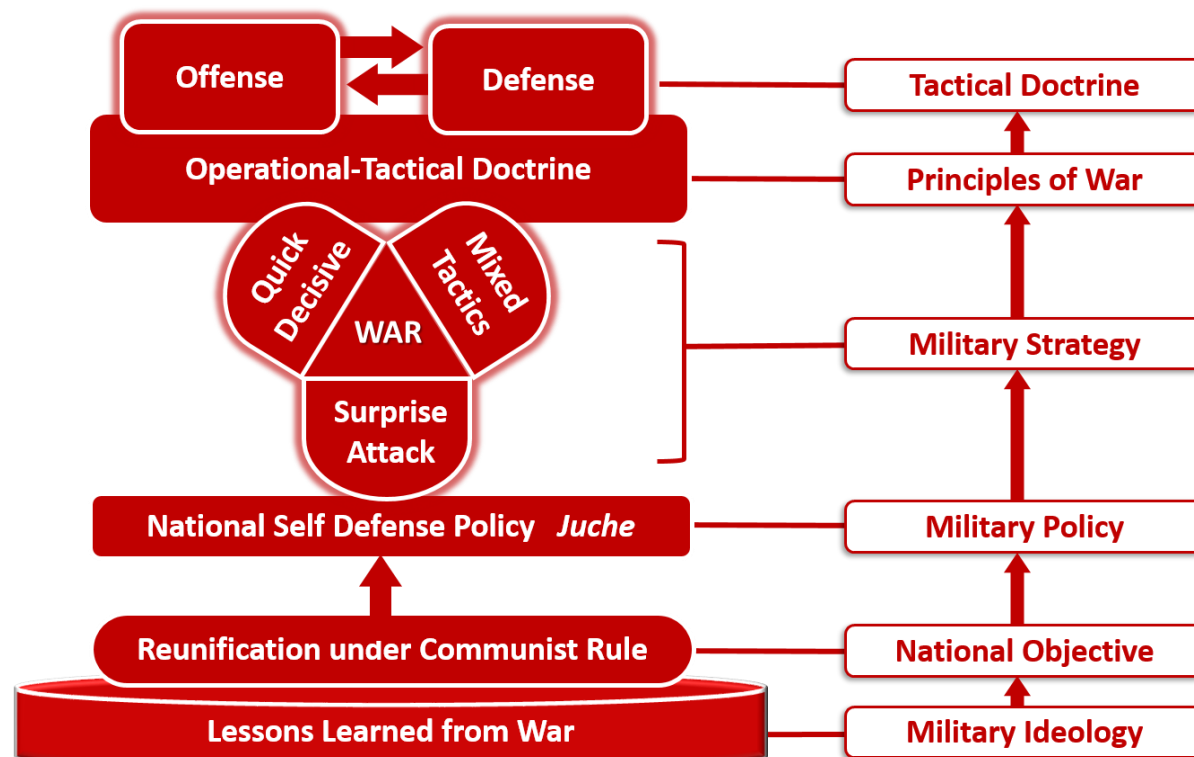


Figure 2. Building blocks of KPA tactical doctrine. Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics, 2005, p 66. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.





## KPA Tactical Doctrine Building Blocks

The KPA tactical doctrine is based on a series of six “building blocks” as demonstrated in Figure 2. The Military Training Bureau serves as the KPA’s military think tank and has studied conflict from World War II to the present. With that knowledge, the KPA has developed a military ideology based on its experiences from 1950-53 fighting the US, old Soviet theory, and Chinese light infantry tactics modified by the most recent US experience in numerous locations around the world over the past three decades. Due to the United States’ ability to overwhelm almost any enemy with technology and firepower, the KPA emphasizes asymmetric warfare in conjunction with large numbers of SPF units. Even with the emphasis on asymmetric warfare, the KPA plans the use of large amounts of artillery including multiple rocket launchers in lieu of air support, heavy reliance on anti-tank guns, and anti-armor support by a variety of first and second generation wire-guided anti-tank missiles. The KPA will attempt to concentrate and coordinate the firing of large numbers of older weapons systems in order to make up for a shortage of the latest technologically advanced equipment.<sup>30</sup>

The second building block is the national objective discussed in the section on strategy and goals early on in this TTR. *Juche*, or self-reliance, is discussed in the section on key alliances above. From these three building blocks, the KPA military strategy of a surprise attack, a quick decisive war, and one fought with mixed tactics emerges to become the fourth block. Based on the military strategy, the KPA’s principles of war generate the fifth block. From the principles of war, the KPA develops its offensive and defensive tactical doctrine.

## Military Strategy

### Surprise Attack

The KPA will attempt to attack its enemy in an unexpected place, time, or means. The characteristics of a surprise attack could include the use of inclement weather, nighttime operations, or rugged terrain; a detailed deception plan; skilled infiltration units to include SPF units; parachute or air assault operations; the massing of fires; the quick concentration of forces at the decisive point and time; or the unexpected employment of large scale mechanized or armor forces.<sup>31</sup>

### Quick Decisive War

The DPRK lacks the resources to fight a protracted war and therefore any war the KPA fights must be quick and decisive. Based on recent experience, the DPRK also realizes that the US democratic system takes time to react as the Americans attempt to build a coalition. If the war is over before the Americans can react, the US may have to let the status quo remain, such as in the recent action in Crimea by the Russians.<sup>32</sup>

### Mixed Force Tactics

Offensively, the KPA plans a two-front war through both conventional and unconventional means. The DPRK is willing to launch a pre-emptive strike and is willing to risk its country’s annihilation in order to defeat its enemies. The first front would consist of a massive conventional assault across the DMZ with substantial firepower and chemical attacks on selected forward position targets in order to surround Seoul and then move farther south. Additionally, ballistic missile strikes, including some with chemical warheads, would hit South Korean and US air bases; ports; and command, control, communications,



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computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets throughout South Korea and in Japan. There is also a real possibility that North Korea would attempt to use offensive biological weapons in its attacks.<sup>33</sup>

The second front would be an attack by the large KPA SPF units throughout the South Korean rear area in conjunction with North Korean agents already in place. The SPF could reach South Korea by a number of means including helicopters, hovercraft, light planes, parachutes, small boats, submarines, or infiltration tunnels. These SPF personnel would also simultaneously hit US bases in Japan including Okinawa. In addition, the DPRK would focus on asymmetric warfare attacks using lessons learned from American military actions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places over the last thirty years. Since 1992, North Korean leaders have espoused that its military forces could reach Pusan in just three days. While totally unrealistic, some DPRK leaders actually believe that in the right military and political conditions, its goal of reaching Pusan could occur in less than a month. Some South Korean reports indicate that some KPA generals now believe that the capture of the entire peninsula is an impossibility and that after the capture of Seoul, North Korea would need to sue for a negotiated peace treaty based upon its position of greater strength. It is not known how Kim Jong Un stands on this change in policy, but some of the KPA's military plans reflect this change in attitude about taking over the entire peninsula. If war were to resume on the Korean peninsula, the US and its allies would face a formidable foe both on the front line and in its rear areas.<sup>34</sup>

## Operational/Tactical Doctrine

The KPA's doctrine is based on five fundamental principles of war: surprise attack, mass and dispersion, increased maneuverability, cunning and personified tactics, and secure secrets. The use of surprise attack has been covered under military strategy, above.

### Mass and Dispersion

The KPA will concentrate its combat power at the decisive point and time and will weight its main effort. Unlike US doctrine, the KPA believes that its forces will only need a 2:1 ratio of its forces at the decisive point to the enemy to find success in offensive operations. The main effort will operate on a narrower front than the attacks to its flanks and the supporting attacks will disperse over a wider front to deceive the enemy about where the attack may occur. The KPA will use the terrain to maximize its success and use deception operations when dispersing to avoid excessive concentration that will make the force a lucrative target.<sup>35</sup>

### Increase Maneuverability

The KPA wants to fight and win a quick and decisive war and to achieve this objective, the combat units will seek to use the terrain to their advantage. The KPA will employ ground vehicles to quickly reposition artillery, armor, and infantry on the battlefield using the existing high-speed networks or aircraft. The KPA, however, will conduct night moves and use the minor roads as well as the rugged terrain to surprise its enemy. The SPF or other forces will conduct raids to seize key transportation nodes from other forces and the KPA emphasizes maneuverability as a basic element of combat power during training.<sup>36</sup>



## Cunning and Personified Tactics

The KPA focuses on cunning in all planning for its troops and emphasizes to its leaders to use its initiative and aggressiveness with no hesitation. While the KPA conducts comprehensive planning and keep these plans close-hold, the leaders expect its subordinates to conduct quick estimates and conduct bold operations that will result in a quick but decisive war.<sup>37</sup>

## Secure Secrets

North Korea not only keeps a close hold on all plans, but also distributes false information to confuse its enemy. Activities to secure the KPA's secrets could include reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance, deceptions, counterintelligence operations, and conducting operations in inclement weather or darkness.<sup>38</sup>

## Defensive and Offensive Tactics

The KPA professes both a defensive and offensive strategy in case of war. The defensive strategy is to prevent any invasion across the DMZ or an amphibious landing on either of its coasts. If such an attack would occur, the DPRK would mobilize not only its 7.7 million reserve personnel but likely declare a total war in which all North Korean citizens would be obligated to defend their country. To deter any foe from attacking the country, the DPRK has threatened the use of nuclear weapons against South Korea, Japan, or any reachable US military facility in Asia. The DPRK also has no qualms about the use of chemical or offensive biological weapons. The military decision-making process to invade North Korea could be delayed as its enemies debate its ramifications as long as the DPRK still retains control of its NBC arsenal.<sup>39</sup>

## Other Techniques

Besides the military strategy and operational/tactical doctrine previously discussed, there are also a number of techniques that the KPA will employ for an offensive or defensive operation.<sup>40</sup>

## Adequate Logistics

The KPA doctrine calls for each commander to ensure that there are sufficient supplies to successfully complete the mission. Due to the lack of supplies faced by the KPA, most commanders will plan to use captured supplies, military or civilian, to adequately complete the assigned mission. The KPA weapons systems, mortars, and artillery, are often of a slightly larger caliber than those of its enemy allowing the DPRK military to use captured military stores while denying the same option to its opponent.<sup>41</sup>

## Annihilation

The KPA offensive doctrine calls for the destruction of the enemy at all costs by continuing the pursuit, staying close to the enemy to reduce the likelihood of its foe's superior artillery and close air support coming to the rescue, and continual contact to prevent the enemy from withdrawing or regrouping for a future attack. The taking of terrain is a secondary mission to the enemy's destruction. In the KPA's seven designated offensive movements—penetration, thrust, holding, turning, infiltration, besetment, and encirclement—the focus is on the destruction of the enemy or the movement of ground forces in order to set up another maneuver that will aid in the enemy's annihilation.<sup>42</sup>

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The KPA will often use a combination of the seven offensive forms of movement as seen from any unit level of operation. The purpose of the *penetration*, a division-level movement, is to destroy the defending unit by using the first tactical echelon to penetrate the initial defensive position on a 2- to 3-km front to allow the passage of the second tactical echelon to conduct a deep fight in the enemy's rear.<sup>43</sup>

The *thrust* is an offensive movement form used by the KPA at the company, battalion, or regimental level to attack a terrain-oriented defense. Once the defensive position is breached, the remainder of the unit passes through quickly to conduct one of three follow-on missions—strike the enemy in the flank, conduct a turning movement, or initiate a besetment. See the tactical example diagram of an integrated attack below for more details.<sup>44</sup>

A KPA *holding* movement is used by units conducting an attack that is not part of the main attack. These units receive a much larger front to operate in compared to the main attack. The holding maneuver may consist of a demonstration or feint in order to draw off enemy forces from the main attack's primary route of attack.<sup>45</sup>

The KPA *turning* movement is normally the prelude for another type of KPA attack in the enemy's rear area. The turning maneuver force often follows behind a penetrating or thrust force to rush armor or mechanized forces to the enemy's vulnerable rear areas. Upon the completion of the turning movement, the exploitation force may then become part of an *encirclement* or *besetment* maneuver.<sup>46</sup>

A KPA *infiltration* movement is just as it sounds as the force uses covert means to pass through the enemy's lines to attack positions in the enemy's rear area. In an infantry corps-level operation, approximately two-thirds of the light infantry brigade and sniper brigade or a total of eight battalions may be given the mission to conduct raids on key targets in the enemy's rear—artillery positions, vital chokepoints on major roads, or command posts. This focus on infiltration continues down to all levels: four of six companies from the division light infantry battalion at the division level, one regular infantry company in each regiment, and one regular infantry platoon in each battalion may all receive infiltration missions.<sup>47</sup>

The KPA *besetment* movement is the surrounding of an enemy strong point in order to inflict maximum casualties on the defensive force. There are four types of besetments: front and one flank; front and two flanks; front and rear; and front, rear, and two flanks. No matter what type of besetment is chosen, indirect fire will attempt to seal any enemy side not covered by the direct fire.<sup>48</sup>

*Encirclement* is the final KPA offensive movement and is used when the majority of a retreating force can be intercepted, encircled, and annihilated. The preferred location for the attack is between the enemy's frontline defensive positions and the reserve force's location(s). KPA Army and Corps headquarters may deploy up to two divisions to conduct an encirclement operation. Lower level units will use whatever forces are available. There are four sub-categories of KPA encirclement operations: *partitioned* destruction for large forces; *compressed* destruction for smaller forces; *fire power* destruction in narrow areas; and *raid* destruction for built up areas. See the operational example diagram of a dispersed attack below for more details.<sup>49</sup>



## Camouflage, Concealment, and Deception

Keeping secrets secure involves the use of camouflage, concealment, and deception by all units. Since North Korea will likely not obtain even local air superiority, the KPA doctrine calls for denying the enemy any intelligence it may receive from aerial platforms through the use of both active and passive camouflage, concealment, and deception techniques. The KPAF uses both underground runways and hardened sites to hide aircraft from aerial attack. The KPN not only hides its ships in caves that are connected to the sea by fortified tunnels, it will also attempt to hide its vessels among civilian fishing boats found in small villages. All three services will use decoys in order for the enemy to waste ammunition, something North Korea gleaned from the American aerial strikes on Serbia where the US Air Force fired at fake sites almost as often as actual positions. The KPA armed forces believe that each operation should include a deception plan that may include a demonstration, feint, raid, or an attempt to create fratricide among enemy units.<sup>50</sup>

## Combined Operations

KPA doctrine emphasizes that all actions, conventional or SPF, must be coordinated at all levels and between the different types of units. Much of this coordination will be done through liaison or courier that reduces the likelihood that an enemy can learn KPA intent by an increase in radio chatter or the interception of electronic signals. The KPA has many specialized units including river crossing brigades and regiments, sniper brigades in all three services, and large numbers of SPF units. Any major KPA attack will coordinate the use of all the different arms to attack the decisive point at the proper time.<sup>51</sup>

## Echelon Forces

The KPA takes from old Soviet doctrine in its use of echelons during both offensive and defensive operations. In the offense, the KPA will likely place two-thirds of its ground forces in the first echelon and two-ninths in the second echelon, with only one-ninth in operational reserve or as a third echelon. The KPA ground forces will also use echelons when forced to go on the defense, as the KPA believes echeloning its forces provides for defensive depth with rapid counterattack possibilities.<sup>52</sup>

## Firepower

Like the old Soviet Union doctrine that dates back to World War II, the KPA doctrine also expounds the use of large quantities of artillery fire on a single target. The KPA will use massed fires, including chemical weapons, from artillery, missiles, or multiple rocket launchers to both psychologically frighten as well as annihilate the enemy position. The KPA fields over 4,400 artillery pieces of all types and the KPAF is focused on support of the ground forces. With this large amount of indirect fire support available on the battlefield, the KPA can ensure that almost all targets receive the emphasis they deserve. When not otherwise employed, KPAF aircraft will fly in support of ground troops.<sup>53</sup>

## KPAF and KPN Employment

The KPA doctrine states that joint operations should be used for most missions. Any major attack by the DPRK will likely use KPAF and KPN assets to deploy KPA units into the enemy's rear areas. The KPAF will fly SPF units in with small airplanes such as the recently repainted Antonov An-2 fleet or helicopters. The KPAF can also use its airplanes or helicopters to parachute drop the KPA's airborne units to conduct an

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air assault operation. The KPN will use its small boats and submarines to clandestinely transport SPF behind the enemy's lines on both coasts of South Korea.<sup>54</sup>

## Mobility

The KPA doctrine also stresses the use of armored vehicles in all its operations. The KPA ground forces will use the speed of vehicles to exploit all openings and, when on defense, the KPA will employ its mobile forces to counterattack any enemy penetration. KPA vehicles will use the major and minor roads to move quickly, but the KPA light infantry units possess the ability to travel on foot through the rugged mountainous terrain to sneak up on enemy positions from an unexpected direction.<sup>55</sup>

## Rear Area Protection

The KPA understands the vulnerability of rear areas as the KPA leaders see its enemy's rear area as an operational center of gravity for American forces. Much of the DPRK's SPF effort will be directed at its enemy's rear area. Conversely, the KPA will also defend its own rear area against ground attacks. The DPRK will deploy its vast number of paramilitary units to defend against enemy rear area attacks in order to free up its regular KPA units for more conventional offensive operations.<sup>56</sup>

## Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance is very important to KPA military doctrine. The KPA will strive to conduct reconnaissance continuously at all levels to include the enemy's rear area in order to achieve surprise when attacking and to prevent surprise when on defense. Each forward-deployed KPA infantry corps fields a reconnaissance battalion and each KPA infantry division contains an organic reconnaissance company. Each KPA infantry regiment possesses its own organic reconnaissance platoon, but there are also three independent reconnaissance brigades that could be deployed anywhere on the battlefield for additional intelligence-gathering operations.<sup>57</sup>

## Two Front War

KPA doctrine calls for a two-front war, but not in the traditional sense of the term such as in World War I or World War II. Instead, the DPRK will use its SPF units and agents already on the ground in South Korea to create a "second front" in the enemy's rear areas while its enemy must continue to deal with the conventional battle on the primary front. The SPF units will attack enemy key command and control (C2) facilities, important logistical centers, and attempt to create fratricide between enemy rear echelon units.<sup>58</sup>

## Use the Terrain

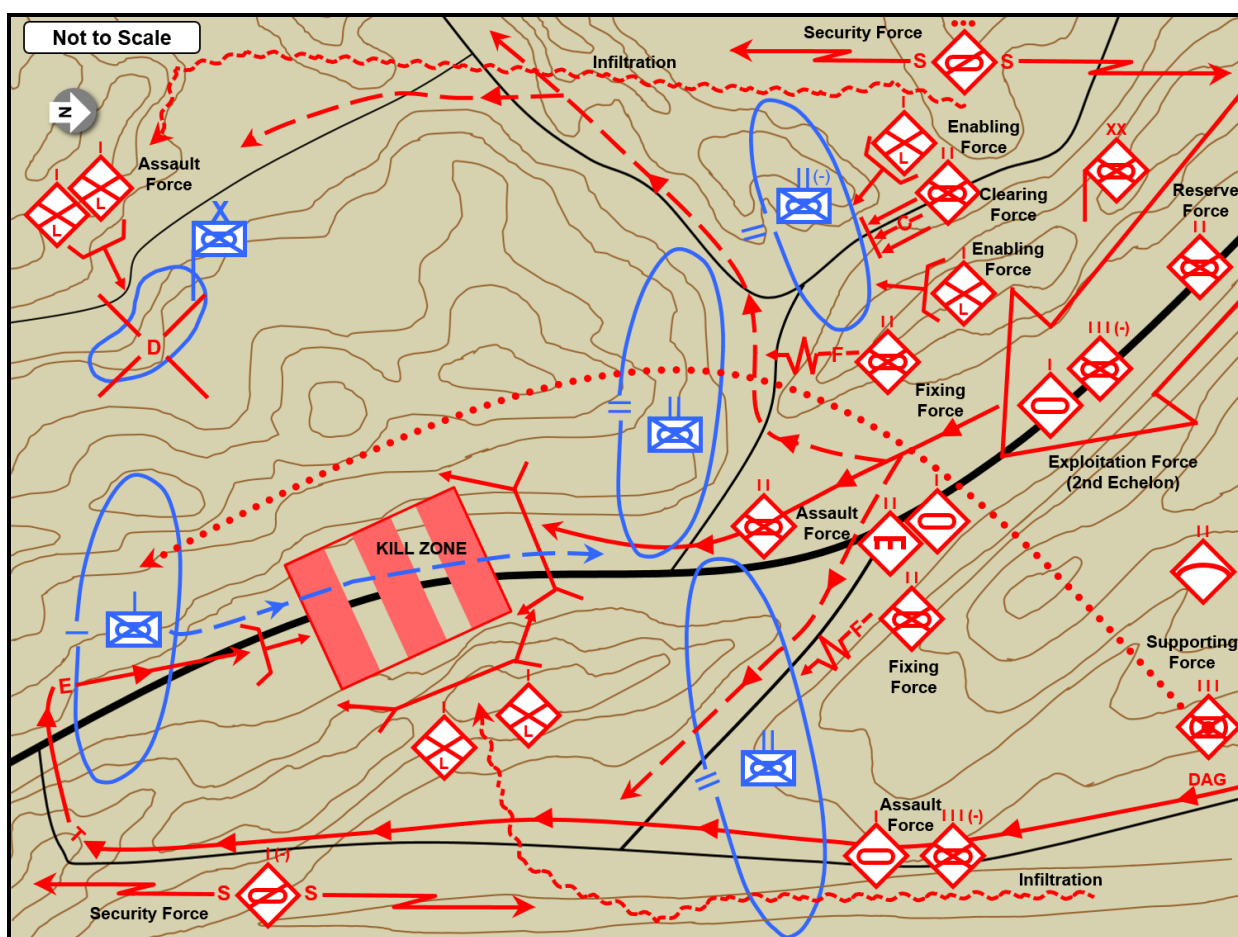
Lastly, the KPA doctrine calls for its forces to use the terrain to its best advantage with a focus on the mountains, poor weather, or night operations in order to minimize the effects of a technologically superior foe. Just like during the Korean War, the KPA will likely use the mountain ranges and ridges as an avenue of advance in bad weather or at night while its enemy focuses on the more easily accessible valley floor with its highways.



## Tactical Vignettes

The following vignettes explore two operational level and two tactical level actions in detail, accompanied by tactical diagrams to graphically depict the actions. Throughout the following four examples, references will be made to North Korean tactics and, when applicable, related to OPFOR tactics found in TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*. The terms will be shown in parenthesis where the North Korean tactic or term is translatable into TC 7-100.2 terminology.

### 1. Operational Offense: Encirclement (Dispersed Attack)



**Figure 3. KPA Division encirclement movement (dispersed attack) of an enemy brigade position. Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics, 2005, pp 86-87. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.**

Though a KPA division may conduct an encirclement movement at its operational level, many of the subordinate KPA units are involved in other forms of military movement as defined by KPA offensive doctrine. A KPA encirclement movement is the functional equivalent of the OPFOR dispersed attack described in TC 7-100.2, pages 3-13 to 3-16. While the KPA assault forces conduct the main attack in the form of an encirclement movement, the fixing forces may conduct thrust, penetration, or holding



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movements in its own areas of operation. In this example, one of the assault forces also conducts a turning movement before becoming part of the encirclement forces.<sup>59</sup>

A dispersed attack requires deliberate planning and can be accomplished with or without an advantage in forces over the defensive foe. To make an attack, the KPA requires only a 2:1 advantage at the point of the attack. The KPA doctrine designates that the main attack advance on a much narrower attack zone and this requires the rest of the division to disperse more widely throughout the remainder of the divisional front. The KPA commander's intent is to provide the appearance to the enemy that there is significant military force to its front to keep them from assisting other units. The division's four artillery battalions, three conventional and one rocket, are located in the Division Artillery Group (DAG). The DAG may receive additional indirect fire assets from the corps dependent upon whether the division is conducting the main or supporting attack. The DAG initiates the dispersed attack by indirectly firing artillery and rockets not only at the front line units, but at the brigade command post and brigade reserve as well. (For ease of clarity in this example, only one artillery round is shown.) The DAG's task is to provide adequate indirect fire in order to achieve neutralization of the brigade reserve; disrupt the command and control of the battalion command post; and to harass as minimum or neutralize, if possible, the front line units (see TC 7-100.2, p 9-2 to 9-3 for the definition of the terms harass, disrupt, and neutralize in regard to artillery battle damage assessment).<sup>60</sup>

The KPA Division uses its light infantry units (one battalion with six companies) on infiltration missions to initiate the attack during the night, a period of inclement weather, or during poor visibility. All six light infantry companies in the division take part in this example, but only two companies are involved in the actual main encirclement movement. On the western flank, two light infantry companies assist the mechanized battalion to clear a mountain pass that is a terrain chokepoint. The task of the light infantry company and the mechanized infantry battalion is to clear the pass to gain freedom of movement and allow possible exploitation from second echelon units (TC 7-100.2, p 3-1). (See Figure 4 below and its accompanying details for an example of a possible KPA thrust attack that could be used to clear this type of chokepoint.) Two other light infantry companies on the same flank infiltrate farther to the south to attack the enemy's brigade command post by fire in order to destroy it if not already eliminated by the artillery fire. On the eastern flank, the remainder of the light infantry battalion—two companies—infiltrate over the mountain ridge to serve as the support force on the eastern side of the planned kill zone. Even though there are adjacent KPA divisions also attacking, the division's recon company still protects the eastern flank of the main attack, especially as the main assault force makes its turning movement to the west and then north again. A single platoon screens the division's western flank by screening to prevent a surprise attack from the enemy from the adjacent division's areas of operation.<sup>61</sup>

Away from the main attack and the light infantry battalion activities, there are three other supporting attacks that occur almost simultaneously. This includes the thrust attack on the west flank already mentioned above, a holding maneuver to the west of the main attack (fixing attack in TC 7-100.2, p 3-5) and a penetration movement to the east of the main attack (also designated a fixing attack in TC 7-100.2, p 3-5). The engineer battalion and first echelon tank company are prepared to follow the main attack along the major road or along possible secondary avenues of approach to the east. The engineer battalion is prepared to assist with any breach operations required along the main axis of advance or the secondary axis located to the east. The second echelon units consisting of a tank company and two mechanized infantry battalions serve as the division's exploitation force and are back farther to follow

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whichever first echelon unit is most successful. The planned exploitation is along the main axis of advance, but could possibly go west through the cleared chokepoint to the west or if the penetration attack has been more successful than the main attack, farther to the east.

The main attack has many moving parts. One tank company and two mechanized infantry companies (Assault Force) would then conduct a turning movement from the east to attack the enemy's brigade reserve from the south. Its task is to get behind the enemy's brigade reserve with the purpose to drive it into the planned kill zone. If possible, the timing of this attack would occur just after the enemy's brigade reserve initiated its movement from its assembly area in a move to reinforce a gap in the front lines to its north. The planned KPA kill zone is located between the front line units and the brigade reserve force. If executed correctly, the tank company and two mechanized infantry battalions would attack by fire from the south; one mechanized infantry battalion with possibly a tank company would support by fire from the north. The intent is for the main assault force to annihilate the brigade reserve at its most vulnerable time, just as it begins its movement from the reserve assembly area. The two light infantry companies that infiltrated earlier support by fire from the east to prevent the reserve from escaping in that direction. The kill zone's fourth flank to the west is blocked by high ground. If necessary, indirect fire from artillery and rockets in the DAG could cover the west flank not covered by direct fire from ground units. Besides the second echelon units that will exploit the success of the first echelon assaults, the division will keep approximately one battalion in reserve for other contingencies. The division's organic air defense battalion will provide sector coverage for the area of operation (see TC 7-100.2, Chapter 11).<sup>62</sup>

Upon completion of the encirclement of the brigade reserve and any front-line units falling back into the kill zone and their annihilation, the KPA would continue its movement to the south. Based on its experiences during the Korean War, the KPA expects that if a significant penetration of the enemy's front lines occur, enemy adjacent units often conduct retrograde operations to maintain contact with its flanks and to avoid being cut off. If the KPA first echelon forces still maintain adequate forces, these units would continue to press the attack southward. If not strong enough to remain a viable force or based on the situation, the KPA division's second echelon forces could then pass through the first echelon to attack the enemy's combat support, combat service support, and C2 units in the division and/or corps rear area. The second echelon could follow the planned primary avenue of approach as the Assault Force (TC 7-100.2, p 3-5 to 3-6) or along the secondary roads to the east or west if either of those attacks yielded better success. In the tradition of old Soviet doctrine, the KPA will reinforce success and any KPA division plan will contain different route options for the second echelon units to follow based on the success of the first echelon units.<sup>63</sup>

While the size of the operation may vary depending on the level of command involved, the actions are very similar. Initially, the KPA will use artillery or mortars from the DAG or RAG (Regimental Artillery Group) to support the operation by providing indirect fire on the enemy positions. (For ease of clarity in

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this example, only one artillery attack is shown.) The RAG's task is to neutralize (TC 7-100.2, p 9-3) the enemy platoons to allow the enabling elements to successfully assault and occupy the positions overwatching the minefield placed on the road. Additionally, the artillery would be used as a fixing force to prevent any potential enemy forces from coming to the attacked unit's assistance. In this role, the artillery would neutralize (TC 7-100.2, p 9-3) the enemy artillery or enemy ground units that react to the attack on the enemy forces. SPF, spies, or forward observers that infiltrated (TC 7-100.2, p 9-15 to 9-17) to observation positions would provide the call for fire on arriving units attempting to reach the attacked units. For a battalion level thrust, 110 to 150 tubes (artillery, mortar, or rocket) could be allocated to the unit making the attack. Even though this battalion will have adjacent friendly units, the battalion commander would still provide security on his flanks to avoid an attack by the enemy without warning. The KPA commander would most likely use observation posts on high terrain or likely avenues of approach to warn the main body composed of soldiers internal to his battalion or the attached light infantry company.<sup>65</sup>

Due to the rugged terrain on the Korean peninsula, the KPA will likely use light infantry or possibly mechanized infantry operating dismounted to attack enemy units holding a physically difficult terrain feature. While the KPA would like a better force ratio, its ground forces will attack even if the assault force only possesses a 2:1 ratio advantage against the defenders. If possible, the KPA ground forces will use an indirect approach to attack the position from a direction the defensive unit least expects an assault. The enabling elements would eliminate the squad positions on either side of the road that are providing observation to the minefield for its breaching and then to give the battalion back its freedom of movement. While the attack by the enabling elements and the breaching occurred, additional security personnel would place observation posts on the most likely avenues of approach by enemy reserves that may come to the assaulted squads' assistance. Either the engineers, the infantry, or an attached obstacle removal company (only in forward divisions) would conduct the breaching operation in order to continue the advance as rapidly as possible to gain the freedom of movement needed by the mechanized battalion. If the infantry that made the actual enabling assault on the enemy squad positions were dismounted mechanized or motorized infantry, the successful attackers would rejoin their vehicles as the battalion regains its freedom of movement down the primary avenue of advance or secondary avenue if that route proved easier to traverse.<sup>66</sup>





## 3. Operational Defense: Anti-Tank Defense System (Maneuver Defense)

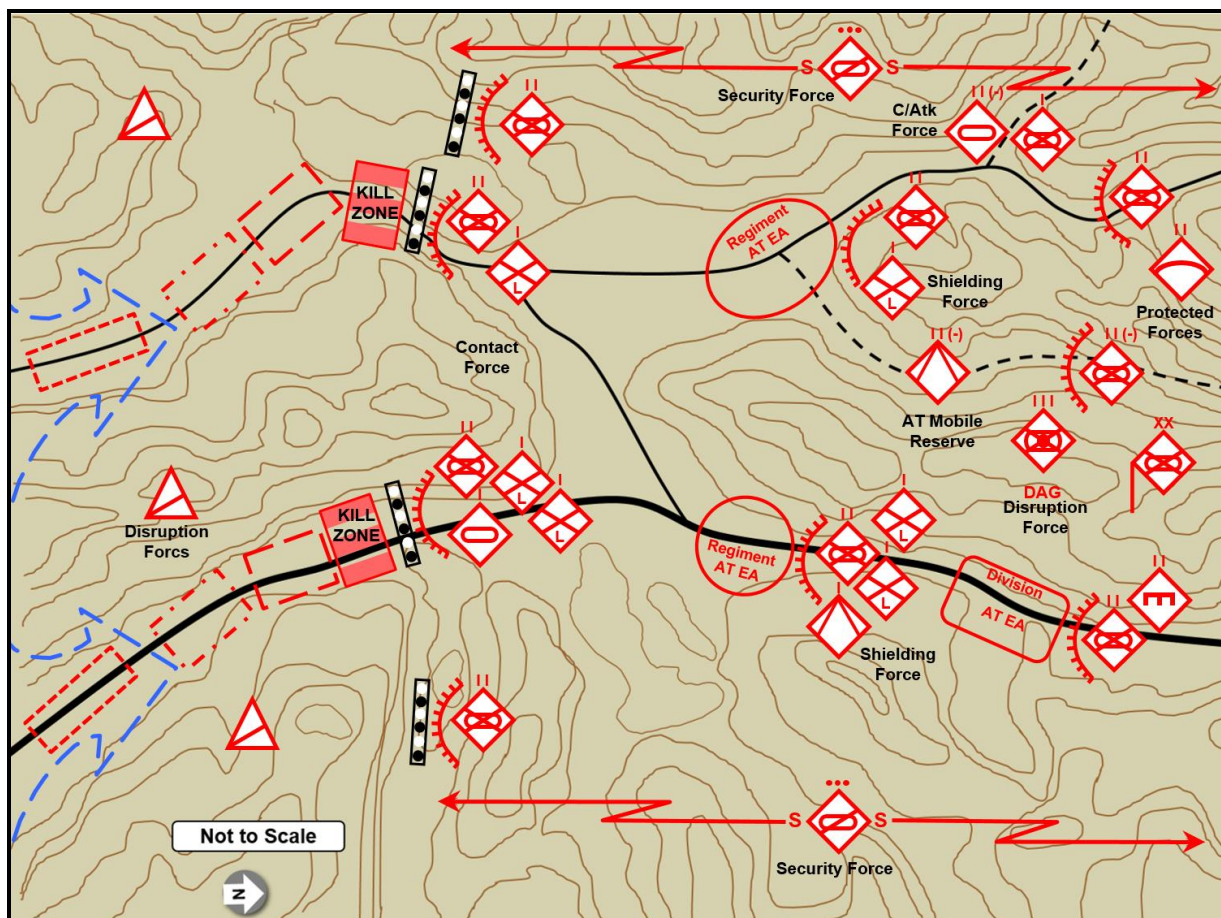


Figure 5. KPA Division Anti-Tank Defense System (Maneuver Defense). Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics*, 2005, pp 93-99. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

The area defense is the KPA's principal defensive tactic, which it designs around stopping the enemy's armor as the KPA leaders consider tanks as the enemy's most lethal ground attack vehicle. If on defense, the KPA plans to fight an anti-armor battle along the predictable routes that the enemy's vehicles will likely travel. The KPA's area defensive doctrine is the functional equivalent of the Maneuver Defense found in TC 7-100.2 (pp 4-10 to 4-14). The KPA breaks down its defensive plan into six phases: anti-armor obstacles, anti-armor fire plan, anti-tank defensive positions, anti-tank engagement areas, the anti-tank reserve, and the counterattack force.<sup>67</sup>

The KPA's defense phase 1 is the **Anti-Armor Obstacle Plan** that takes place in front of the forward defensive positions and within each anti-tank (AT) engagement area or kill zone (TC 7-100.2, p 2-15). The KPA will place these obstacle belts so they tie into the terrain and include a combination of AT and anti-personnel (AP) mines. The KPA will cover each concealed obstacle belt with both observers to call in

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indirect fire and direct fire weapons. The obstacle belts will consist of several layers positioned to take advantage of the KPA's various AT weapons' ranges, normally from 400 to 1,000 meters.<sup>68</sup>

Phase 2 or the **Anti-Armor Fire Plan** contains four sub-phases conducted by Disruption Forces based on the location of the enemy observed by security elements located ahead of the forward defensive line whose task is to call in indirect fire for the purpose of preventing an effective attack by the enemy (TC 7-100.2, p 4-4 to 4-5 and pp 9-15 to 9-17). During Phase 2a, the KPA plans *area fires* at potential chokepoints along the suspected avenues of approach, often along main roads. The KPA allocates two artillery battalions per each enemy company to its front. The KPA will fire mortars, artillery, or rockets at these chokepoints. The normal size of a battery target is approximately 100 meters wide by 900 meters deep. Phase 2b is a set of planned *rolling fires* approximately 2,000 meters in front of the forward battle positions with the purpose to disrupt and destroy armor march units as they transition to battle formations. The normal width for these barrages are 400 to 700 meters and may occur every 500 to 800 meters for a maximum of four times. Phase 2c or *anti-armor rectangular target fires* occurs immediately after Phase 2b. The primary difference between these two types of fire is that while the width is approximately the same (400 to 700 meters), the depth of the fire is less, 300 to 500 meters, and is fired in three sequential volleys first by rockets, then by artillery, and lastly by mortars as opposing forces approach the obstacle belts. Anti-armor rectangular fire will cease at the obstacle belt along the forward battle positions. Phase 2d or the *direct-fire fight* begins at the forward defensive obstacle belts where tanks, AT guns, recoilless rifles, and RPGs fire at their maximum ranges while KPA soldiers fight the enemy's infantry. The KPA plans indirect final protective fire when the enemy closes to within 300 meters of the KPA's front line forces.<sup>69</sup>

Phase 3 is the **AT Defensive Position** planned by the regimental commander, but executed by the battalion commander. The AT defensive position is not shown in detail on this map, but see the next example for a diagram and a detail description of the KPA's defensive position. The AT defensive position will be set up along the most likely armor avenue of approach into the forward infantry regiment's area. Any units or personnel in the forward units that are not killed by the enemy will remain behind to set up stay behind ambushes of enemy combat support and combat service support units as they enter the overrun unit's area of operations.<sup>70</sup>

Phase 4 or the **AT Engagement Area** is similar to the AT defensive position, but occurs at the regimental or divisional level. Any enemy forces that pass successfully through the forward regiments' battalion AT defensive positions will likely run into an AT engagement area set up by other first or second echelon units. The KPA will likely allocate two platoons of SU-100 howitzers to use in a direct fire role and up to two RPG-7 platoons for a regimental or divisional level AT engagement area. Any additional weapons systems that might be available such as tanks and recoilless rifles can also be used. The regimental or divisional commander will select a location so that the enemy force will be channelized and then can be attacked on three, if not four sides. The attack is similar to the AT defensive position described in the example below, but on a much larger scale.<sup>71</sup>

Phase 5 is the **AT Mobile Reserve** (TC 7-100.2, p 4-6) that is designed to destroy any tanks that appear unexpectedly within the KPA's defensive system, especially in the vulnerable rear areas. This AT mobile reserve would confront any enemy tanks that manage to get through the AT defensive positions, the regimental engagement areas, and the division engagement areas. Each KPA division normally keeps two AT companies for this role and locates them between the division's first and second echelons.<sup>72</sup>



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The counter attack conducted by the **Counterattack Force** (TC 7-100.2, p 4-5 to 4-6) is Phase 6 and the final piece of the KPA defensive plan. All regimental and higher units will possess a plan to conduct a counterattack to eliminate any enemy penetrations into its lines. Only the division counterattack force (two tank companies and a mechanized infantry company) is shown on the diagram, but each battalion, regiment, division, and corps will designate a counterattack force. Once a penetration becomes a possibility, the appropriate KPA commander will attempt to predict the direction the penetration will continue and then select a counterattack position, normally one kilometer to the rear of the penetrated unit. The type of counterattack chosen by the KPA commander will depend on the depth of the penetration (the rear area of that level of unit) and the criticality of the position penetrated. The normal KPA procedure is to conduct a rapid counterattack for a company-level penetration, a standard counterattack for a battalion-level penetration, and a delayed counterattack for a regimental penetration level. The difference between the types of counterattacks is how fast the mission can be executed. The key to reading the counterattack chart below is that if a KPA infantry regiment received the mission to counterattack the penetration of one of its first echelon battalions, it would need to conduct a delayed counterattack (the longest of the three types of KPA counterattacks before the mission can be accomplished) that takes additional time and planning to execute. The division, however, might be able to respond quicker with a standard counterattack against the same penetration while the corps could respond the fastest with a rapid counterattack. The situation at the time and what counterattack force was available could also dictate what unit received the counterattack mission. Once the unit chosen for the counterattack method is designated, the depth of the penetration into the KPA's lines would determine what method the counterattack force would employ against the penetration.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 2. KPA Counterattack Type/Criteria<sup>74</sup>**

Counterattack Type	Regiment	Division	Corps
Rapid Counterattack	1st Echelon Platoon Penetration	1st Echelon Company Penetration	1st Echelon Battalion Penetration
Standard Counterattack	1st Echelon Company Penetration	1st Echelon Battalion Penetration	1st Echelon Regiment Penetration
Delayed Counterattack	1st Echelon Battalion Penetration	1st Echelon Regiment Penetration	1st Defense Zone Penetration



## 4. Tactical Defense: Anti-Tank Defensive Position (Area Defense)

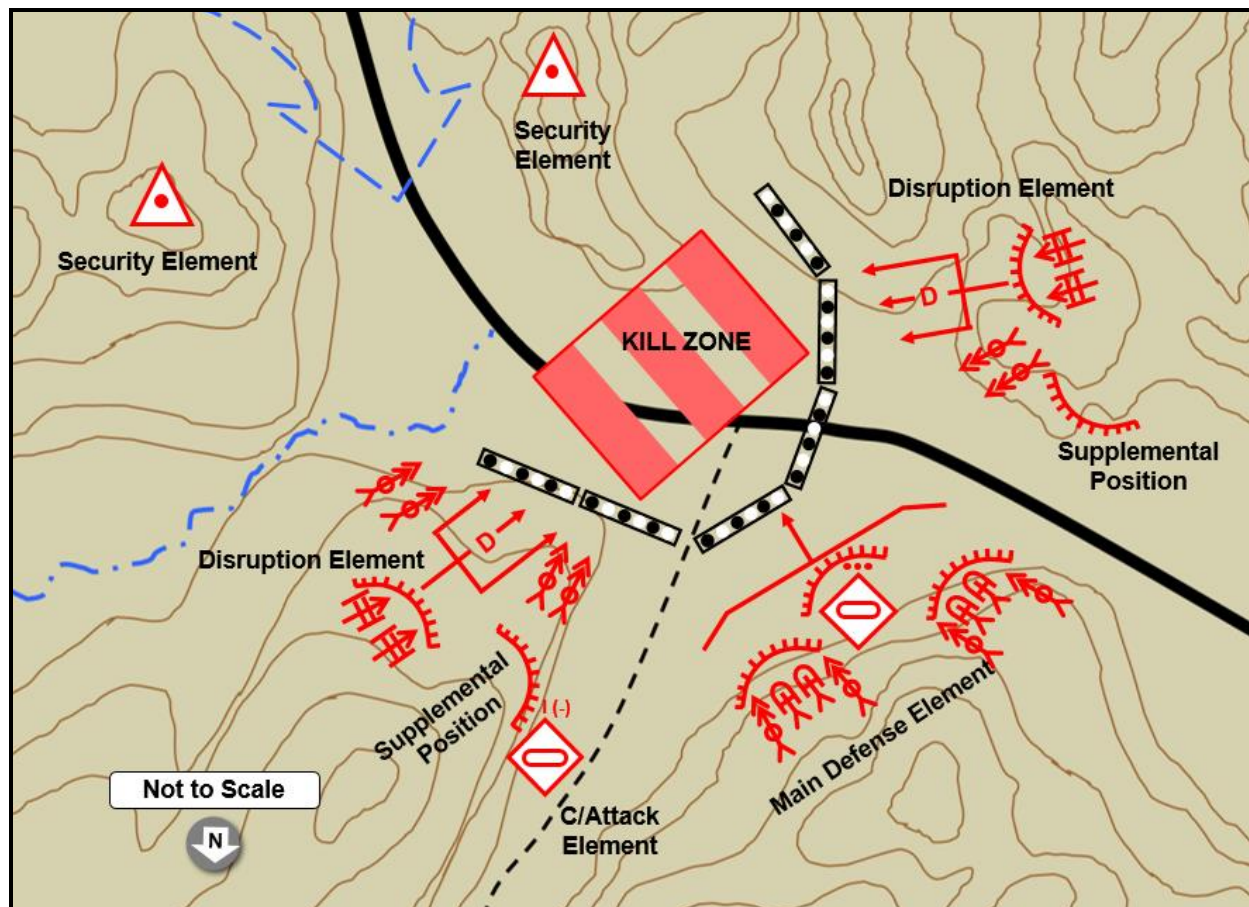


Figure 6. KPA Battalion Anti-Tank Defensive Position (Area Defense). Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics*, 2005, pp 96-97. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

The anti-tank (AT) defensive position is phase 3 of the six phases of the KPA's defensive battle plan described previously. The regimental commander designates and plans the main effort battalion's AT defensive position. The regimental commander will often select a parallel forward ridgeline so that the armor vehicles can be hit by a crossfire from two, if not, three directions. The battalion creating this defensive position will receive additional resources such as anti-tank missiles and/or recoilless rifles. (See area defense in TC 7-100.2, pages 4-14 to 4-18.) The purpose of the area defense is to force the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before its objectives are obtained and to deny the enemy its objectives while preserving combat power until a decision in the KPA's favor can be reached through operational or strategic operations.<sup>75</sup>

The KPA considers enemy armor to be the most deadly ground threat, and the elimination of the armor threat takes priority during defensive planning. When the enemy armor enters artillery range, the Observation Posts' (TC 7-100.2, p 8-13) task is to locate and observe the armor and its purpose is to provide security for the main defensive position as well as to call for indirect fire from the disruption



force. See previous example for additional indirect fire details, but the artillery is not shown in this example for simplicity. When the enemy armor is within range, the Main Defense Force Element (TC 7-100.2, pp 4-5 and 4-21) composed of tanks and AT guns, such as Sappers, engages the enemy with direct fire. The main defense force's task is to attack by direct fire with a mission to destroy the enemy armor. As the enemy armor continues to advance, the vehicles will meet an AT/AP minefield where disruption elements with recoilless rifles and RPG-7s will engage as the vehicles become bogged down trying to breach the minefield. The disruption elements' (TC 7-100.2, pp 4-5, 4-20 to 4-21) task is to support by fire with its purpose to contain the enemy within the kill zone and to prevent the armor from flanking the defensive battalion's position. During this time, the main defense force continue to engage the enemy in the kill zone. Any armor vehicles that make it through the minefield will be attacked by additional RPG-7 teams of the Disruption Force with the task to support by fire with the mission to prevent the armor from escaping from the desired axis of advance. Any AT weapons from the forward position disruption forces that are still operational can relocate to supplemental positions to continue to engage the enemy armor that made it successfully through the kill zone to eliminate those vehicles. The KPA battalion commander will possess a counterattack element (TC 7-100.2, p 4.5 and 4-21) composed of armor and/or AT weapon systems, often hidden from view and shielded from direct fire on the reverse slope of a hill. On order, the counterattack element of two tank platoons will maneuver and attack the enemy's flank with the purpose to destroy the remaining armor threat before the enemy escapes the AT defensive position. Even if some armor vehicles pass through this first echelon AT defensive position, those elements could face other AT defensive positions, regimental AT engagement areas, or even possibly a division engagement area. Any surviving soldiers and operational weapons systems will continue to engage the attackers, often as a stay behind ambush force focused on unsuspecting combat support or combat service support units that may pass along the avenue of advance.<sup>76</sup>

## Section 3: KPA Weapons and Equipment

North Korea fields one of the world's largest militaries, but its equipment ranges from World War II vintage to the most modern. The modern equipment, however, is only in niche areas such as ballistic missiles. There are many sources, such as *Jane's* or *Military Periscope*, for a breakdown of the quantity and types of equipment. Only selected equipment will be discussed here.<sup>77</sup>

### Army

The KPA is composed of both armor and light units, with large quantities of artillery to provide indirect fire support to both types. The KPA possesses at least 3,700 medium and light tanks that range from the T-34/85 produced in World War II to the *Songun-ho*, North Korea's internally-produced tank that combines technologies of the Soviet/Russian T-62, T-72, T-80, and T-90, and the Chinese-produced Type 88 main battle tank (MBT). For information on North Korean tanks, see the two-part series in the TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration [Red Diamond](#) newsletter (published in the May and June 2015 issues). The KPA can also deploy at least 2,100 infantry fighting vehicles or armored personnel carriers, many of them in the BTR family of vehicles. See the TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration product, "[The BTR Handbook-The Universal APC](#)," for additional details on the BTR's capabilities. The KPA ground forces receive indirect fire support from over 13,500 artillery pieces that include mortars, cannons, guns,

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and howitzers that range from 1930s technology to more modern vintage; free-rocket-over-ground (FROG) missiles based on 1960s and 1970s knowledge; and multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLS) that consist of Soviet-era types to present-day production models. The KPA also possesses over 15,600 anti-aircraft artillery (AA) pieces including single, double, and quad AA guns; missile launchers; and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS).<sup>78</sup>

## Air Force

The KPAF, a subordinate element of the KPA, operates an air fleet of approximately 1,600 aircraft of all types. This includes approximately 80 bombers, 780 fighters, 300 An-2 biplanes, 100 support aircraft, and 300 helicopters. Many of these aircraft are outdated, but the KPAF does fly some formidable fighters, such as the MiG-29 and the slightly-outdated MiG-21 and MiG-23. The An-2 biplane is used to insert KPA SPF elements. The KPAF operates approximately 139 Mi-2 Hoplite and 20 Mi-24 Hind helicopters. The KPA SPF forces can also use MD-500D/E helicopters, ironically originally produced in the US, to insert SPF personnel. The KPAF is also taking advantage of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and possesses over 300 UAVs of various models and technological levels.<sup>79</sup>

## Navy

While the KPN operates approximately 1,000 vessels of all types, most of them are not that large and are used primarily for SPF operations, amphibious assaults, and coastal defense. The most formidable of the KPN's ships are the 20 ROMEO Class attack submarines that could operate against enemy surface ships. The KPN also fields over 80 midget submarines that would likely deliver SPF personnel to either coast of South Korea. The KPN operates approximately 430 surface combatant ships and 260 landing craft. Many of these, however, are in dry dock and inoperable. In addition, the Ministry of People's Armed Forces Coastal Security Bureau operates 150 corvettes, guided-missile patrol boats, torpedo boats, and fire support boats. The KPN also is responsible for coastal defense, with coastal defense guns on both its east and west coasts as well as surface-to-surface missile batteries.<sup>80</sup>

## Section 4: North Korean Military Organization

North Korea operates a conventional military with a strong SPF capable of irregular warfare. Due to the lack of modern weapons and equipment with a few exceptions—nuclear weapons, missiles, and submarines—even the conventional army may use a number irregular force tactics including information warfare (INFOWAR) in its operations. The following tables provide the locations of the major KPA, KPAF, and KPN units or bases as well as the locations of most North Korean runways. The numbers in the last column of each chart correspond with its approximate location on the associated map in Section 1 under locations.

**Table 3. Major North Korean Army Unit Locations**

Unit	Headquarters	Map #
1 District Command	Wonsan	1
I Army Corps	Hoeyang	2
II Army Corps	Hanpori	3

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Unit	Headquarters	Map #
III Army Corps	Kaechon	4
IV Army Corps	Haeju	5
V Army Corps	Hupyong Ni	6
VII Army Corps	Tongsin	7
VIII Army Corps	Tongnim (Changhong)	8
IX Army Corps	Hamgyong Province	9
X Army Corps	Yanggang Province	10
108 Mechanized Corps	Hamhung	11
425 Mechanized Corps	Chongju	12
Pyongyang Defense Command	Pyongyang Si	13
Pyongyang Air Defense Command	Sonnae-san	13
11 'Storm' Corps (Light Infantry Training Guidance Bureau)	Unknown	NA
Strategic Rocket Forces Command	Suhoe Dong	14

**Table 4. Major Air Force Unit Locations<sup>81</sup>**

Unit	Locations	Map #s
<b>1 Air Combat Division</b>	Kaechon Military Air Base (MAB), Uji MAB, Sunchon MAB, Onchon Up MAB, Pukchang Ni MAB, Panghyon MAB; Yonggang Ni Helicopter Base, Kangdong MAB, Sonchon Helicopter Base, Sunan International Airport	4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 13
<b>2 Air Combat Division</b>	Toksan MAB, Hwangsuwon MAB, Iwon Airport, Changjin MAB	21, 22, 23, 24
<b>3 Air Combat Division</b>	Hwangju MAB, Koksan Airport, Kwail MAB, Hyon Ni MAB, Nuchon Ni Airport, Taetan MAB	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
<b>5 Air Transport Division</b>	Kwakson MAB, Manpo MAB, Taechon MAB, Sunan International Airport, Sonchon Helicopter Base, Pukchang East Helicopter Base, Sinjju Airport	31, 32, 33, 13, 17, 34
<b>6 Air Transport Division</b>	Sondok MAB, Yonpo MAB	35, 36
<b>8 Air Training Division</b>	Orang MAB, Samjiyon MAB, Kyongsong Chuul MAB, Sungam Ni Air Base, Kuktong MAB	37, 38, 39, 40

**Table 5. Major Navy Unit Locations**

Unit	Location	Map #s
<b>Naval Headquarters</b>	Pyongyang	13
<b>East Fleet (Headquarters)</b>	Toejo Dong	41
<b>1 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)</b>	Kosong	42
<b>2 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)</b>	Munchon Up	43
<b>3 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)</b>	Nagwon Up (Yoho Ri)	44
<b>4 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)</b>	Mayang Do	45



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Unit	Location	Map #s
5 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)	Chaho	46
6 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)	Puam Dong	47
7 Naval Squadron (East Fleet)	Najin	48
West Fleet Headquarters	Nampo	16
8 Naval Squadron (West Fleet)	Sagon Ni	49
9 Naval Squadron (West Fleet)	Chodo	50
11 Naval Squadron (West Fleet)	Pipa Got	51
12 Naval Squadron (West Fleet)	Yongdok and Yomjugun (Yongampo)	52, 53

## Military Capabilities

### Command and Control

The KPA's ground units are the DPRK's primary military force. The KPAF and KPN support the KPA ground forces, primarily through defense of the homeland and the deployment of SPF in the enemy's rear area. The KPA uses the old Soviet C2 structure with a highly structured chain of command. While the KPA trains its soldiers to operate at the next higher command level, many commanders may hesitate or show the initiative desired by the chain of command in fear of doing the wrong thing if out of communication with his/her superior for an extended period or if a break occurs in the chain of command. Since he took over in December 2011, Kim Jong Un has selected four different officers to lead his military, showing that the DPRK's supreme leader may possess little tolerance for failure.<sup>82</sup>

### Maneuver

The KPA will use old Soviet tactics along the mobile corridors that are usually found on the valley floors. The armored and mechanized forces will likely place two-thirds of its ground forces forward in the first echelon and a little less than one-third in its second attack echelon. The light infantry will likely travel via the mountain ranges or ridges on foot. KPA SPF will likely land in its enemy's rear areas by sea, helicopter, plane, or via a tunnel. While the US and South Korean forces may become mesmerized by the mobile units in front of them and concentrate their attention on the armor units, the US/South Korean forces will need to watch their flanks and sides for attacks on foot by light infantry forces or SPF units coming from an unexpected direction.<sup>83</sup>

### INFOWAR

The DPRK will likely use the seven INFOWAR capabilities—electronic warfare (EW), computer attack, information attack, deception, physical destruction, protection and security measures, and perception management—as best they can. North Korea has already practiced EW with several previous attacks against South Korean GPS systems. The hacking of Sony shows that the DPRK, despite North Korea's denial of the cyberattack, also possesses the ability to attack its enemy's computer networks. As discussed earlier, the KPA places great emphasis on camouflage, a major component of deception operations. The common North Korean cannot access the Internet so there is little social media in the





DPRK. The DPRK attempts to manage the perception of its own people through the control of the information environment. The KPA will also likely use old school techniques such as leaflets and other propaganda methods to attempt to turn South Koreans. See the *Red Diamond* articles from November 2014 and January 2015 for additional details on North Korean [INFOWAR](#) capabilities.<sup>84</sup>

## RISTA

The KPA emphasizes reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition (RISTA) capabilities and will use its intelligence resources to gain information about its enemies. North Korea will also use spies and SPF units in its enemy's rear area to conduct its RISTA activities. The KPA can deploy up to three separate reconnaissance brigades from theater-level assets to conduct RISTA activities. The SPF and agents already planted in country could assist with the location of strategic targets. In addition, each KPA ground unit from corps to regiment fields its own reconnaissance unit—battalion for the corps, company for the division, and platoon for the regiment. The KPA will also be able to use its UAV fleet of over 300 unmanned aircraft to obtain additional information on the enemy.<sup>85</sup>

## Fire Support

The KPA doctrine is similar to old Soviet doctrine with heavy emphasis on artillery, missiles, and multiple rocket launchers combined on a single target. If aviation assets are available and not involved in homeland defense, the KPAF will most likely use any additional aviation assets to provide close air support to the KPA ground forces.<sup>86</sup>

## Protection

KPA doctrine, due to its belief that its forces cannot achieve air superiority against most of its enemies, expounds maximum use of both active and passive camouflage, concealment, and deception in order to prevent the enemy from locating KPA units and important static positions. The more ordnance that its enemy uses against decoys, the less ordnance will hit actual KPA units, positions, buildings, and weapons.<sup>87</sup>

## Logistics

While KPA doctrine states that adequate logistics is important, it is most likely that the DPRK will run out of vital supplies within a short time of the onset of any military operation. It is likely that South Korea maintains a two- to three-month stockpile of food and POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants). North Korea maintains at least one million tons of rice in storage for potential military operations and only under the severest conditions will it release some of its stores to help the North Korean citizens avoid starvation. In any case, the capture of enemy food, equipment, and ammunition will become a priority for the KPA in order to continue its military operations for a sustained period of time. The DPRK may have up to 10 million barrels of fuel in storage for wartime use. In 2011, the DPRK purchased between 3,000 and 4,000 trucks from China for its military. There are 180 arms factories in North Korea along with about 115 nonmilitary factories that have a dedicated wartime materiel production mission. The theory of *sonjun* or "military first" means that any supplies that are available will go to the KPA before civilians.<sup>88</sup>

The General Rear Service Bureau is responsible for all KPA logistics and combat service support operations. This bureau appears to be bloated with at least 15 different subordinate organizations including bureaus for Buildings Management, Clothing, Energy, External Affairs, Farm Management,

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Finance, Medical Service, Military Decorations Management, Munitions Production, Organization and Planning, Provisions, Rear Service Political Operations, Road Management, Vehicle Management, and Veterinary Services. This large bureaucracy may reduce the effectiveness of the KPA in military operations.<sup>89</sup>

## Air Defense

KPA's air defense operates primarily from the ground and not from counter-air operations in the sky. While North Korea possesses one of the most dense air defense networks in the world, it is comprised mostly of obsolete weapons, including its radar, and its air defense weapons are most effective at low altitude targets. Many of the air defense units are situated to protect Pyongyang, the DPRK capital city, instead of military units or installations.<sup>90</sup>

## UAVs

North Korea operates at least eight different types of UAVs and maintains an inventory of at least 300 UAVs. Many of these UAVs are outdated models and include the D-4, the Durumi, the MQM-107D, the Panghyon I/II, the Pchela-1T, the Sky-09P, the Shmel, and at least one other unidentified model. The KPAF and the Reconnaissance General Bureau operate the North Korean UAV fleet. There have been known cases where DPRK UAVs have violated the southern boundary of the DMZ, but the North Korean government always denies that the downed UAVs in South Korean territory belong to them.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

The DPRK's unorthodox use of provocation in order to obtain concessions from its enemies—especially the US, South Korea, and Japan—is a danger. One never knows what North Korea will do next as, in the past, the DPRK has sanctioned assassination attempts on South Korean political leaders and conducted bombings when South Korean contingents are in another country, unannounced attacks on ships by submarines, unprovoked artillery attacks, or has tunneled underground into another country. US military personnel stationed in South Korea must be prepared for the unexpected from the DPRK.<sup>92</sup>

One of these incidents could ignite the Korean peninsula back into a full-blown war. While an armistice has been in place since 1953, an armistice is just a ceasefire waiting for a peace treaty to be signed or for the resumption of hostilities. Any conflict between North and South Korea would inevitably bring the US into the conflict as the ROK has been an ally for over six decades.

North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons and the missiles to transport it up to 9,650 km makes it a threat to US forces stationed in Korea, Japan, Alaska, or even the west coast of the continental United States. Even more concerning was the DPRK's first successful test launch of a KN-11 missile from a submarine on 23 January 2015 since, in the near future, the North Korean submarines could silently move closer to their targets before launching a nuclear missile that would give the US less warning time. If the DPRK thought that the survival of its country or the Kim regime was at stake, North Korea might use any nuclear weapons at its disposal. The KPA also possesses chemical weapons and its doctrine calls for their employment. The DPRK is also involved in biological weapons research and would likely use those with offensive capabilities. US military personnel training for deployment to South Korea must be prepared to fight in a chemical, biological, or nuclear environment.<sup>93</sup>

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The KPA fields a large conventional military force of over one million soldiers, airmen, and sailors with over seven million uniformed personnel in reserve. North Korea also possesses one of the largest SPF in the world. The KPA will fight using conventional tactics, but will also use unconventional tactics on the “second front,” especially against rear areas. The US military must be prepared to fight this dual threat—conventional war on the ground from the north with irregular warfare in its rear areas. The KPA emphasizes the attack on an enemy’s rear, so US combat support and combat service personnel must be vigilant and be ready to fight the enemy while they continue to provide support to the American combat soldier on the front lines.

## REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS APPLIED TO TRAINING

Of the five DATE countries, the one that most resembles North Korea is Ariana. Militarily, Ariana is the second strongest country in DATE, but is more representative of North Korea than the strongest country, Donovia. Ariana, however, fields more modern equipment and weapons than North Korea. Exercise planners may need to reduce the equipment tier level for Ariana to more closely replicate North Korea. While politically Ariana is a theocracy and North Korea an oligarchy, both countries are ruled by a small group of people. The difference is that Ariana is ruled by elites from a particular religion while North Korea is ruled by a small number of elites being related to or are close friends with the three generations of the Kim family, the family that has ruled North Korea since the end of World War II. For the other six variables, the DATE could be easily modified to replicate conditions in North Korea.

- North Korea primarily uses Soviet/Russian/Eastern bloc weapons systems. These are the legacy systems that the OPFORs have used at the Combat Training Centers (CTCs) for years. There should be no issues with replication of these former Eastern bloc weapons systems at the CTCs, but it could be more difficult to successfully imitate these weapons systems during home station training.
- All tactical tools needed to recreate North Korean tactics in training exercise are available in the TC 7-100 series; many of them are based on old Soviet tactics modified for the Korean peninsula. Home station OPFOR personnel would likely need some additional training to better use the tactics and techniques favored by North Korea, but the training will be more greatly enhanced than if the OPFOR used modified American methods.
- The terrain of North Korea would be hard to replicate at any of the CTCs. Fort Irwin is in the desert and there is no similar environment in either one of the Koreas. The Korean peninsula is very mountainous and that is not the terrain found at either the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana or the Joint Maneuver Training Center in Germany. Home station training may be difficult depending on the location of the unit. For the most part, however, most infantry and armor divisions are stationed at posts that are not mountainous enough to resemble North Korea. Some Army National Guard combat arms units could find similar terrain to what is found in North Korea, but others could not.

The [Army Training Network](#) (ATN) provides US Soldiers with access to a variety of resources that would assist them with their preparation for deployment to South Korea. These products include.

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- Field Manual (FM) 7-100.1: [Opposing Force Operations \(December 2004\)](#): This manual is one of a series that describes a contemporary opposing force (OPFOR) for training US Army commanders, staffs, and units. It and the other manuals in the series outline an OPFOR that can cover the entire spectrum of military and paramilitary capabilities against which the Army must train to ensure success in any future conflict.
- Training Circular (TC) 7-100.4: [Hybrid Threat Force Structure Organization Guide \(June 2015\)](#): The OPFOR organizations outlined in TC 7-100.4 and the associated online organizational directories represent a realistic composite of potential adversaries the Army might encounter in real-world situations of the near- and mid-term.
- TC 7-100: [Hybrid Threat \(November 2010\)](#): This TC describes hybrid threats and summarizes the manner in which such future threats may operationally organized to fight US forces. It also outlines the strategy, operations, tactics and organization of the Hybrid Threat that represents a composite of actual threat forces as an OPFOR for training exercises.
- TC 7-100.2: [Opposing Force Tactics \(December 2011\)](#): Provides tactics for an OPFOR that exists for the purpose of training US forces for potential combat operations.
- TC 7-100.3: [Irregular Opposing Forces \(January 2014\)](#): This TC addresses the irregular opposing force (OPFOR) and represents a composite of actual threats and enemies that comprise irregular forces. The three primary categories of irregular forces are insurgents, guerrillas, and criminals. These actors may operate separately or in conjunction with one another and/or combined with regular military forces as the Hybrid Threat. Included are functional tactics for irregular forces.
- TC 7-101: [Exercise Design Guide \(November 2010\)](#): This TC outlines a methodology for designing and executing training exercises.
- TC 7-102: [Operational Environment and Army Learning \(November 2014\)](#): This TC presents concise and enduring doctrine-based guidance on how to integrate the variables of an operational environment (OE) into Army training, education, and leader development.
- US Army TRADOC G-2 Handbook No. 1.08, [Irregular Forces \(December 2010\)](#): This handbook describes the contemporary irregular forces and summarizes irregular threat actions to counter US forces in the OE. The handbook describes irregular force tactics; forms of offensive and defensive operations; irregular tactics, techniques, and terrorism; and the irregular forces planning cycle.
- [Worldwide Equipment Guide \(WEG\)—2014](#): The WEG is a list of equipment that US forces would most likely find used by its enemies on the battlefield. While not all weapons and weapons systems are listed in the WEG, similar weapons can be found. The WEG also tells how an exercise planner substitutes a weapon or vehicle in the WEG for one found in the actual military that is being replicated for the exercise.
- [Decisive Action Training Environment](#) (April 2015): The purpose of this Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) document, version 2.2, is to provide the US Army training community with a detailed description of the conditions of five composite OEs in the Caucasus region. It presents trainers with a tool to assist in the construction of scenarios for specific training events, but does

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not provide a complete scenario. The DATE offers discussions of OE conditions through the political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT) variables. The DATE incorporates real-world data and artificial data in order to set the conditions for a wide range of training events, to include decisive operations.

- Regionally Aligned Forces Training Environment (RAFTE) [Pacific](#) (September 2014): A RAFTE is intended to be used when already familiar with DATE. A RAFTE is a supplement to DATE that can be used when training must occur for operations in a known part of the world. A RAFTE identifies the conditions of a selected OE that are unique from what is already in the DATE. It will enable training based on current conditions specific to an OE, in this case most of the countries that fall under the responsibility of the Pacific Command (PACOM). RAFTEs are different but not separate from the DATE.
- RAFTE [North Korea](#) (April 2014): This is a RAFTE specifically focused on North Korea.
- [Information Environment Assessment](#) (June 2008): This product describes the Information Environment for a number of countries including North Korea.
- [North Korea Operational Environment Assessment](#) (OEA) (2006): This is the most current OEA published by ACE Threats Integration, but is mostly outdated since it is nearly a decade old. Many changes have occurred since its publication including the death of Kim Jong Il and the succession of his son, Kim Jong Un. Some information, especially in the Physical Environment variable, is still valid.
- Asymmetrical Warfare Group (AWG) [Subterranean Warfare Handbook](#). This FOUO handbook contains a section on North Korean use of tunneling operations.
- [Red Diamond Newsletters Articles](#)
  - March 2015: [North Korean Leadership Turmoil](#)
  - January 2015: [INFOWAR-North Korean Capabilities \(Part 2\)](#)
  - November 2014: [INFOWAR-North Korean Capabilities \(Part 1\)](#)
  - July 2014: [Unmanned Aircraft System Vulnerabilities](#)
  - May 2014: [The BRDM: The Multi-Purpose Reconnaissance Vehicle](#)
  - August 2013: [Shaping the North Korean EMP Threat](#)
  - June 2012: [North Korean Jamming of GPS Systems](#)
- [North Korea GPS Jamming](#): This ACE Threats Integration Threat Report examines the jamming of South Korean GPS signals by North Korea.
- [BTR: The Universal APC Handbook](#): This ACE Threats Integration Handbook describes the various BTR variants on the battlefield. The KPA fields a large number and a variety of BTRs.

The following chart provides a connection between the real-world condition in North Korea, a comparable example of the condition in [DATE](#) as well as the relevant pages from the threat Field Manuals, Training Circulars, or other product. The page numbers where these connections can be found

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are also listed in the chart. To find the product, use the links to the documents listed in the previous section.

## Conditions in DATE and Doctrine

Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Chapter/section/word or phrase to search	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
<b>DPRK Oligarchy Government</b>	National Command Authority; Centers of Political Power-Family Authority	DATE 2A, 2B, 2D, 2E; National Command Authority; Centers of Political Power	National Command Authority	FM 7-100.1, 1-2; TC 7-101, 3-2 to 3-6; TC 7-102, 1-4; TC 7-100.2, 1-1 to 1-2
<b>DPRK Strategic Goals</b>	National Strategic Goals/Strategy	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; National Strategic Goals; Strategy	National Strategic Goals	FM 7-100.1, 1-2; TC 7-100.2, 1-3 to 1.4
<b>DPRK National Security Strategy Framework</b>	Military Authority	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Military Authority	Framework for implementing National Security Strategy	FM 7-100.1, 1-2 to 1-5; TC 7-100.2, 1-4 to 1.5
<b>DPRK Strategic Operations</b>	Strategic Operations	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Strategic Operations	Strategic Operations	FM 7-100.1, 1-8 to 1-9; TC 7-100.2, 1-5
<b>DPRK Regional Operations</b>	Regional Operations	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Regional Operations	Regional Operations	FM 7-100.1, 1-9 to 1-10; TC 7-100.2, 1-5 to 1-6
<b>DPRK Transition Operations</b>	Transition Operations	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Transition Operations	Transition Operations	FM 7-100.1, 1-10 to 1-12; TC 7-100.2, 1-6
<b>DPRK SPF Operations</b>	Adaptive Operations/Hybrid Threats	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Adaptive Operations; Hybrid Threat	Adaptive Operations/Hybrid Threats	FM 7-100.1, 1-12; TC 7-100; TC 7-100.2, 1-6
<b>DPRK Nuclear Capability</b>	CBRN; Nuclear Power	DATE 2A, 2B, 2E; Nuclear; CBRN	Cause Politically Unacceptable Casualties	FM 7-100.1, 1-15
<b>DPRK Lack of Technology</b>			Neutralize Technological Overmatch	FM 7-100.1, 1-15 to 1-16
<b>DPRK Annihilation Doctrine</b>			Allow no sanctuary	FM 7-100.1, 1-17
<b>DPRK Paramilitary Forces</b>	Government Paramilitary Forces; 7 million reservists	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; RAFFE-North Korea; Paramilitary; Reserve	Role of Paramilitary & Irregular Forces in Operations	FM 7-100.1, 1-20; TC 7-100, 2-5; TC 7-100.2, 1-16
<b>DPRK Internal Security Forces</b>	Internal Security Forces	DATE 2E; Internal Security	Internal Security Forces	FM 7-100.1, 1-20 to 1-21
<b>DPRK Centralized Planning</b>			Centralized Planning	FM 7-100.1, 2-2
<b>DPRK</b>			Decentralized	FM 7-100.1, 2-2



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Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Chapter/section/ word or phrase to search	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
Decentralized Execution			Execution	
DPRK C2	Command & Control	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Command; Control; C2	Command & Control Structures	FM 7-100.1, 2-3; TC 7-100.2, 2-1 to 2-34
KPA Peacetime Structure	Army Overview; Army Size & Structure; Order of Battle (OB)	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Force Structure; Order of Battle; OB	Administrative Force Structure	FM 7-100.1, 2-6; TC 7-100.4, 2-1 to 2-20; TC 7-101, 3-6 to 3-11; TC 7-100.2, 1-2 to 1-3
KPA Wartime Structure	Army Size & Structure	DATE 2A; 2B; 2E; Wartime Force Structure	Task-Organizing	TC 7-100.4, 3-1 to 3-25 & Appendix B; TC 7-100, 6-1 to 6-8
KPA Strategic Forces Rocket Command	Strategic Forces	DATE 2E; Rocket	Integrated Fires Command	FM 7-100.1, 2-14
KPA General Rear Service Bureau			Integrated Support Command	FM 7-100.1, 2-17
KPA "Two Front" War			Battlefield Geometry	FM 7-100.1, 2-18 to 2-22
KPA Operations Security			Operations & Information Security	FM 7-100.1, 2-50
KPA Offensive Doctrine	Army Doctrine & Tactics; Maneuver	DATE 2A; 2E; Offensive Doctrine; Tactics; Maneuver	Offensive Operations	FM 7-100.1, 3-1 to 3-28; TC 7-100.2, 3-1 to 3-43
KPA Defensive Doctrine	Army Doctrine & Tactics	DATE 2A; Defensive Doctrine; Tactics	Defensive Operations	FM 7-100.1, 4-1 to 4-28; TC 7-100.2, 4-1 to 4-35
DPRK INFOWAR	INFOWAR	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E INFOWAR; Information Warfare	Information Warfare	FM 7-100.1, 5-1 to 5-18; TC 7-100, 3-5 to 3-6, 5-1 to 5-2; TC 7-101, 3-20 to 3-25; TC 7-102, 1-5; 2-3, 3-4; TC 7-100.2, 7-1 to 7-16; IEA
KPA RISTA	RISTA	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; RISTA; Reconnaissance	Reconnaissance	FM 7-100.1, 6-1 to 6-10; TC 7-100.2, 8-1 to 8-18
KPA Fire Support Operations	Fire Support	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Fire Support; Artillery; Close Air Support; CAS	Fire Support	FM 7-100.1, 7-1 to 7-17; TC 7-100.2, 9-1 to 9-26
KPAF	Air Force Overview; Air Force Size & Structure	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Air Force Structure	Aviation	FM 7-100.1, 8-1 to 8-14; TC 7-100.2, 10-1 to 10-31
KPN	Naval Forces Overview; Navy Size & Structure	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Navy Structure		
KPAF Air Defense	Air Defense	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Air Defense; AD; ADA	Air Defense Support	FM 7-100.1, 9-1 to 9-34, TC 7-100.2, 11-1 to 11-30

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Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Chapter/section/ word or phrase to search	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
KPA Emphasis on Camouflage	Protection	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Camouflage; Concealment; Cover; Deception	Camouflage, Concealment, Cover, & Deception	FM 7-100.1, 9-18
KPA Engineering & Tunneling	Subterranean Environment	DATE 2A, 2B, 2E; Subterranean; Tunnel	Engineer Support	FM 7-100.1, 10-1 to 10-15; TC 7-101, 3-26 to 3-30; TC 7-102, 1-5; TC 7-100.2, 12-1 to 12-32; AWG Tunneling Handbook
DPRK WMD	Biological Weapons Threat	RAFTE-North Korea, Biological	CBRN and Smoke Operations	FM 7-100.1, 11-1 to 11-18; TC 7-100, 2-7 to 2-8; TC 7-100.2, 13-1 to 32
KPA Logistics	Logistics; Defense Industries; Lack of motorized transportation	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; RAFTE-North Korea; Logistics; Supply	Logistics	FM 7-100.1, 12-1 to 12-22; TC 7-100.2, 14-1 to 14-17
SPF	Navy Doctrine & Tactics; 25 SPF Brigades	DATE 2A, 2E; RAFTE-North Korea; Navy Doctrine; SPF	Airborne, Special-Purpose Forces, & Amphibious Operations	FM 7-100.1, 13-1 to 13-20; TC 7-100.2, 15-1 to 15-34, 16-1 to 16-12
KPA Weapons Systems	Army Equipment & Weapons; Navy Equipment & Weapons; Air Force Equipment & Weapons	DATE 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E; Equipment	Equipment Operations/OPFOR Tier Levels	TC 7-100.4, 4-1 to 4-12; TC 7-101, 2-9 to 2-11
Reverence of Kim Family	Cult of Personality	RAFTE-Pacific; RAFTE-North Korea; Personality Cult		
Inexperienced Dictator	Young dictator with no succession plan	RAFTE-Pacific; RAFTE-North Korea; Dictator		
Diplomacy by threat of WMB	Nuclear weapons trump card	RAFTE-Pacific; RAFTE-North Korea; Nuclear		
Military First Concept	Sanjun	RAFTE-North Korea; Sanjun		
Preemptive Attack Doctrine	Attack first if they feel threaten	RAFTE-North Korea; Preemptive Strike; Surprise Attack		

## North Korean Weapons in the WEG

Real-World Weapon	Type of Weapon	WEG Location
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Real-World Weapon	Type of Weapon	WEG Location
Russian T-34/85	Main Battle Tank (MBT)	Vol 1, Chapter 5
Russian T-54/T-55	MBT	Vol 1, Chapter 5
Russian PT-76B	Amphibious Tank	Vol 1, Chapter 6
North Korean M1985	Light Tank	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Chinese Type 63A	Light Tank	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian BRDM-2	Scout Car	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian BTR-60PB	Armored Personnel Carrier (APC)	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Russian BTR-80	APC	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Russian BTR-80A	APC	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Russian BTR-152	APC	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Chinese YW 531A/531C	APC	Vol 1, Chapter 3
North Korean VTT-323	APC	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Russian BMP-1	Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV)	Vol 1, Chapter 3
Russian BMP-1P	IFV	Vol 1, Chapter 3
North Korean M1978 & M1989	170-mm Self Propelled (SP) Gun (Koksan)	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian M-46	130-mm Towed Gun	Vol 1, Chapter 7
100/120-mm	Mortars	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian 2S9-1	120-mm SP Combination Gun	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian M-37	82-mm Mortar	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian 9P140	220-mm Multiple Rocket Launcher System (MRLS)	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian 9A51/PRIMA	122-mm MRLS	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian BM-21	122-mm MRLS	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Chinese Type 63	107-mm MRLS	Vol 1, Chapter 7
Russian B-11	107-mm Recoilless Gun	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian B-10	82-mm Recoilless Gun	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian D-44	85-mm Towed Anti-Tank (AT) Gun	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian Malyutka-2	Anti-Tank (AT)-3 Sagger Anti-Tank Gun Missile (ATGM) Launcher	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian 9P135 (9K111)	AT-4 Spigot ATGM	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian 9P148	AT-5 Spandrel ATGM	Vol 1, Chapter 6
Russian KS-19M2	100-mm Towed Anti-Aircraft (AA) Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian ZSU-57-2	57-mm SP AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian S-60	57-mm Towed AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6

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Real-World Weapon	Type of Weapon	WEG Location
Russian M-1939	37-mm Towed AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Chinese Type 65	37-mm Towed AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian ZSU-23-4	23-mm SP AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian ZU-23	23-mm Towed AA Gun	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian ZPU-4	14.5-mm Heavy Machine Gun (MG)	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian SA-3	Surface to Air (SA) Goa Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian S-200V	SA-5B Gammon SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian 9K32M (Strela-2M)	SA-7B Grail SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian S-300-M	SA-10B Grumble SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian S-300PMU1	SA-20A Gargoyle SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian 9K35M3 (Strela-10M3)	SA-13B Gopher SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian 9K34 (Strela-3)	SA-14 Gremlin SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian 9K310 (Ingla-1)	SA-16 Gimlet SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian 9K38 (Igla)	SA-18 Grouse SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
US FIM-92	Stinger SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 6
Russian Scud-B/C	Surface to Surface (SS) Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 5
North Korean Nodong-1/2	SS Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 5
Chinese H-5	Beagle Light Bomber	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian Su-17	Fitter Close Air Support (CAS) Aircraft	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian Su-25tm & Su-39	Frogfoot Multi-Role Attack Aircraft	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Chinese F-6	Farmer Fighter	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian MiG-29	Fulcrum Multi-Role Fighter	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian MiG-23	Flogger Multi-Role Fighter	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian MiG-21	Fishbed Multi-Role Fighter	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Chinese J-7	Fishbed Fighter	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian An-2	Colt Transport Aircraft	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian Il-18	Coot Transport Aircraft	Vol 2, Chapter 3
Russian Shmel-1	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)	Vol 2, Chapter 4
Russian Pchela-1K	UAV	Vol 2, Chapter 4
Russian Mi-2	Hoplite Medium Multi-Role Helicopter	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian Mi-24/35	Hind Attack Helicopter	Vol 2, Chapter 2
US MD-500MD	Defender Light Helicopter	Vol 2, Chapter 2

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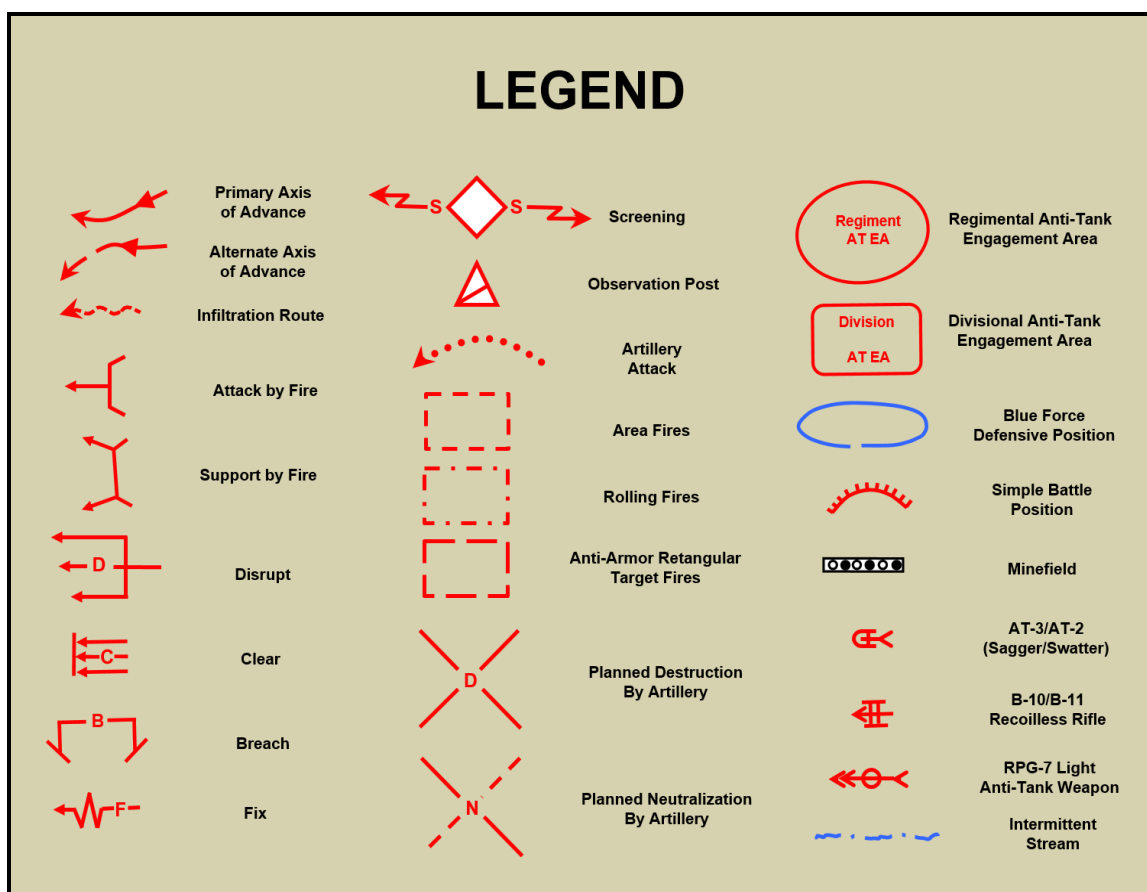


Real-World Weapon	Type of Weapon	WEG Location
Russian Mi-8	Hip-C Multi-Role Helicopter	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian AA-2	Atoll Air-To-Air (AA) Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian AA-7	Apex AA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian AA-8	Aphid AA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian AA-10	Alamo AA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian AA-11	Archer AA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2 & 3
Chinese PI-5	Thunderbolt AA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
Russian Volga-75SM	Guideline SA Missile	Vol 2, Chapter 2
SANG-O	Coastal Infiltration Submarine	Vol 3, Chapter 3
North Korean SOJU	Guided Missile Patrol Craft	Vol 3, Chapter 3
North Korean SOHUNG	Guided Missile Patrol Craft	Vol 3, Chapter 3
Chinese HUANGFENG	Fast Attack Missile Craft	Vol 3, Chapter 3
North Korean Semisubmersible	Infiltration Landing Craft	Vol 3, Chapter 3
Russian 4K40	Surface-To-Surface (Anti-Ship) Missile	Vol 3, Chapter 1
Indian/Russian BrahMos	Supersonic Cruise (Anti-Ship) Missile	Vol 3, Chapter 5



## Legend for Tactical Diagrams

This legend presents the military symbols, mission task symbols, and control measures from a threats perspective as used in the tactical diagrams in this report. The primary adversary or enemy is presented in the color blue.





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## Diagram Credits

- Figure 1. North Korean military installations and runways. Numbers correspond with the map numbers under Section 4, Military Organizations, below. Map from [CIA](#), modified by TRISA, 17 June 2015.
- Figure 2. Building blocks of KPA tactical doctrine. Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, [The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics](#), 2005, p 66. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.
- Figure 3. KPA Division encirclement movement (dispersed attack) of an enemy brigade defensive position. Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, [The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics](#), 2005, pp 86-87. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

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Figure 4. KPA Thrust Attack (Attack to Gain Freedom of Movement) of an enemy stop point). Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics 2005, pp 82-83. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

Figure 5. KPA Anti-Tank Defensive System (Maneuver Defense). Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics, 2005, pp 93-99. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

Figure 6. KPA Battalion Anti-Tank Defense Position (Area Defense). Adapted from COL James M. Minnich from his book, The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics, 2005, pp 96-97. Modified by TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats, 17 June 2015.

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# THREAT TACTICS REPORT: RUSSIA

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TRADOC G-2 ACE THREATS INTEGRATION

VERSION 1.0

JULY 2015





## Executive Summary

- The Russians have employed Hybrid Warfare and Indirect Action to counter NATO and Western influence for over seventy years.
  - Hybrid Warfare is the use of political, social, criminal, and other non-kinetic means employed to overcome military limitations.<sup>1</sup>
  - Indirect Action can be defined as the need for Russia to defend its interests and sphere of influence in its former states and satellites.

Although Western observers characterize the actions of Russian Armed Forces as hybrid warfare, the Russian Army practices its long-established tactics with new attention to advanced developments in many areas such as precision weapons, command and control (C2) and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and electronic warfare (EW), and including direct and indirect application of these. The nature of these tactics is derived from Russia's focused assessment of specific neighborhood threats and its long-time focus on security superiority in its Near Abroad.

- Russia continues to maintain military bases in its former states to exert influence and control.
- The Russians used conventional tactics in Georgia in 2008 and used indirect and asymmetric approaches in Crimea in 2014 and eastern Ukraine in 2014-2015.
- The Euromaidan protests and overthrow of the Yanukovich government triggered the Russian incursion into Crimea and the seizure of the naval base at Sebastopol.
- Russian intelligence operatives and SPF were instrumental in the success of the Crimea operation and are now assisting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.
- Russia may use these tactics in other areas such as Moldova, Transnistria, and the Baltic states.

This (U) **Threat Tactics Report (TTR)** was produced in accordance with (U) **Intelligence Community Directive Number 203: Analytical Standards** (Effective: January 2015). This TTR was coordinated with:

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon S. Cleaves".

Jon S. Cleaves  
Director, TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration





## Introduction

In the last seven years, Russia has reasserted itself as a military force in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. With the 2008 military incursion into Georgia and the 2014 seizure of Crimea and support for pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, Russia has assumed a more aggressive, interventionist stance in Europe. In the effort to influence events in Ukraine, the Russians have used what the US Army defines as “Hybrid Warfare” to infiltrate, isolate, and dominate eastern Ukraine and Crimea. This is all a part of the strategy of what can be called “Indirect Action”—the belief by the Russians that they reserve the right to protect ethnic Russians and interests in their former states from domination by Western powers and NATO.

It is important to note that the Russians do not use the terms Hybrid Warfare or Indirect Action to describe these tactics. These are terms that the Western media, think tanks, and analysts have developed to define this method of warfare. The Russians have used terms such as *indirect*, *asymmetrical*, and *non-linear* when discussing what is commonly referred to as Hybrid Warfare. Hybrid Warfare is a part of the strategy/policy of what can be called Indirect Action that the Russians believe is essential to protect their interests in their former satellite states (referred to as “the near abroad”). To the Russians, using covert methods, information warfare (INFOWAR), and special operations troops to make up for conventional disadvantages has been the norm for decades. Because the terms Hybrid Warfare and Indirect Action are familiar, they will be used throughout this report in reference to Russian indirect, asymmetrical, and nonlinear tactics.

This Threat Tactics Report (TTR) will focus on three distinct operations—Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2014, and eastern Ukraine in 2014–2015. The TTR will present and analyze the tactics used in these conflicts, the lessons learned, and adjustments made by the Russian Armed Forces

## Section 1: Russia after the Soviet Union

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia went through many changes. The government, society, and the economy went through drastic overhauls. The Russian military also underwent major changes and was beset by low morale, low pay, and outdated equipment and tactics. Russia’s performance in the First Chechen War of 1994–1996 was a prime example of this. The Russian Army did poorly, being bested in the initial conventional fight. After this humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chechens, Russian military leaders saw a need to adjust their operational approach and focus military thought to meet current realities. The Second Chechen War of 1999–2000 showed that the Russians could adapt and learn from previous mistakes. During this conflict, the Russians allowed for some autonomy and improvisation by commanders on the battlefield. The result was much more favorable to Russia, and the junior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who fought in this war gained valuable battlefield experience.

After Boris Yeltsin relinquished power in 1999, his successor Vladimir Putin began to reassert Russia’s role in European and world affairs. Putin began by improving economic and military relations with the former Soviet states. He renewed agreements with Armenia, Belarus, and Ukraine to continue to allow Russian naval and land forces to maintain bases and continue military cooperation. By 2001, Russia had



become an integral part of the defense of its former states through economic and military treaties. This strategy was continued by Dmitri Medvedev during his tenure as president. The worldwide emphasis on defeating Islamic terrorism also allowed for Russia to expand its military footprint to fight potential terrorists or counter American influence in Afghanistan and the Caucasus.

## Russian Strategy and Goals

Russian foreign policy and military strategy are a reflection of the Soviet concept of War Communism and later total war—bending the political, economic, cultural, industrial, agricultural and military might, indeed the might of the entire population, toward achieving a pressing national goal. Accordingly, Putin has established a practice of constant military readiness and a bellicose and confrontational diplomatic posture. The Russians believe that they must counter the power and influence that was lost with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the loss of former Soviet republics and buffer states. Key components of this are the protection of ethnic Russians, protection of Russian economic interests, continued occupation of former naval and army bases. The Russians maintain bases or facilities in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia and Tajikistan. The Russians also maintain bases in the disputed areas of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea- areas which the Russians consider part of Russia proper. This provides the Russians with an ability to react to crises in these areas and serves as a deterrent to military operations by neighboring countries.

Hybrid Warfare is the use of political, social, criminal, and other non-kinetic means employed to overcome military limitations. The Russians refer to this warfare by various names—indirect, asymmetrical, and non-linear warfare. As seen in Crimea and the Donbass region of Ukraine, the Russians and their Ukrainian separatist allies have used these tactics to further the Russian goal of influencing events in the “Near Abroad.”

## Key Alliances

Through economic, military, and diplomatic means the Russians have attempted to reestablish the old Soviet sphere of influence to willing partners (Armenia, Belarus, Chechnya, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) and by covert and overt means with adversarial states (Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine). Putin frequently uses the protection of ethnic Russians living in former Soviet states (the so-called “Russian Diaspora”) as an excuse for economic and military pressure and covert activities.

Putin will also use the threat of NATO expansion as an excuse to flex Russian military muscle. Any attempt by former Soviet satellites to join or partner with NATO or the United States is met with vehement protest. Russia views this as simply a continuation of Cold War tactics and rationalizes that its reactions are merely defensive measures against Western aggression.

Russia has also forged military and political alliances with Iran, Syria, and Venezuela, as well as strengthening ties with longtime allies Cuba and Nicaragua.



## Organizational Size and Structure

Under Putin, the Russian Army began implementing a new concept of greater autonomy and decentralization of command. The Army was forced to reorganize the old Soviet structure and command and control (C2) relationships that had been in place for over eighty years. The old division structure was replaced with a force that relied on independent brigades that could fight autonomously.<sup>2</sup> Restructuring began in 2008 under Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov. The Russian Army had 24 divisions consisting of three tank, sixteen motorized rifle, five gun artillery divisions, and two division-level bases in Tajikistan and Armenia. There were also 12 Independent Brigades that included Airborne and Spetsnaz troops. The current Russian Army consists of one machine gun artillery division in the Kuril Islands, four tank, 35 motorized rifle, and one fortifications brigade. Another overhaul and reorganization was directed at the personnel system. An effort was made to attract more so-called “contract” or volunteer soldiers. Unlike the conscript soldiers, contract soldiers volunteered for two or three years, were paid better, and were more likely to re-enlist or decide to make the army a career. The Army also established an NCO professional development program that consisted of courses designed to teach leadership and management skills. The schools also emphasized initiative and decision making. This new NCO corps has added a degree of professionalism in the Russian Army that has improved both morale and performance, although it is still far behind the armies of Western Europe and the United States.

The officer corps was also overhauled, with an emphasis on leadership, training, and integrity. In the past, the Soviet Army officer education system emphasized political reliability and loyalty. The Soviet system also discouraged reporting defects or issues with training or readiness, and the net result was a culture that tolerated falsification of reports and reluctance to fix deficiencies. The new Russian officer education and professional development system concentrates on competence, training, and empowering subordinates. The C2 systems were also streamlined. Junior commanders were free to make decisions on the battlefield without having to ask for permission to make the most basic tactical moves. Finally, the Russians upgraded their communications systems and put in redundant systems to ensure that commanders could talk to subordinates without the communications problems that plagued the Army in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

## Section 2: Russian Tactics and Techniques

The Russians will use political, social, information warfare (INFOWAR) and other nonkinetic means to increase military capabilities. Covert intelligence operators will infiltrate the targeted country, recruit operatives and spies, and establish an intelligence and insurgent network. Along with this, cyber attacks, electronic warfare (EW), and INFOWAR, will be used to spread unrest and gain support to legitimize future kinetic options. Once the necessary groundwork has been laid, the Russians can then assist the “independent” forces that will eventually form into a full blown insurgent force. This allows the Russians to overcome military shortcomings and gives them—in their view—plausible deniability on the world stage.



## Georgian–Russian War 2008

In Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine today, the Russians used a sophisticated, well-planned, and gradual strategy to establish an insurgent force that is supported by a robust information warfare program to maximize results with minimum troops and equipment.

After the defeat in Chechnya in 1996, Russia built up the military and increased capability, improved tactics, and streamlined C2. When Putin assumed the presidency in 1998, he immediately began preparations for military operations in the breakaway region. The Russians went into



Figure 1. [Map of countries that border Russia](#)

The Russians went into the Second Chechen War with a new strategy and tactics. They abandoned the old Soviet conventional tactics and fought a counterinsurgency fight that involved pro-Russian Chechen fighters. Putin also characterized this conflict as an “anti-terrorism operation” that portrayed Russia as the victim, not the aggressor. Using this new approach, the Russians managed to subdue the Chechen insurgents and install a pro-Russian government that greatly reduced the effectiveness and popularity of the insurgency.

Building on success in the Second Chechen War, the Russians fine-tuned their tactics into the present Hybrid Warfare concept. The next target of opportunity for Russia was Georgia. Russia had never fully accepted Georgia as an independent country, and supported separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

### Military Forces<sup>4</sup>

#### South Ossetia

The South Ossetian military has a total of 16,000 soldiers. Of those, 2,500 soldiers are on active duty and 13,500 are reservists.

At the beginning of the 2008 South Ossetia war, the armed forces possessed the following equipment:

- Fifteen tanks: 5 T-55s and 10 T-72s
- Twenty-four self-propelled howitzers: twelve 122-mm 2S1 "Gvozdikas" and twelve 152-mm 2S3 "Akatsiya"s
- Twelve 122-mm D-30 howitzers
- Six 122-mm BM-21 "Grad" multiple rocket launchers
- Four 100-mm MT-12 "Rapira" anti-tank guns
- 30 mortars
- 52 armored combat vehicles BRDM, BMP-1 and BTR-70
- Six 9K31 "Strela-1" mobile, short-range, low altitude surface-to-air missile systems

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



- Ten ZU-23-2 short-range air defense cannons
- Four Mi-8 helicopters

## **Russian Forces Deployed in South Ossetia at the time of the conflict:**

- 496 Russian peacekeeping forces
- Russian 58th Army
- Two battalions of the 135th Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment
- 503rd Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 19th Motorized Rifle Division
- 693rd Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 19th Motorized Rifle Division
- 42nd Motorized Rifle Division
- 70th Motorized Rifle Regiment
- 71st Motorized Rifle Regiment
- Unidentified Chechen units
- One company of Special Battalion Vostok
- One company of Special Battalion Zapad
- Airborne Troops (VDV)
- 104th and 234th Paratroop Regiments of the 76th Guards Air Assault Division (Pskov)
- Units of 98th Guards Airborne Division
- Units of GRU
- One Battalion of the Spetsnaz of 45th Detached Reconnaissance Regiment of VDV (Moscow)
- Units of the 10th Special Forces Brigade
- Units of the 22nd Special Forces Brigade

## **Abkhazia**

- The Abkhazian Self Defense Force consists of approximately 10,000 troops
- 60 tanks, including 40 T-72s
- 85 artillery pieces and mortars, including several dozen with a 122–152-mm caliber
- 116 armored vehicles
- RPG-7 rocket launchers to Konkurs-M anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs)

## **Russian Forces Deployed in Abkhazia at the time of the conflict:**

- 7th Novorossiysk Air Assault Division
- 76th Pskov Air Assault Divisions
- Elements of the 20th Motorized Rifle Division
- Two battalions of Black Sea Fleet Marines

## **History of Conflict**

Abkhazia and South Ossetia conducted a brief war with Georgia from January 1991 to June 1992. The result was de facto independence for both regions. The Georgians grudgingly allowed both regions to have autonomy with a peacekeeping force that consisted of local forces and Russian troops. The Russians then began to infiltrate operatives into both areas, conducted reconnaissance, established intelligence and insurgent networks, and began to provide financial and humanitarian aid. Russian “peacekeepers” also funneled weapons to separatist groups and provided military training to future

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



insurgents. Finally, Russia issued Russian passports on massive scale to the citizens of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2002, essentially making them citizens of Russia. Russia controlled virtually all of the civic, military, and governmental functions in these areas by the time of the Georgian Rose Revolution in 2004.

New Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili attempted to lure both regions back into a unified Georgian state, but this proposal was rejected. Saakashvili's desire for Georgian membership in NATO was the final straw for Russia. From 2004 to 2008, the Russians stepped up their efforts in INFOWAR. A key element of this tactic is to control information through television, radio, and the Internet. The Russians had been providing access to Russian TV stations since the 1990s, and pro-Russian/separatist media outlets in Abkhazia and South Ossetia provided a steady stream of anti-Georgian propaganda. The Internet was also used to spread pro-Russian and pro-independence themes. Finally, Russian and local intelligence operatives began organizing demonstrations and protests against the Georgian government's mistreatment of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian Russian populations, most of whom held Russian passports and supported autonomy.

The Russians had recognized the governments of both regions in April of 2008 and sent approximately 2,000 more peacekeepers to Abkhazia and massed 1,500 troops on the Russian-South Ossetian border. In late April, a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was shot down over Abkhazia. The Russians and Abkhazians blamed NATO for the incident while Georgia claimed that insurgents or the Russians had shot down the UAV. Regardless who shot down the UAV, this gave the Russians a plausible excuse to continue to mass troops on the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia while covertly moving SPF troops into position.

## INFOWAR

As all of this covert activity was taking place, the Russian INFOWAR campaign was in full swing. The Russians began an effort on social media sites, the Russian press, and international press to discredit the position of the Georgian government and show the "plight" of the "oppressed" ethnic Russians. Russian EW experts also began to monitor and jam Georgian military and government communications.

A number of incidents in May and early June of 2008 involving Georgian government officials and troops and pro-Russian Abkhazian and South Ossetian citizens ratcheted up the tension on both sides. Pro-Russian websites, blogs, and news outlets broadcast stories that pushed the Russian/South Ossetian/Abkhazian side of the dispute. Part of the cyber campaign was to portray President Saakashvili as a Nazi, and the Georgian government as oppressive and using Gestapo-like tactics.<sup>5</sup> The Georgian response to this propaganda was virtually non-existent except for a few ineffective press releases by the Georgian government.

Russia also attacked the Georgian computer system, disabling civilian and government sites with barrages of traffic that resulted in denial of service (DOS) situations during and prior to the conflict. It is also suspected that the Russians attacked Georgian systems one month prior to the attack, and then used this information to implement measures to work around Georgian countermeasures. Aside from the normal inconvenience of having computer systems down, the Georgian army and government were unable to effectively communicate during the war.<sup>6</sup>





Separatist elements began to increase activity throughout June and July. Incidents included an assassination attempt on a Georgian official and the capture of four Georgian soldiers by separatists in South Ossetia. An IED was used against Georgian police, and insurgents shelled Tskhinvali in early August, gradually increasing pressure on the Georgian government to act. Finally, on 8 August 2008, the Georgian army moved on Tskhinvali in an attempt to take the Roki Tunnel to deny Russian forces the ability to move into Tskhinvali. The Georgians did manage to secure the southern and central parts of the city by 1400, but this move proved to be too late as the Russians had already started moving regular army troops through the tunnel into South Ossetia.<sup>7</sup> Along with troops, the Russians deployed a large contingent of “reporters” who could cover the war in real time to advance the Russian message of “assisting the oppressed ethnic Russians in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.”

### Seizure of Tskhinvali

Russian troops arrived at the outskirts of Tskhinvali at approximately 1800 on 8 August 2008. The main Russian ground forces belonged to the 58<sup>th</sup> Army and were reinforced by the 76<sup>th</sup> Guards Assault Division. These forces began firing on the Georgian forces in the city and the surrounding areas. The Russians had air superiority and used fixed and rotary wing assets to decimate Georgian forces that were attempting to flank the Gupta Bridge between the Roki Tunnel and Tskhinvali. The Georgian Air Force managed to lightly damage the bridge, but Russian engineers quickly repaired the damage. As darkness fell, the Georgians had retreated to the southern part of the city. The Russians had linked up with the local militia and now had control of municipal buildings and were guided through the city and surrounding areas by their South Ossetian counterparts.

As the battle was raging in Tskhinvali, the Russians continued to pour troops through the Roki Tunnel and into Tskhinvali. Estimates of 5,000–10,000 troops with assigned vehicles, tanks, and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), moved southward and simply overwhelmed the outnumbered Georgians. The two sides fought in Tskhinvali throughout the day of 9 August and by 10 August the Russians were able to push the Georgians out of the city and begin a pursuit to the south toward the South Ossetian border. According to Moscow Defense Brief,

On this very day the accumulation of Russian forces in the region finally bore fruit, and the fighting in South Ossetia reached a turning point. Toward the evening of August 10, Tskhinvali was completely cleared of Georgian forces, which retreated to the south of the city. Georgian forces were also repelled from the key Prisi heights. The bulk of Georgia’s artillery was defeated. Meanwhile, Ossetian forces, with the support of Russian divisions, took Tamarasheni, Kekhvi, Kurta, and Achabeti on the approach to Tskhinvali from the north. Georgian forces in several of Georgian enclaves were eliminated.<sup>8</sup>

It took the Russians and South Ossetian separatists approximately three days to secure Tskhinvali. By 11 August there were no Georgian forces left in South Ossetia. Georgian troops regrouped at Gori, sixteen miles south of Tskhinvali, setting up defensive positions for the anticipated Russian onslaught.



## Battle for Gori

Gori is a major military installation and transportation hub in Georgia.<sup>9</sup> Seventy-five tanks and armored personnel carriers (a third of the Georgian military's arsenal) were assembled near Gori on 7 August.<sup>10</sup> The Russians bombed the Georgian Military Barracks in Gori on 9 August, which destroyed the barracks, damaged several apartment buildings, and killed sixty civilians, according to Georgia. After this airstrike, Georgian forces, mostly conscripts, began to flee the city and were followed by a mass exodus of civilians. The Russians capitalized on this by portraying the Georgians as being incapable of defending their own territory and civilians. The Russians allowed South Ossetian militias, Chechens, and Cossack volunteers to participate in the fight. These forces were accused of rampaging through the occupied territories and looting, indiscriminately kidnapping and killing civilians, and destroying infrastructure. The Georgian army regrouped north of Tbilisi and prepared to defend the capital.

In the Abkhazian section of Georgia, the Russian navy defeated the outgunned and outmanned Georgian navy and blockaded the Port of Poti on 10 August. Russian paratroopers deployed in Abkhazia occupied the city of Zugdidi on 11 August and carried out raids against military bases in western Georgia.<sup>11</sup> Abkhazian militias and insurgents then attacked Georgian forces in the Kodori Gorge on 12 August, forcing the Georgians to withdraw.

## Analysis

By this time the war was obviously turning into a rout by the South Ossetian/Abkhazian/Russian forces. International mediation led by France negotiated a ceasefire and eventual peace treaty signed on 16 August that gave South Ossetia and Abkhazia autonomy. Most Russian troops were out of Georgia by mid-September and international peacekeepers were placed on the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Georgia.

The war was a definite military win for Russia and its proxies. The INFOWAR component was not as successful, as world opinion blamed Russia for instigating the conflict. Russian attempts to portray Georgia as the aggressor were dismissed. Russia would take lessons learned from this conflict and refine its INFOWAR program for its next conflict.

## Tactical Vignettes: Russian and South Ossetian Tactics

The following tactical vignettes explore four tactical actions in detail, accompanied by tactical diagrams to graphically depict the actions. Russia and South Ossetia are represented in red. The primary adversary or enemy is presented in the color blue. The color purple and special threat symbol notes a separatist entity. See page 51 for full legend of symbols.

### *1. Simple Battle Position Defense in an Urban Environment*

Russian and South Ossetian military forces in Tskhinvali effectively countered assaults of Georgian military forces in the restrictive mobility corridors of the city. Prior to hostilities, Russian and South Ossetian members of the peacekeeping contingent in Tskhinvali had advantages of time and resources to plan for contingencies of a Georgian attack. Detailed knowledge of the urban infrastructure and the

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



ability to cache weapons such as anti-tank grenade launchers (ATGLs) allowed for immediate urban defense in simple battle positions (SBPs) as Georgian forces attacked into the city.

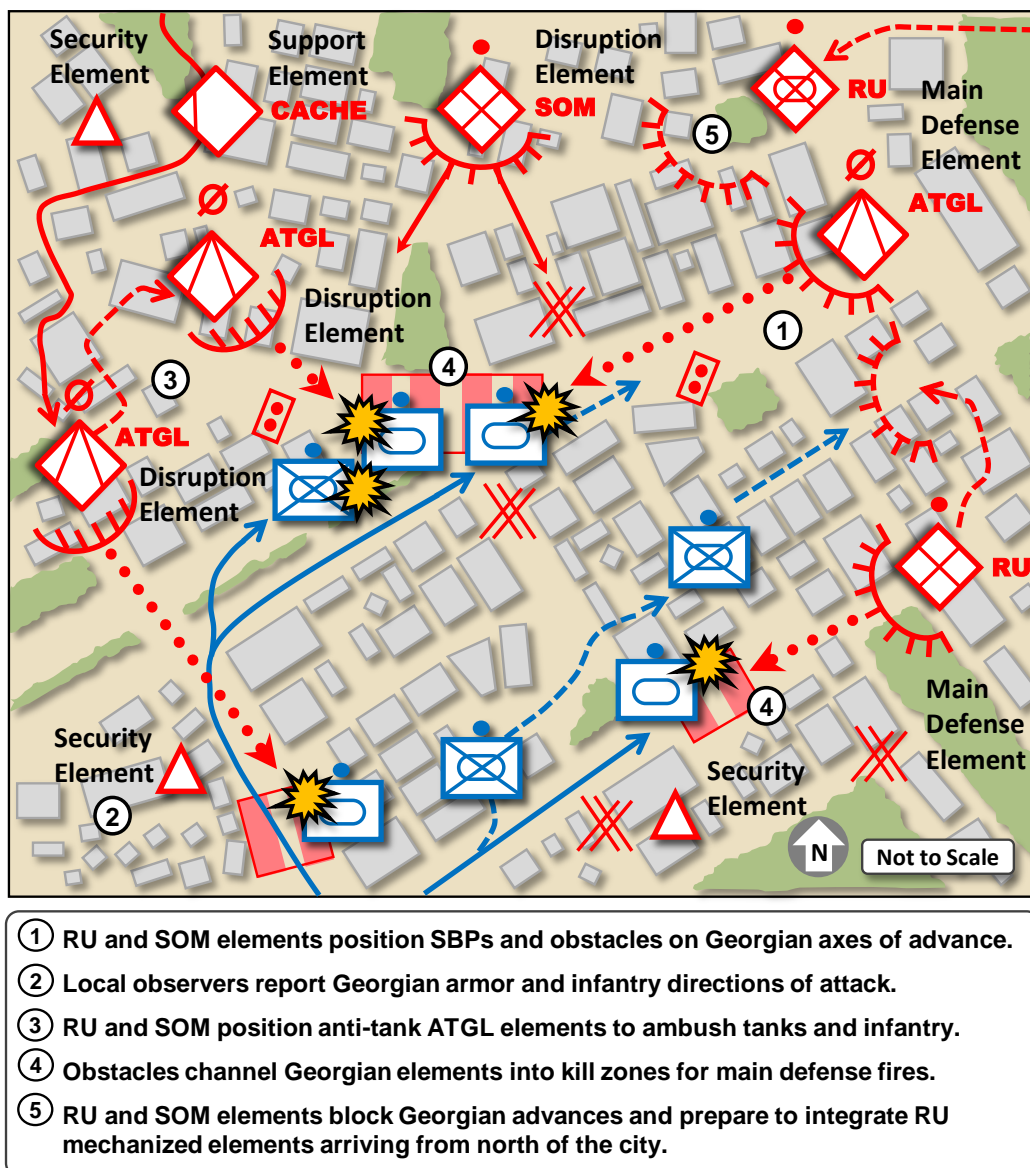
The Russians and South Ossetians knew they must slow Georgian advances into the city and surrounding countryside until Russian ground maneuver forces arrived from the very restrictive exit of the Roki tunnel and mechanized routes to the south. Retaining forward defensive terrain was a military requirement based on political ramifications. Russian forces and South Ossetians quickly activated planned and expedient defensive positions throughout the city as part of an urban area defense. Observation reports by local citizens, militia, and regular forces provided early warning of Georgian avenues of approach. The minimal distance from the border to the city outskirts precluded any disruption zone in depth. Security elements harassed lead Georgian elements and attempted to separate Georgian infantry and armored elements once they entered the city street network.

Kill zones focused the combat power of regular and militia elements with frontal or flanking anti-tank fires from SBPs.<sup>12</sup> Positions were reinforced with opportune obstacle emplacement of available materiel and augmented by rubble caused by ongoing combat actions and indirect fires. Use of complex urban terrain; camouflage, cover, concealment, and deception (C3D); pre-staged caches of weapons and munitions; and kill zones oriented on likely Georgian avenues of approach to prevent Georgian seizure of Tskhinvali. In one instance, a series of engagements by Russian and South Ossetian ambush teams and main defense elements destroyed four tanks with ATGL fires and other coordinated defensive measures.<sup>13</sup>

## Training Implications

These type of defensive tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against threats in complex operational environments (OEs).<sup>14</sup> In Tskhinvali, disruption elements were able to delay and disrupt the momentum of Georgian assaults with ambush teams and defenses. With handover of engagements to main defense elements intent on retaining terrain as long as possible, Russian and South Ossetian elements were flexible enough to use alternate, supplementary, and subsequent SBPs to stall Georgian advances. Although immediate defensive reserves were probably minimal, arriving Russian mechanized forces were able to build combat power effects and force Georgian elements out of the city and into a withdrawal under pressure.

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



**Figure 2. Russian and South Ossetian anti-tank urban defense with ATGLs (example)**

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of simple battle positions in an urban environment. The defensive actions can be analyzed as areas of disruption zone, battle zone, and support zone. Security use of reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance provided early warning and a level of protection to the main defenses. Ambushes and other disruptive actions reduced cohesive combat power of an enemy. C3D measures protected defending elements and lured attacking elements into kill zones. Given restrictions on allowable weapon systems in a region controlled by a multinational peacekeeping force, covert materiel caches can provide immediate access for use in a short-notice



transition to combat operations. Military and paramilitary elements in simple battle positions of a coordinated area defense can create conditions that deny an enemy success in territorial objectives, and/or provide time for friendly force reinforcements to arrive, seize the tactical initiative, and transition to the offense.

## ***2. Direct Air Support as a Raid***

Russian and South Ossetian military elements conducted defensive actions to slow Georgian advances along the mobility corridor to the west of Tskhinvali as Georgian forces attacked along multiple axes of advance from the south. Civilian supporters or South Ossetian militia probably reported a concentration of Georgian main battle tanks and infantry arriving in the vicinity of a wooded area on the western outskirts of the city. Security elements confirmed Georgian orientation to north and northwest.

Russian and South Ossetian elements lacked the combat power to confront these Georgian elements as Russian mechanized forces were still deploying south from the chokepoint of the Roki tunnel exit. Russian elements coordinated for direct air support (DAS) to attack the Georgian defensive positions as one of many offensive actions in the sector. In this engagement, Russian fixed-wing aircraft attacked with cluster bomb munitions. The raid caught many of the Georgian soldiers in the open causing significant casualties as well as damaging or destroying several armored vehicles. Elements from Russian motorized rifle regiments (MRRs) started to arrive and by mid-afternoon on 8 August. Georgian elements withdrew from their defensive positions to reorganize to the south as part of a general withdrawal of Georgian forces.<sup>15</sup> Other Russian air assets degraded Georgian capabilities in the Georgian support zone that limited combat support and logistics flow to forward Georgian combat elements, and disrupted Georgian C2. Later and into the evening, Georgian elements with main battle tanks, armored vehicles, and infantry attacked north in this western corridor but were unsuccessful. By late in the day, elements from MRRs and other Russian units of divisional combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) were in or near the city of Tskhinvali.

### **Training Implications**

These type of offensive tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against superior threats and/or when unable to initially mass combat power in a particular tactical locale.<sup>16</sup> Ground maneuver disruption elements lacked the ability to stop the ongoing defensive occupation by Georgian elements in the woods and reported this lucrative target. The Russians used a window of opportunity to mass combined arms effects with DAS in order to degrade Georgian will and capability to defend their tactical positions.<sup>17</sup> Disrupting Georgian defensive positions in this corridor was critical as Russian and South Ossetian elements prepared to transition from defend and delay to offensive actions in support of a divisional integrated attack across the entire battle zone.

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of raiding actions. The DAS action element displayed a rapid massing of combat power that degraded and disrupted Georgian capabilities at a critical moment, and caused casualties and weapon systems degradation that adversely affected Georgian C2 and morale.<sup>18</sup> Support elements in Tskhinvali provided limited direct fires to augment the disruption and coordination for forward air control of the DAS raid.<sup>19</sup> Security elements maintained

## Threat Tactics Report: Russia



contact with Georgian elements as they withdrew and were able to orient Russian mechanized elements as they attacked south into the battle zone.

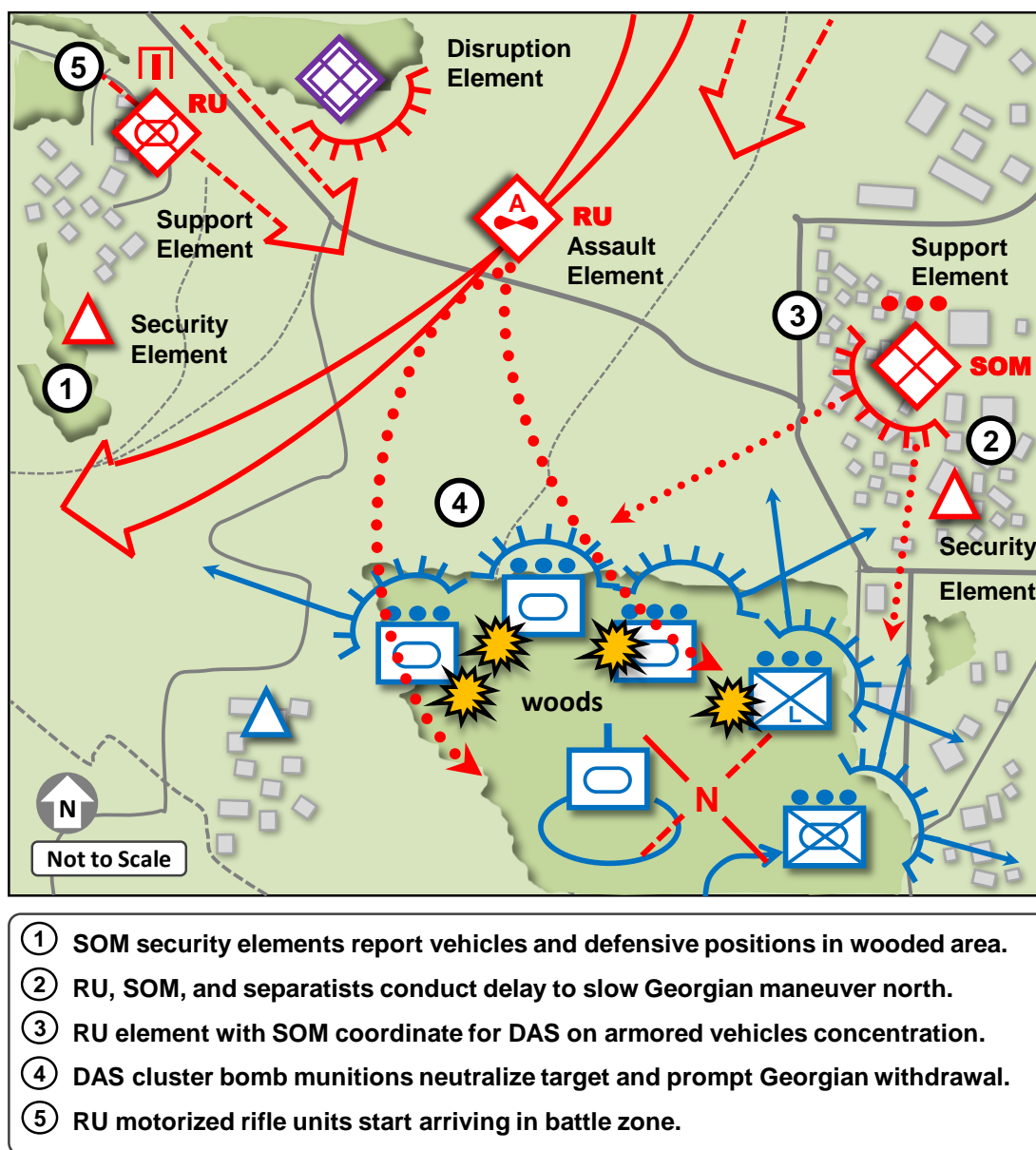


Figure 3. Russian direct air support raid on Georgian defensive positions (example)

Defensive actions in response to an attack may initially require retention of key terrain. Attack aviation can employ direct air support (DAS) to disrupt and destroy enemy forces in proximity to friendly forces, and assist ground maneuver elements to regain the tactical initiative.<sup>20</sup>





### 3. Area Defense as War Erupts in South Ossetia

Georgian and South Ossetian incidents escalated in the early months of 2008 to include cross-border violations of small arms fire, sniping, improvised explosive device and/or other direct and indirect fires. Russian and South Ossetia peacekeeping forces gradually increased military capabilities, and Georgian forces positioned at the Georgia-South Ossetia border. Russia knew if war erupted, time and distance factors would preclude immediate massing reinforcements in the region to protect Tskhinvali. Actions indicated war was imminent.

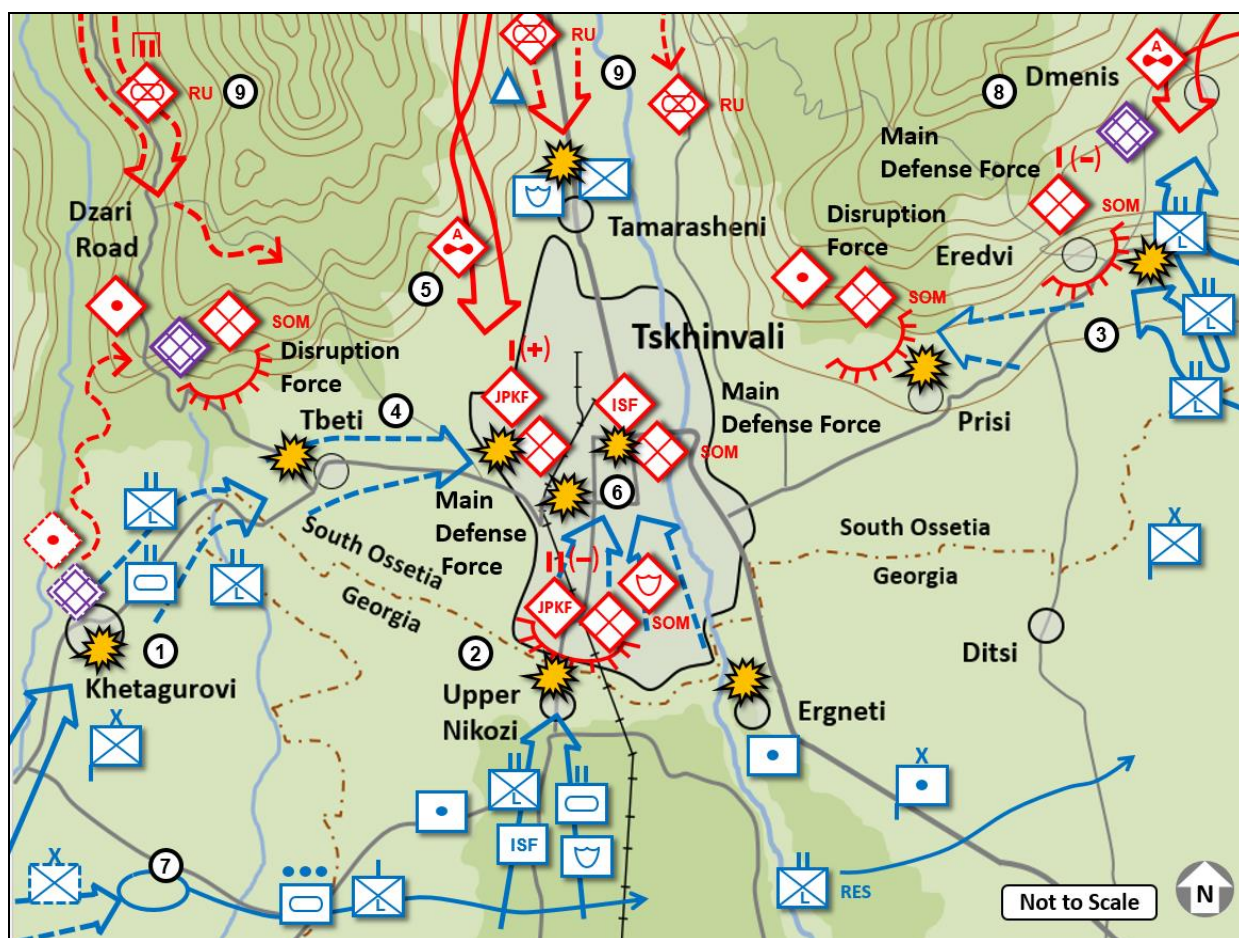


Figure 4. Russian and South Ossetian area defense in and near Tskhinvali (example)



- ① Ossetian defensive fires disrupt enemy but then withdraw to north. Georgian light infantry brigade attacks from west through Tbeti to advance on Tskhinvali.
- ② Ossetian forces, militia, and internal security forces (ISF) agencies defend in series of urban simple battle positions against Georgian infantry, armor, and ISF. Russian Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) elements are contained-bypassed at JPKF south compound.
- ③ Ossetian militia and separatists defend against light infantry brigade attack. Georgian infantry battalion reserve is committed early in attack. Georgian advance toward Prisi heights causes Ossetian forces and indirect fires to withdraw.
- ④ Ossetian militia and Russian JPKF north compound force defend western urban area.
- ⑤ Russian aviation (two Su-25) attack infantry and armor with cluster munitions causing casualties and damage or destruction to vehicles. Georgian forces withdraw.
- ⑥ Ossetian ISF, militia, and law enforcement agencies continue to defend in series of urban simple battle positions with primarily small arms and anti-tank grenade launchers (ATGL) to block Georgian advance into Tskhinvali.
- ⑦ Lead elements of reinforcing brigade arrive and support eastern attack in vicinity Erdevi. The reinforcing brigade is detraining and moving toward assembly area.
- ⑧ Ossetian forces and separatists with Russian attack aviation block Georgian advance. Georgian forces start to withdraw and reorganize. Georgian forces in west and south of Tskvinhali withdraw to reorganize.
- ⑨ Lead elements of Russian motorized rifles infantry—battalion tactical groups—start to arrive along western and central corridors and secondary routes, and change combat power ratio in favor of South Ossetia. INFOWAR is a psychological multiplier.

**Figure 5. Narrative summary of initial combat actions in vicinity of Tskhinvali**

Georgia initiated indirect fires on Tskhinvali, Gufta bridge, and near the Roki tunnel to fix ground maneuver forces in or near the capital and disrupt Russian axes of advance.<sup>21</sup> As Georgian maneuver forces attacked into South Ossetia, Russian peacekeeping forces, South Ossetian forces and militia, and regional separatists attempted to block or fix Georgian forces with defensive fires, ambushes, and limited assaults in urban and rural terrain.<sup>22</sup> These defensive actions created conditions that allowed Russian reinforcements to arrive in the area, mass, and transition from Russian and South Ossetian area defense engagements to an integrated offensive operation throughout the battle zone.<sup>23</sup>

## **Training Implications**

These types of tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against threats when overmatched and when unable to mass or provide integrated command and control to initial phases of an operation. The intent is to force the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before the enemy can achieve objectives, and preserve friendly force combat power and retain regaining the initiative within its capabilities.<sup>24</sup> An area defense inflicts losses on the enemy, retains ground, and protects friendly forces. The area defense does not surrender the initiative to attacking forces, and takes action to create windows of opportunity that permit friendly forces to attack key components of the enemy's combat system and/or cause unacceptable enemy casualties. INFOWAR is

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



important for effective perception management to deceive, demoralize, and defeat the enemy during concurrent maneuver and fires.

In Tskhinvali and the surrounding countryside, disruption and main defense forces conducted multiple offensive or defensive actions against multiple Georgian axes of advance into South Ossetia. Direct and indirect fires and maneuver by Ossetian disruption forces caused Georgian forces to deploy into combat formations and delayed their movements or maneuver into South Ossetia. Main defense forces defended from complex battle positions or simple battle positions that delayed Georgian maneuver into Tskhinvali. Any Ossetian reserves were small local elements. These actions provided time for Russian ground maneuver forces to mass combat power, employ direct air support (DAS), and eventually counterattack through South Ossetia and into Georgia.

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of regular forces, militia, and irregular forces to fix and/or disrupt enemy ground maneuver formations, interrupt the enemy timetable, and prevent success of enemy objectives. Early in the five-day war, ground and aerial actions in a narrow disruption zone and expanding battle zone reduced cohesive combat power of an enemy. Key terrain included the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and the physical terrain to both flanks for observation and fires.<sup>25</sup> As Russian reinforcements arrived, main defense forces and disruption forces were integrated into fixing and assault forces to defeat or destroy enemy forces in zone. Support forces added to the Russian-South Ossetian increase in combat power of ground maneuver and aviation forces, indirect fires, and other CS and CSS.

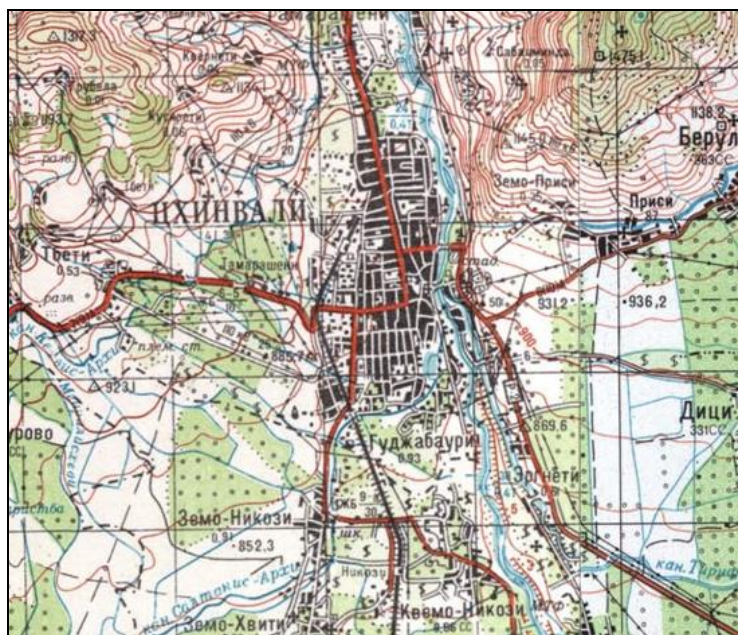


Figure 6. Topography map of Tskhinvali area

Specifically planned and integrated INFOWAR seeks to influence an enemy's decisionmaking, and create pause or acceptance by international actors in a conflict. Continuous INFOWAR messaging psychologically postures to protect interests and gain critical advantages in time and space over an adversary or enemy.<sup>26</sup>

**Note.** Military symbols for Ossetian, Russian, and Georgian forces do not have echelon amplifiers unless stated in source materials. The Russian JPKF in Tskhinvali was formed from a motorized rifle battalion located in a northern and southern compound. The battalion (-) and company (+) amplifiers are general estimates of JPKF distribution.





## 4. Integrated Attack toward Tbilisi

Russian forces, South Ossetian forces and militia, and regional separatists prevented Georgian forces from seizing the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali on 8–9 August 2008.<sup>27</sup> Russia continued to introduce ground and aerial forces into the battle zone to protect Tskhinvali, and established military capabilities on the ground and in the air superior to Georgia that allowed expanding Russian offensive actions.<sup>28</sup> Russian reinforcements massed to transition an initial defensive posture in South Ossetia to an integrated attack along the South Ossetia-Georgia border and deep into the Georgian support zone.<sup>29</sup>

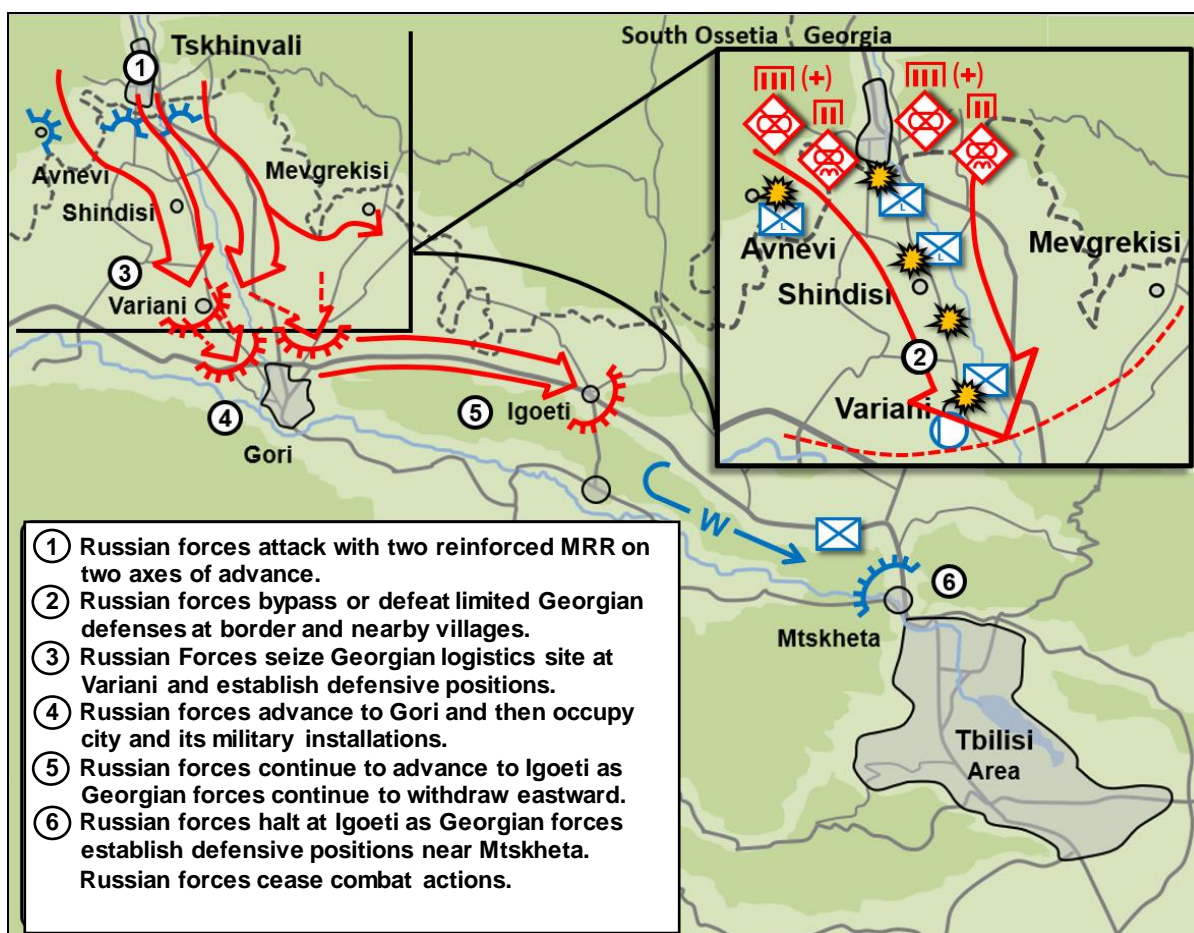


Figure 7. Integrated attack along Tskhinvali–Tbilisi axis of advance (example)

In this same time period, Georgian offensive actions in the vicinity of Tskhinvali stalled. A Georgian call for temporary ceasefire was hampered by continued indirect fires from both Georgian and Russian forces and isolated incidents in the battle zone. After renewed Georgian attacks on Tskhinvali were unsuccessful, Georgian forces withdrew to the south and southeast by 10–11 August 2008.<sup>30</sup> Russian special purpose forces (SPF) were aerial-inserted near Gori for reconnaissance and surveillance of area activities at military installations and related intelligence for the Russian attack.

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Russian attack aviation was a combat multiplier in the war, whereas Georgian authorities decided to not use their small fixed-wing and rotary-wing forces, with limited mission exceptions, to preserve this capability.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, inefficient C2 between Russian air and ground maneuver forces limited the timing and effects of close air support [direct air support (DAS)] to ground maneuver units.<sup>32</sup> More than one Russian aircraft loss was due to Russian friendly fires.<sup>33</sup> Some targets attacked in the Georgian support zone by Russian aviation appeared less than critical to disrupting Georgian offensive and defensive actions.<sup>34</sup>

Russian forces occupied Tskhinvali and prepared to continue the attack to the south toward Gori on two primary axes of advance with two reinforced regimental tactical groups [brigade tactical groups (BTGs)].<sup>35</sup> West of the Liakhva River, one divisional motorized rifle regiment (MRR) was reinforced with a battalion tactical group [battalion detachment (BDET)] from a different division and an MRR (-) from a different division.<sup>36</sup> East of the Liakhva River, one MRR was reinforced with a battalion tactical group (BDET) from a different division. The two BDETs from an airborne assault division were configured with BMD armored vehicles, 2S9 self-propelled gun-mortars, and other combat support systems.<sup>37</sup>

As Russian forces attacked south from Tskhinvali on 11 August 2008, Georgian defenses in the border villages and nearby villages were seized or bypassed in order to achieve assigned objectives to the south. Bypassed Georgian forces were defeated or destroyed by Russian forces. As Georgian forces withdrew toward Gori, unexpected engagements occurred with Russian forces that had already bypassed Georgian defensive positions near the border.<sup>38</sup>

Russian forces reached an initial objective south of Tskhinvali to establish a zone that precluded Georgian indirect fires into South Ossetia. Russian forces continued their attack and seized a large logistics site at Variana and established defensive positions. With the exception of one Georgian rotary-wing attack on a Russian convoy, Georgian forces continued to withdraw toward defensive positions near Gori and northeast of Tbilisi near Mtskheta.

On 12 August 2008, Russian forces occupied terrain in the vicinity of Gori that emplaced indirect fire systems to cover and control the main east–west highway and rail line, as well as Gori. No significant resistance occurred between Russian and Georgian forces from Tskhinvali and Gori, and Russian forces prepared to seize Gori. Russian forces occupied Gori, and controlled the main highway between Gori and Tbilisi to the town of Igoeti.<sup>39</sup> Russian forces achieved their objectives and did not continue their advance toward Tbilisi. A large neutral zone existed between the Russian and Georgian forces as Russia declared a cessation of direct combat actions in the Russian-Georgian war.

## Training Implications

These types of tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against threats who conduct an *integrated attack*. This offensive action seeks military decision by destroying the enemy's will and/or ability to continue fighting through the application of combined arms effects. Integrated attack is often employed when the threat enjoys overmatch of its enemies and is able to employ the advantages of offensive combat power.<sup>40</sup>

Integrated attack includes but is not limited to—

- Disrupting enemy C2 and logistics to complement destruction of other enemy combat power.

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



- Isolating the targeted subcomponents of the enemy's combat system from his main combat power.
- Applying deception and other components of information warfare (INFOWAR) to degrade enemy situational understanding, morale, and resolve to continue resistance.
- Using flank attacks and envelopment throughout the depth of operations to include an enemy disruption zone, battle zone, and support zone.

In South Ossetia and along the main high-speed highways leading toward Tbilisi, Russian fixing and assault forces conducted offensive actions to defeat Georgian forces at the tactical level, and then threatened Georgian resources such as major petroleum pipelines, main motorways, rail lines, and the approaches to the capital of Tbilisi.

An integrated attack employs *action* and *enabling* forces that are identified by function. An integrated attack often employs fixing, assault, and support forces as enabling forces. The action force conducts the primary action of the friendly force mission.<sup>41</sup> Continuous INFOWAR is important for effective perception management to deceive, demoralize, and defeat the enemy during concurrent maneuver and fires. The exploitation force is the most common type of action force in an integrated attack after a successful assault or attack. Action and enabling forces can be described as follows:

- The *fixing* force prevents enemy defending forces, reserves, and/or other quick-response forces from interfering with the actions of the assault and exploitation forces.
- The *assault* force defeats or destroys a designated enemy force or seizes key positions, and may be used to create a window of opportunity for an exploitation force.
- The *support* force provides general and/or designated support to the attack, other combat or combat service support, or C2 functions.
- The *exploitation* force must be capable of penetrating or avoiding enemy defensive forces in order to attack and disrupt, defeat, or destroy the enemy's support infrastructure before the enemy has time to react.

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of regular forces and special purpose forces, and coordination of ground and air maneuver forces to fix and defeat or destroy enemy forces, sustain the initiative, and promote a successful Russian INFOWAR campaign to the media and public. Large-scale military exercises in Russia near South Ossetia allowed Russian forces to preposition combat power near the intended area of operations. Based on channelized routes into the Tskhinvali area, massing Russian ground combat power took time in the initial days of the war. Once massed, Russian mechanized forces were task-organized for their attack, and maneuvered quickly through the battle zone and into the Georgian support zone along one major axis of advance toward the Georgian capital. Limited or no Georgian resistance was the norm after Georgian forces withdrew from Tskhinvali. Integrated Russian INFOWAR promoted a narrative that Russian actions were defensive and that the aggressor was Georgia.<sup>42</sup> INFOWAR centered on a message that it was protecting South Ossetia.

*Note.* Military symbols for Ossetian, Russian, and Georgian forces do not have echelon amplifiers unless stated in source materials. Russian forces were task-organized from several divisions with consideration to training readiness, mission requirements, and type of unit capabilities. The Russian regiment (+) amplifiers and battalion task force amplifier for the tactical groups are general estimates of combat power distribution.





## Crimea 2014

In late November of 2013, protests erupted in Ukraine over the Ukrainian governments' rejection of a European Union-sponsored trade agreement by the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovych. Yanukovych had opted for a trade agreement with Russia that was supported by Ukrainians in the east and opposed by western citizens. These protests morphed into the "Euromaidan" movement and resulted in the ouster of Yanukovych and the subsequent Russian incursion and annexation into the Crimean peninsula.

The unrest in Ukraine was not a new phenomenon. Tensions between Ukraine and Russia have been ongoing for hundreds of years. In the last century, several conflicts between the two have exacerbated the tension. The Soviet regime's absorption of Ukraine in 1921 has always been a source of friction. The Russians have always viewed Ukraine and Crimea as regions of Russia and not independent, separate nations. The invasion and occupation of Ukraine by Nazi Germany in World War II and the subsequent pro-independence and pro-Soviet insurgent movements further divided Ukraine along ideological and geographic lines. Under Stalin, ethnic Russians were resettled in eastern Ukraine after World War Two creating a pro-Russian enclave. The transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian S.S.R. in 1954 complicated matters further and made the ethnic Russians in Crimea feel more isolated from the rest of Ukraine. Finally, Ukrainian independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 was never fully accepted by Russia—they never considered Ukraine to be a real country—and attempted to influence it economically and militarily.

Due to the historical tensions in the region and the Russian desire to dominate and influence its former territory, Russia has waged an INFOWAR campaign to discredit the Ukrainian government as a vassal of NATO and the United States. Russia regarded the 2004 Orange Revolution as a crisis manufactured by American "agents" wishing to dominate and marginalize Russia.

This situation provided the Russians with an opportunity to influence events in Ukraine through covert operations and INFOWAR. Russia has maintained covert operatives in Ukraine since the breakup of the Soviet Union, but it stepped up operations in 2005. They set up intelligence networks in eastern Ukraine and Crimea and began INFOWAR to discredit the Ukrainians. Ethnic Russians were portrayed as oppressed victims of a Ukrainian government that did not see them as equals.

Russia's INFOWAR effort used Russian television and radio that was available in Crimea to push its message of ethnic Russian solidarity, the right of Crimeans to choose their own government, and the threat posed by the "hostile Western" Ukrainian government in Kiev. As the situation in Kiev worsened, Yanukovych was forced to flee the country and a new government took over. This fed right into the Russian INFOWAR narrative and provided the Russians the needed catalyst to make the move into Crimea.

Depending on which president was in power, the political and economic relationship between Ukraine and Russia has swung like a pendulum since the former's independence in the early 1990s. In May 2002, the Ukrainian political leadership announced that their country would seek to join NATO—a move loathed by the Russians and maybe more than half of the Ukrainian population. This gravitation toward the Western military alliance continued until 25 February 2010, when Viktor Yanukovych began his term as Ukraine's president. In April 2010, Ukraine signed a deal with Moscow that would allow the Black Sea



Fleet to be stationed in Crimea until 2042 with an option providing for renewal of the agreement for five additional years. In return, Russia cut the price of natural gas sold by GazProm to Ukraine by 30%. Two months after ratifying the Black Sea Fleet deal, the Ukrainian parliament voted to stop its country's plans to join NATO—a decision that significantly increased Russia's geopolitical influence over Ukraine. In November 2013, Yanukovich's government chose to reject a trade agreement with the European Union (EU), looking instead for a closer economic relationship with Russia.<sup>43</sup>

Parliament's decision to turn its back on the West led Ukrainian nationalists to begin small protests all over the country, which increased in size until 100,000 Ukrainians marched in Kiev and occupied its city hall. Russia responded to Yanukovich's tenuous situation by writing off \$15 billion of Ukrainian debt and approving a one-third price reduction on natural gas shipments to Ukraine. While possibly not connected, the Ukrainian government released all 234 demonstrators taken into custody since December 2013 just a few days after Ukrainian security forces allegedly killed 77 protesters in Kiev. Despite this conciliatory move by the authorities, violent protests continued throughout Kiev until Yanukovich signed an agreement with opposition leaders that committed him to governing consistent with parameters codified in the 2004 constitution. Shortly thereafter, Yanukovich fled to either eastern Ukraine or Russia in fear of his personal safety. On 23 February 2014, the Ukrainian parliament appointed its speaker, Oleksander Turchynov, as interim president, and the new government later issued an arrest warrant for Yanukovich due to his impeachment and flight from prosecution. Russia's loss of its leading supporter in Kiev made it seem to Putin and the other Russian leaders that Ukraine would not remain within the Russian sphere of influence, but even more importantly was how the change in administrations would affect the Russian Black Sea Fleet. On 31 March 2014, GazProm eliminated the "discount" of natural gas sold to Ukraine and increased the price by over 40% to \$385.50 per thousand cubic meters (tcm). Less than a week later, on 3 April 2014, GazProm raised the price of natural gas sold to Ukraine to \$485 per tcm. Negotiations continued throughout the summer, but the two sides have yet to reach an agreement. Russia eventually chose to stop all natural gas sales to Ukraine until that country paid off its past gas debt of over \$2 billion, and further stipulated that all future sales must be prepaid before GazProm ships the natural gas through its pipeline.<sup>44</sup>

## **2010 Naval Base Agreement**

The Yanukovich-led Ukrainian government agreed in April 2010 to allow the Russian Black Sea Fleet to remain based in Crimea for an additional 25 years, with a five-year extension option. With the current deal not set to expire until 2017, this gave Russia the ability to base troops in Crimea until 2042 with an option for five additional years. In return for the extension, Ukraine would receive a \$100 discount per tcm of natural gas if the price was over \$330 per tcm, or a 30% discount if the regular price was below the \$330 threshold. The deal would allow Ukraine to purchase up to 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2010 and up to 40 billion cubic meters annually in the following years. Basically, Ukraine traded the right for Russia to station military troops in Crimea for a promise by Russia to supply Ukraine's energy requirements throughout the length of the agreement.<sup>45</sup>

## **Russian Crimean Military Authorizations**

The deal between Ukraine and Russia allowed Russian naval forces to be stationed in Crimea. The maximum strength limits for the Russian armed forces included 25,000 personnel, 24 artillery systems with calibers less than 100-mm, 132 armored vehicles, and 22 airplanes. Most of the Russian naval units

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



were stationed in the Sevastopol area, but there were a few exceptions—the primary Russian naval airbase is in Kacha, a few miles north of Sevastopol, and the 61st Support Group in Feodosia in the eastern part of the province. At the time of the 2014 crisis, Russia had only about 16,000 troops stationed in Crimea; of these, most were naval personnel used mainly for sailing ships, rather than soldiers trained for ground warfare. One source stated that 10,000 combat soldiers, possibly infiltrated into Crimea, took part in the capture of the Ukrainian military bases in Crimea, but no other open source confirmed a number that high. Two major exceptions to the mainly naval Russian presence in Ukraine included the 1,096th Separate Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment and 2,000 marines in the 810th Marine Brigade. At the onset of the 2014 crisis, additional Russian airborne soldiers and specialized troops were flown in to Crimean airports, ferried in, or brought into the country by hovercraft.

## Russian naval units assigned to Crimea in late February/early March 2014 before the influx of any additional forces<sup>46</sup>

Unit (Size if known)	Location
Black Sea Fleet Headquarters (Flag Ship-Missile Cruiser Moskva)	Sevastopol (Note: Payment by Russia to lease facilities and for environmental impact)
854 Coastal Missile Regiment	Chersonese (Sevastopol) (Note: Military Personnel)
1096 Air Defense Regiment	Sevastopol (Note: Artillery [less than 100-mm in size])
89 Independent Communications Regiment	Sevastopol (Note: Armored Vehicles)
130 Electronics Intelligence (ELINT) Center (Osnaz)	Sevastopol (Note: Military Planes)
810 Independent Marine Brigade (2,000 personnel)	Sevastopol (Note: Kacha Air Base)
30 Surface Ships Division (Ships-Kerch, Ochakov, Smetlivy, Ladny, & Pytlivy)	Sevastopol (Note: Gvardeysky Air Base)
11 Surface Ships Brigade	Sevastopol (note: Unit Security)
197 LST Brigade (7 amphibious ships)	Sevastopol
247 Independent Submarine Division (Diesel Subs B-871 Arosa & B-380 Syvatoy Knyaz Georgy)	Sevastopol
68 Coast Guard Ships Brigade (Harbor Defense Ship Brigade)	Sevastopol
400 Anti-Submarine Ships Division (4 ships)	Sevastopol
418 MSM (Minesweeper) Division (4 ships)	Sevastopol
102 Independent Anti-Diver Battalion	Sevastopol
41 Missile Ships Brigade	Sevastopol
166 Missile Ships Division (Fast Attack Craft-Bora & Samum hovercrafts, Mirazh & Shtil)	Sevastopol
295 Missile Boat Division	Sevastopol
63 Repair Ships Brigade	Sevastopol
519 Independent ELINT Ships Division	Sevastopol
Support Ships Department	Sevastopol
VM-1020 (Support Ships)	Sevastopol
58 Group (Support)	Sevastopol
61 Group (Support)	Feodosia
9 Support Ships Brigade	Sevastopol
472 Support Ships Brigade	Sevastopol
57 Support Ships Division	Sevastopol
23 Support Ships Division	Sevastopol
37 Rescue Brigade	Sevastopol
138 Rescue Ships Division	Sevastopol
162 Support Rescue Ships Division	Sevastopol
Hydrographic Department	Sevastopol

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Unit (Size if known)	Location
422 Separate Hydrographic Ship Division (includes Cheleken, Stvor, Donuzlav, & GS-402)	Sevastopol
176 Hydrographic Division	Sevastopol
47 Hydrographic District	Sevastopol
7057 Naval Air Force Brigade	Sevastopol

## Ukrainian Forces

Ukraine actually fielded more personnel—about 25,000 military personnel to 16,000 Russian sailors and soldiers—in Crimea in late February 2014. Most of the Ukrainian military personnel, however, were sailors and not ground forces. The one major exception was the combined forces of approximately 750 personnel of the Ukrainian 1st (stationed in Feodosia) and the 501st Marine Battalion in the eastern part of Crimea. If Russia infiltrated 10,000 additional ground forces into Crimea, the forces were then almost equal in terms of personnel during the crisis. There were some non-military forces in Crimea that Russia felt more important than the naval personnel. These included Ukrainian Border Troops and Minister of Interior internal defense units. The chart below shows the major Ukrainian military weapon systems as of April 2013, not just the equipment located in Crimea.<sup>47</sup>

**Ukrainian Army (As of April 2013)<sup>48</sup>**

Armored Equipment in Service		Artillery in Service		Missile/AD/AT/AVN in Service	
T-80UD/T-90 Main Battle Tank	167	152-mm, 2A36 Giatsint-B, Towed Gun	287	100-mm, MT-12, Towed Anti-Tank Gun	500
T-72A Main Battle Tank	600	152-mm, 2A65 MSTA-B Towed Gun/Howitzer	185	30-mm, 2S6M Tunguska, SP AA Gun (w/SA-19 Grison SAM)	70
T-64B Main Battle Tank	1100	152-mm, D-20 Towed Gun/Howitzer	215	57-mm, S-60, Towed AA Gun	400
T-64BM Bulat	47	152-mm, M-1937 (ML-20), Towed Gun/Howitzer	7	SS-1C Scud SRBM, Surface to Surface Missile	72
T-54/55 Medium Tank	UNK (<112)	203-mm, 2S7 Pion, SP Howitzer	99	9K21 Luna, Free Rocket Over Ground (FROG)-7, Surface to Surface Missile	50
T-84/U/Oplot Main Battle Tank (In Trials)	10	152-mm, 2S3 Akatsiya, SP Howitzer	463	9K79 Tochka, SS-21 Scarab, Surface to Surface Missile	90
BRDM-1/BRDM-2Di Armored Recon Vehicle	UNK (600 in 2012)	152-mm, 2S5 Giatsint, SP Howitzer	24	Surface to Air (SA)-4 Ganef (2K11 Krug)	100
BMP-1 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV)	994	152-mm, 2S19 MSTA-S, SP Howitzer	40	SA-8 Gecko (Osa-AK)	125
BRM-1K IFV	458	122-mm, 2S1 Gvozdika, SP Howitzer	600	SA-11 Gadfly (9K37, Buk-1M)	60
BMP-2 IFV	1434	122-mm, D-30A, Towed Howitzer	369	SA-13 Gopher (9K35, Strela-10)	150
BMP-3 IFV	4	122-mm, M-30, Towed Howitzer	2	SA-18 Grouse (9K38, Igla 2) MANPADS	UNK
BMD-1 IFV	60	120-mm PM-38, Towed Mortar	119	Anti-Tank (AT)-6 Spiral (9K114 Shturm)	UNK
BMD-2 IFV	78	120-mm, 2S9-1 NONA-S, SP	67	AT-5 Spandrel (9K113	UNK

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Armored Equipment in Service		Artillery in Service		Missile/AD/AT/AVN in Service	
BTR-80 Armored Personnel Carrier (APC)	395	Mortar 120-mm, 2B16, SP Mortar	2	Konkurs) AT-4 Spigot (9K111 Fagot)	UNK
BTR-70 APC	857	120-mm, 2S12, Towed Mortar	318	Helicopter, Mi-24 Hind Gunship	139
BTR-60PB APC	136	300-mm, 9A52 Smerch, SP MRLS (12-round)	80	Helicopter, Mi-8 Hip, Utility	38
BTR-D APC	44	220-mm, 9P140 Uragan, SP MRLS (16-round)	137		
		132-mm, BM-13, Truck Mounted MRLS	2		
		122-mm, BM21 Grad, SP MRLS (40-round)	315		
		122-mm, 9P138, Truck Mounted MRLS	20		

## Ukrainian Air Force (As of April 2013)<sup>49</sup>

Fixed Wing Aircraft in Service		Rotary Wing Aircraft in Service		Air Defense Weapons in Service	
MiG-29 Fulcrum-A/C, Fighter (16 in storage)	140+	Mi-2 Hoplite, Transport	3	AA-7 Apex (Air-to-Air Missile, K-23)	UNK
MiG-23 Flogger, Fighter/Ground Attack	120	Mi-8 Hip, Transport (31 in January 2012)	UNK	AA-8 Aphid (K-60)	UNK
MiG-25 Foxbat, Fighter/Ground Attack	60	Mi-9 Hip-G, Transport (4 in January 2012)	NA	AA-9 Amos (K-100)	UNK
Su-27 Flanker, Fighter	50+	Mi-24 Hind, Attack	24	AA-10 Alamo (R-27)	UNK
Su-24 Fencer D, Fighter (Strike)	30	Mi-26 Halo, Transport	8	AS-9 Kyle (Air-to-Surface Missile, Kh28)	UNK
Su-25 Frogfoot-A Fighter, Ground Attack	35			AS-10 Karen (Kh-25)	UNK
Su-24 MR Fencer-E, Reconnaissance	8			AS-11 Kilter (Kh-58)	UNK
Su-24MP Fencer F, Electronic Warfare (EW)	140+			AS-12 Kegler (Kh-25MP)	UNK
IL-76 Candid, Transportation	160			AS-13 Kingpost (Kh-59)	UNK
An-24 Coke, Transportation	3			AS-14 Kedge (Kh-29, some in January 2012)	NA
An-26 Curl, Transportation	21			AS-15 Kent (Kh-5, some in January 2012)	NA
An-30 Clank, Transportation	3			SA-2 Guideline (Surface-to-Air Missile, S-75 Dvina)	UNK
An-70 Antonov, Transportation (6-8 o/o)	0+			SA-3 Goa (S-125 Neva)	UNK
Tu-134 Crusty, Transportation	2			SA-5 Gammon (S-200 in fixed positions)	UNK
L-39C Albatros, Training	39			SA-6 Gainful (2K12 Kub, some in January 2012)	NA
				SA-10 Grumble (S-300P, SP)	NA
				SA-11 Gadfly (9K37, Buk-1M)	NA
				SA-12a Gladiator (S300V Antei)	UNK

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



## Ukrainian Navy (As of April 2013)<sup>50</sup>

Vessels	
Submarine: ZHAPOROZYE FOXTROT Class	1
Frigate: Russian Krivak III Class	1
Corvette: Russian GRISHA V Class	3
Corvette: Russian GRISHA II Class	2
Corvette: Russian PAUK I Class	2
Guided Missile Patrol Craft: Russian MATKA Class	2
Guided Missile Patrol Craft: Russian TARANTUL II Class	2
Patrol Boat: Russian FLAMINGO Class	1
Patrol Boat: Russian ZHUK Class	1
Mine Warfare (Inshore Minesweeper): Russian YEVGENYA Class	1
Mine Warfare (Coastal Minesweeper): Russian SONYA Class	2
Mine Warfare (Minesweeper): Russian NATYA-I Class	2
Amphibious Hovercraft: Russian Pomornik Class	2
Amphibious LST: Russian ROPUCHA Class	1
Amphibious Medium Landing Ship: Polish POLNOCNY-C Class	1
Amphibious Tank Landing Ship: Russian TAPIR Class	2
Amphibious Mechanized Landing Craft: ONDATRA Class	2
Amphibious Mechanized Landing Craft: Russian T-4 Class	1
Auxiliary-Training Ship: Russian MOMA Class	1
Auxiliary-Command Ship: Russian KAMCHATKA Class	1
Auxiliary-Harbor Patrol: FLAMINGO Class	4
Auxiliary-Survey: NYRYAT 1 Class	4
Auxiliary-YPT: SHELON Class	1
Auxiliary: PO 2 Class	1
Auxiliary-Ambulance: U783	1
Auxiliary-Officers' Yacht: U853	1
Auxiliary: DRAKON Class	1
Auxiliary-Firefighting: POZHARNY Class	2
Auxiliary-Harbor Tug: SIDEHOLE II Class	1
Auxiliary-Coastal Tug: OKHTENSKY Class	2
Auxiliary-Tug: GORYN Class	1
Auxiliary-Tug: SCRUM Class	1
Auxiliary-Large Tug: PROMETHEY Class	1
Training Ship: PETRUSKA Class	3
Training Ship: BRYZA Class	1

Aircraft	
Be-12 Mail, Maritime Patrol	3
An-26 Curl, Transport	2
An-24 Coke, Transport	1
An-12 Cub, Transport	1
Il-18 Coot, Transport	1
Tu-134 Crusty, Transport	1
Ka-27 Helix, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)	16
Ka-25 Hormone, ASW	28
Ka-29 Assault, ASW/Transport	16
Mi-14 Hare, ASW	5
Mi-8 Hip, Troop Carrier	8
Mi-6 Hook, Troop Carrier	5





## Crimean Takeover: Operational Overview

Crimea has long sought its independence from Ukraine because of its protracted association with Russia and the people's desire to rejoin the Russian Federation. Crimea had become the home to a large ethnic Russian population, many of which had served in the Soviet/Russian military. As far back as February 1994, Crimean politicians would make speeches declaring the Crimeans not only sought separation from Ukraine, but also a unification of Crimea with Russia. When Yuriy Meshkov won the first and only independent Crimean presidential election in 1994 with 73% of the votes, he stated, "In spirit, the Crimean people have been and remain part of Russia."<sup>51</sup> During the next couple of years, Ukrainian marines took possession of a number of naval facilities on Crimea, evicted the pro-Russian political leaders in Crimea, and ended the short-lived independent Crimea on 17 March 1995. With protests from Moscow, this eventually led to the 1997 treaty that divided the Russian naval facilities between the two countries and allowed for the Russians to maintain a military presence in Crimea, primarily to support the Russian navy's Black Sea Fleet. One of the most overlooked clauses in the agreement which allowed the February/March 2014 events to take place was the section that permitted Russian forces to implement not only security measures at their own permanent bases in Crimea, but to provide security for their own forces during deployment and redeployment movements to and from Russia. In the early stages of the crisis in late February 2014, this very minor clause in the treaty allowed the Russian military to move initially around Crimea without interference by any Ukrainian military personnel under the guise of the movement authorized by the military agreement between the two countries.<sup>52</sup>

The Russian military launched their operation in Crimea less than a week after Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich signed an agreement with the opposition political leaders on 21 February 2014 that confirmed early presidential elections would take place by the end of the year, ensured a national unity government would be created within a month, and guaranteed Ukraine would return to its 2004 constitution. Yanukovich then fled Kiev within 24 hours, however, instead of remaining in Ukraine to abide by the agreement. The timing also coincided with the scheduled military maneuvers in the Russian Central and Western Military Districts that obscured the Russian troop movements into the peninsula. The map in Figure 8 indicates the various activities from unclassified sources that took place in Crimea between the night of 27 February 2014 and 25 March 2014, when the Ukrainian government pulled its military forces from Crimea and ceded control of the peninsula to the Crimean "defense forces" backed by Russian military forces. This is not a complete list, but examples of activities from open sources that took place and the dates on which the events occurred. The numbering of the paragraphs matches the map in Figure 5 below.

### 1: Government Buildings

Less than a company of well-armed troops took control of the Crimean parliament building and cabinet of ministers' buildings in Simferopol, Crimea's capital city, on 27 February 2014. The 120 military personnel, armed primarily with machine guns and grenades, quickly seized the government buildings and hoisted the Russian flag at both locations. Ukraine, especially over the last 20 years, has shown a history of protesters taking control of public buildings, especially city halls. The control of public space is symbolic for the usurpers as it provides a visual picture suggesting that the government cannot defend itself.<sup>53</sup>

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Figure 8. Russian actions in [Crimea](#)—February/March 2014

## 2 and 3: Transportation Hubs

On the night of 27 February 2014, several hundred unidentified armed personnel, likely mostly Russian military, seized the Simferopol civilian airport and the Sevastopol military airport. Approximately two Russian airborne battalions and some Spetsnaz forces then flew into Crimea under the pretext of protecting Crimea's Russian-speaking population. The control of these transportation hubs allowed Russia to regulate what forces could be brought into Crimea by air.<sup>54</sup>

## 4: Communications Network

During the day of 28 February 2014, armed personnel in uniforms who were supported by local militia took control of the Krym State Television Company and several Urktelecom facilities throughout Crimea. Urktelecom is the primary telephone and Internet communications provider in the region, and control of these communications facilities allowed the attackers to not just transmit, but shape their message to those living on the peninsula.<sup>55</sup>

## 5: Naval Blockade

Dropping the pretense of posing as local forces or claiming themselves to be self-defense forces, as they did just two days earlier, the Russian navy sank a ship at the entrance to Donuzlav Lake on 6 March



2014. This was done under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians, but was really to prevent the Ukrainian naval fleet from leaving its base in Novoozerne harbor. Previously, on 1 March 2014, the Russian parliament had approved Putin's request to use force in Ukraine to protect Russian interests. With the Ukrainian navy closed off from open water, their ships were powerless to confront any of the Russian ships at Sevastopol.<sup>56</sup>

## 6: INFOWAR

In Simferopol on 6 March 2014, armed men took control of all Ukrainian media stations still in operation in the city. Under the new "management," the stations replaced their regularly scheduled broadcasts with the Russian news channel Rossiya 24. The Russians continued their INFOWAR campaign by increasing their control of the messages transmitted through local media to the Crimeans.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 9. [Ship sunk by the Russian navy to block the entrance to Donuzlav Lake](#)**

## 7: Block International Observers

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observation teams attempting to enter Crimea for the third time on 8 March 2014 were turned back by warning shots fired by uniformed personnel who prevented them from crossing the Crimean provincial border. Keeping third-party observers to a minimum enabled Russian and pro-Russian self-defense forces to act with impunity, and afforded them control of message traffic transmitted from Crimea to external audiences.<sup>58</sup>

## 8: Targets of Opportunity

Once the major military bases were under Russian control or the Ukrainian military forces barricaded in, the Russian forces continued the campaign against other lesser military targets. On 10 March 2014, armed men occupied the Simferopol military hospital. This fully equipped hospital would be useful in treating Russian and pro-Russian personnel, while denying the same medical assets to the Ukrainian military.<sup>59</sup>

## 9: Internet Control

On 13 March 2014, Russia blocked the web pages of thirteen sites known for their pro-Ukrainian or anti-Russian/Putin sympathies. These included Vkontakte, Russia's leading social media website, which was also used by many Ukrainians. The social media groups, some with as many as 500,000 members, could not access the websites dedicated to their causes. In a very short time, the amount of negative Internet activity against Russia and Putin dropped considerably. The closure of the websites was an attempt to silence those who supported Ukrainian as opposed to Russian interests, and also to limit their activities in Crimea.<sup>60</sup>

## 10: Strategic Chokepoint

One natural gas pipeline provides most of the energy for the entire Crimean peninsula, and that pipeline flows from Russia through Ukraine to Crimea. Once Crimea proclaimed independence and later joined



the Russian Federation, controlling the natural gas pipeline became crucial to both sides. For whatever reason, the Ukrainian military failed to protect it, but Russian forces waited for two weeks before taking this strategic infrastructure node. On 15 March 2014, a small company of Russian soldiers took the natural gas distribution center near Strilkove, a thin strip of land between the Ukrainian mainland and the Crimean Peninsula. Only 60–120 troops, supported by armored vehicles and helicopter gunships, were needed to take possession of the distribution center. With the control of natural gas in pro-Russian hands, the Ukrainians were unable to turn off power to Crimea at this critical chokepoint. In response to this hostile action on Ukrainian soil, the Ukrainian military finally responded by preparing defensive positions along the Ukrainian/Crimean border.<sup>61</sup>

## 11: Overwhelming Force

After days of little resistance by the Ukrainian forces located in Crimea, two Ukrainian supporters—one military and one militiaman—died defending their base in Simferopol on 18 March 2014. Despite all the military activity and confrontation by Ukrainian and Russian military forces in Crimea over the past three weeks, these were the first deaths of Ukrainian military personnel. Reacting to the death of the Ukrainian soldier, the Ukrainian Minister of Defense (MOD) revoked a previous order to exercise restraint, and authorized Ukrainian military personnel to use deadly force to protect themselves. On the following day, the MOD announced that Ukraine would withdraw all 25,000 of its military personnel from Crimea and relocate them to other bases in Ukraine. A couple of deaths and the appearance of a well-armed superior enemy convinced the Ukrainian military to stop resisting and to relinquish control of its former bases to the Russian force and local pro-Russian self-defense forces.<sup>62</sup>

## 12: Intimidate

Russian military forces, assisted by some native defense forces to give it a local flavor, continued to seize Ukrainian military sites. They captured two naval posts, including the major Ukrainian base in Sevastopol, on 19 March 2014. While these actions were underway, Admiral Serhly Hayduk, the Ukrainian navy commander, was taken prisoner by pro-Russian forces. The militia forces unceremoniously dropped off the admiral at a new checkpoint recently erected on the Ukrainian/Crimean border. The local self-defense forces usually raised the Russian flag on any bases they captured. While Crimeans vocally expressed a desire for independence to the international community, the pro-Russian groups' actions almost always indicated their determination to become part of the Russian federation.<sup>63</sup>

## 13: Eliminate Crucial Weapons

On 21 March 2014, Russian-led forces overran the 174th Air Defense Regiment base located at Fiolent, a suburb of Sevastopol. The Crimean forces captured the unit's S-300 surface-to-air missile inventory before it could be destroyed. The Russian/militia forces also demanded the surrender of the defending Ukrainian unit; it complied, singing the "Hymn of Ukraine" as soldiers marched away from their base. The Ukrainian personnel system also worked to support the Russian intervention as conscripts and officers usually served in their home districts. This meant that most of the Ukrainians serving in Crimea were of Russian descent. It seemed that the Ukrainian soldiers preferred surrender and their life to death in a futile effort to keep Crimea as part of a country of a different ethnic heritage. The military forces that now occupy Crimea are very familiar with the Russian S-300 (NATO designation: SA-10 Grumble). Any operational S-300s can quickly become part of the Russian military arsenal with little





difficulty once missile experts complete safety inspections to ensure these weapons are in proper working order.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 10.** [S-300 Anti-aircraft missile](#)

## **14: Limit Opposition Successes**

After sitting bottled up in Donuzlav Lake for almost two weeks, a Ukrainian Natya-class minesweeper tried to escape on 21 March 2014 by evading the blockade set up by the Russian Navy. Other ships refused to assist Cherkasy in moving the sunken ships out of the way, so the minesweeper was forced to return to a defensive position in Donuzlav Lake. The Cherkasy's captain, however, still refused to follow the example of his fellow naval commanders who surrendered their vessels to Russian naval forces. With no

coordination among ships and no assistance from what remained of the Ukrainian Navy in Crimea, there was probably no hope that one ship could do much against the entire Russian Black Sea Fleet. Eventually, the Russians forced the Cherkasy to surrender.<sup>65</sup>

## **15. Leave Difficult—but Not Strategic—Targets for Last**

The Ukrainian military personnel at the Belbek Airbase attempted to defend their position from a follow-on attack by the Russians on 22 March 2014. The Russians had already taken over part of the airbase earlier in the conflict, but a portion of it remained under Ukrainian control. Facing Russian armored personnel carriers, the Ukrainian defense quickly faded, taking minimal casualties as only one Ukrainian officer was injured in the attack; Russian forces suffered no casualties. While some Ukrainian units or leaders attempted to defend their posts, the inability or lack of resolve displayed by neighboring Ukrainian units/leaders often proved contagious, causing comrades-in-arms to ponder whether their own deaths would be worth the cost, especially to any ethnic Russians in the Ukrainian military units.<sup>66</sup>

## **16. Barricade Forces inside Camps**

Located on the eastern side of Crimea and geographically distant from most of the action that took place throughout the previous week, the Ukrainian 1st Marine Battalion was a formidable force in Feodosia. The marines, however, refused to fight and eventually surrendered on 24 March 2014. For several days, the 1st Marine Battalion's leaders had been negotiating with the Russian/militia forces surrounding the base. At some point negotiating parties apparently neared agreement on a settlement that would have allowed the marines to retain their weapons and depart the base en route to the Ukraine in a vehicle convoy. Ultimately, however, the negotiations failed and the marines surrendered unconditionally; several were then arrested. This occurred on the same day that all the other Ukrainian military personnel left Crimea on interim President's Oleksander Turchynov's orders.<sup>67</sup>



## Operational Summary

In fewer than four weeks, the Russians, with support from local Crimean militia, captured approximately 189 Ukrainian military sites, often without firing a shot. Ukraine lost Crimea as much by its inaction on the peninsula as by Russia's actions. The Russians used no tanks, and the most advanced armored personnel carriers (APCs) used in these operations were BTR-80s. (See [The BTR Handbook–The Universal APC Threat Report](#) for details on this APC's capabilities.) The Russians and their Crimean supporters used a combination of naval blockades, barricades to prevent soldiers leaving their bases, psychological



Figure 11. [Russian soldiers keep Ukrainian military personnel confined to their compound](#)

warfare, intimidation, and bribery to convince most Ukrainian units to surrender without offering resistance. In units whose commanders initially refused to surrender, a few well-placed shots and a couple of resulting casualties typically sufficed to quickly change the resisters' minds. The abundance of ethnic Russians in the military units in Crimea who refused to fight for Ukraine and the lack of substantial action by the government in Kiev, gave the Russians a relatively easy military victory under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians. On 17 April 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin finally revealed the worst-kept secret of the entire operation: those Russian troops were present in Crimea.<sup>68</sup>





### The “Storming” of U-510 Slavutych

When the Russians and the local defense forces took over the Ukrainian naval vessels, the last ship to hold out in the Sevastopol harbor was the U-510, *Slavutych*, the Ukrainian navy’s command ship. When the USSR laid the keel for the *Slavutych*, it was originally intended to serve as an intelligence ship, a sister ship to the Russian *Kamchatka*. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the vessel was completed as a communications/command ship in 1992. The *Slavutych* bears the name of a town constructed by the Soviets for the families evacuated from Chernobyl after the 1986 nuclear accident. Both Russia and Ukraine wanted to possess the ship, but the final decision to divide the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet placed the *Slavutych* in the Ukrainian navy.<sup>69</sup>

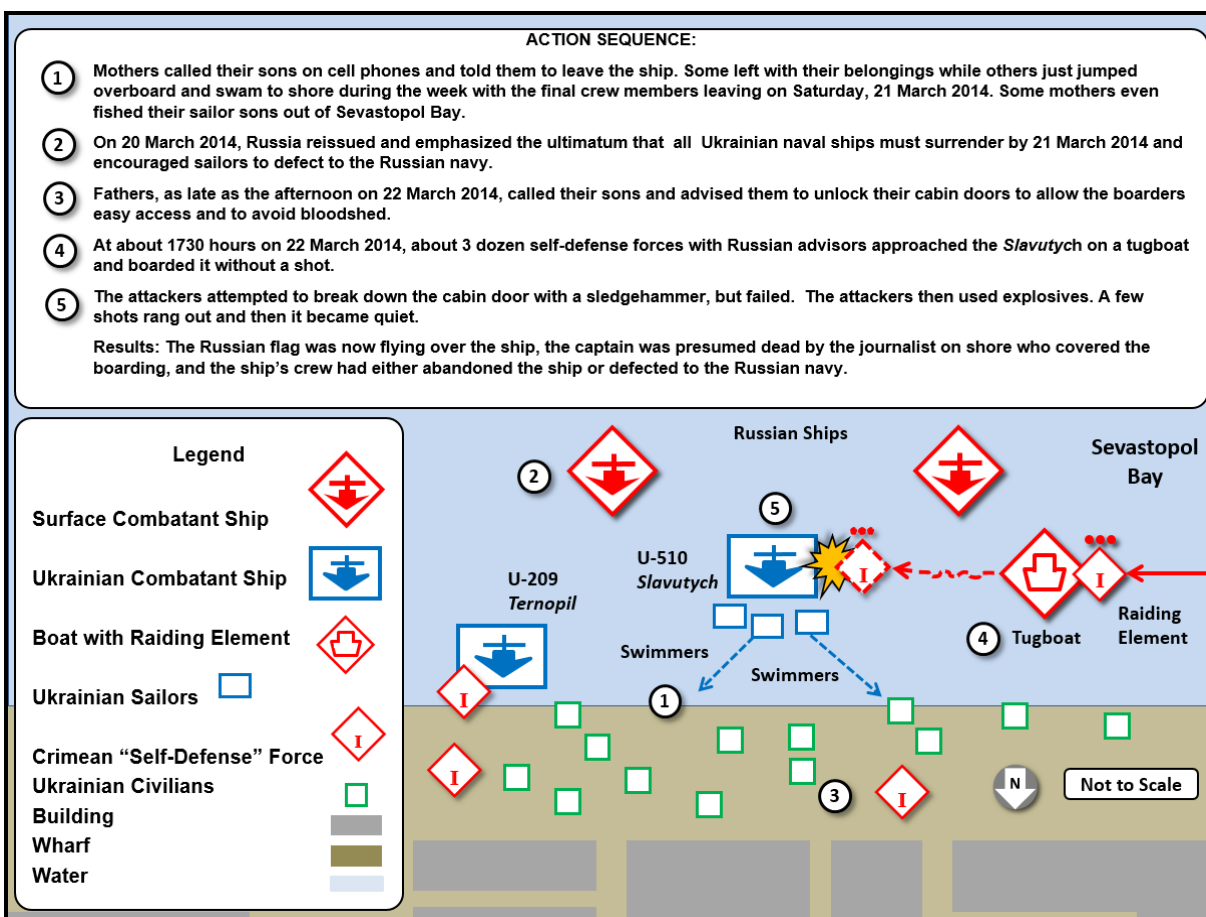
On 3 March 2014, five Russian tugboats prevented all Ukrainian ships from leaving their docks in Sevastopol. Armed personnel quickly seized the Ukrainian corvette, *Ternopil*, through the use of stun grenades and machine guns. Moored next to the *Ternopil*, the *Slavutych* moved away from the pier and anchored itself 10 meters away to prevent any shore-based boarding parties from reaching the ship. When divers attempted to board it the same day, the *Slavutych* used water cannons to drive them away. Armed personnel tried to board the *Slavutych* the following day, but the ship’s crew again repelled the attackers.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 12. [U-510 Slavutych](#), Ukrainian Command Ship

Two small Russian warships eventually replaced the tugboats and positioned themselves about 50 meters seaward from the *Slavutych*. Over the next three weeks, naval and ground forces kept a 24-hour watch on the Ukrainian command ship. After the Russian Black Sea Fleet commander boarded the *Ternopil* for an inspection of the captured vessel, the Russians gave the *Slavutych* and the rest of the Ukrainian navy bottled up at Donuzlav Lake until Friday, 21 March 2014, to surrender or decide to join the Russian Navy. Using various psychological techniques that included urging mothers of the sailors on board the *Slavutych* to call their sons on cell phones, up to 40% of the crew eventually deserted the ship.

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



**Figure 13. Graphic portrayal of how the Russians and local self-defense groups took over the *Slavutych* on Saturday, 22 March 2014**

On the day of the boarding, fathers also called, urging sons to stay in their cabins, unlock their doors, and leave them open, since the attackers would probably break down the doors anyway. Many of those on board were from Crimea and felt little allegiance to Ukraine. Some of the sailors were not technically members of the Ukrainian military, but working as civilian contractors; several just jumped overboard to escape. Their mothers came, fished them out of the water, and took them home. Many sailors chose to join the Russian navy, fearing that Ukrainian sailors who offered no resistance would be treated as deserters once they returned home. This was due to the scuttlebutt that some sailors who abandoned other ships had been arrested and were facing trial and possible prison sentences ranging from five to seven years. Other sailors simply chose to join the Russian Navy because they were native Crimeans, ethnic Russians, or married to local Crimean women; for them loyalty to family, heritage, or ship trumped national allegiance.<sup>71</sup>

Despite all the psychological and family pressure, the *Slavutych's* captain and some of the crew refused to surrender their ship and remained loyal to the Ukrainian government in Kiev. It soon became common knowledge that the local defense forces would attack the *Slavutych* on Saturday, 22 March 2014. During the afternoon, several of the ship's crew—some in uniform and some in civilian clothes—



left the *Slavutych* carrying their possessions in black plastic. At approximately 1730 hours local time, a tugboat with a few dozen men approached the Ukrainian ship while bystanders watched from the pier. While it appeared that the attackers were part of the self-defense forces, at least one witness alleged that the tugboat carried Russian special operations personnel. Sailors aboard the *Slavutych* used their loudspeaker system to warn the approaching vessel against illegally boarding the ship, but to no avail. The Ukrainian ship then began to play the patriotic song *Varyag*, a heroic composition dating back to the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>72</sup>

The attackers on the tugboat reached the *Slavutych*, and then boarded it. By that time, almost everyone had surrendered except for the ship's captain, who had locked himself in his cabin. The attackers first tried to use a sledgehammer to break the door down. When that failed, they resorted to grenades. A few gunshots rang out after the sledgehammer echoes faded and the grenades exploded, but soon the Ukrainian flag came down from the mast and the boarders raised a Russian flag in its place. The storming of the *Slavutych* was over in mere minutes.<sup>73</sup>

The capture of the *Slavutych* is a perfect example of an attack to gain control of equipment as described in Training Circular [\(TC\) 7-100.2, \*Opposing Force Tactics\*](#). The only difference is that the attack occurred on water instead of land. While the Russians may call the units that took part in the attack different names, the groups consisted of raiding, security, and support elements.<sup>74</sup>

### Eastern Ukraine 2014–2015

Almost immediately after the action in Crimea, separatists began military operations in eastern Ukraine. Most of the fighting occurred in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (collectively known as Donbass), areas with significant ethnic Russian populations. Pro-Russian demonstrations and limited military operations had been going on since the ouster of Yanukovich, but during March and early April 2014 pro-Russian separatists began seizing government and municipal buildings and installing “people’s governments” in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Building on previous experience in Georgia and Crimea, the Russians used their covert operatives, SPF troops, and INFOWAR to equip, guide, and advise pro-Russian separatists in Donbass. Unlike the previous operation in Crimea, the population was not completely supportive of the pro-Russian separatists. This required Russia to push the INFOWAR campaign to justify their support for the pro-Russian forces in Donbass. Russia did not move into Donbass as a reaction to the Euromaidan protests, or the Crimea “crisis”—this was a part of Russia’s long-term strategy for Ukraine. Events in Kiev just moved Russia’s timeline up.

Andrey Illarionov, former advisor for Vladimir Putin, said in a speech on 31 May 2014 that some technologies of Russo-Georgian War were updated and again being exploited in Ukraine. According to Illarionov, since the Russian military operation in Crimea began on 20 February 2014, Russian propaganda could not argue that the Russian aggression was the result of Euromaidan. The war in Ukraine did not happen “all of sudden,” but was pre-planned and the preparations began as early as 2003. Illarionov later stated that one of the Russian plans envisaged war with Ukraine in 2015 after a presidential election, however Maidan accelerated the confrontation.<sup>75</sup>

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



## Military Forces

Ukrainian Forces numbered approximately 50,000 soldiers.

### Ukrainian Defense Ministry

- Armed Forces of Ukraine
- Ukrainian State Border Guard
- Ukrainian Security Services

### Ukrainian Internal Affairs Ministry

- National Guard
- Territorial Defense Battalions

### Pro-Russian Separatist Forces

Pro-Russian Separatist forces numbered approximately 10,000-20,000 troops. These numbers fluctuated due to defections, conflicting allegiances, and independent “militia” groups that fought intermittently. The confusion on number of active fighters and sympathizers was an advantage to the separatists as the Ukrainian forces never really knew how large the forces they faced would be. The separatists operated in squad- to platoon-size elements and used harassment tactics (ambushes, mortar and artillery attacks) to confuse the Ukrainian forces.

### Breakaway/Separatist Governments

- Novorossiia
- Donetsk People's Republic
- Luhansk People's Republic

### Militias/Insurgent Organizations

- Donbass People's Militia
- Vostok Battalion<sup>76</sup>
- Russian Orthodox Army<sup>77</sup>
- Army of the Southeast<sup>78</sup>
- Oplot Battalion<sup>79</sup>
- Zarya Battalion<sup>80</sup>
- Kalmius Battalion<sup>81</sup>
- Cossacks
- Chechen and Volunteers from the Caucasus
- Ukrainian police and military defectors
- Union of Mine Workers<sup>82</sup>

## Russian Federation

Russia denies that any Russian forces are fighting in Donbass, but reports of professional-looking, well-trained, Russian-speaking fighters assisting the local militias are widespread. Russia has also been

# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



suspected of firing artillery over the border in support of the separatist militias. The Russians have stated that if there are Russian soldiers in Ukraine, they are “on leave” and are not fighting in an official capacity. The exact number of Russian soldiers is unknown, but there have been reports and sightings of Russian military equipment moving across the border from Russia into Donbass.

- Spetsnaz Forces
- Russian Army “Volunteers”
- Russian Paramilitary Fighters

## History of the Conflict

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Donbass section of Ukraine has been a predominantly ethnic Russian enclave. The Russian population in eastern Ukraine has generally been 20–60% of the populace, depending on the Oblast. The graphic below shows the ethnic breakdown in Ukraine as of the 2001 Census.

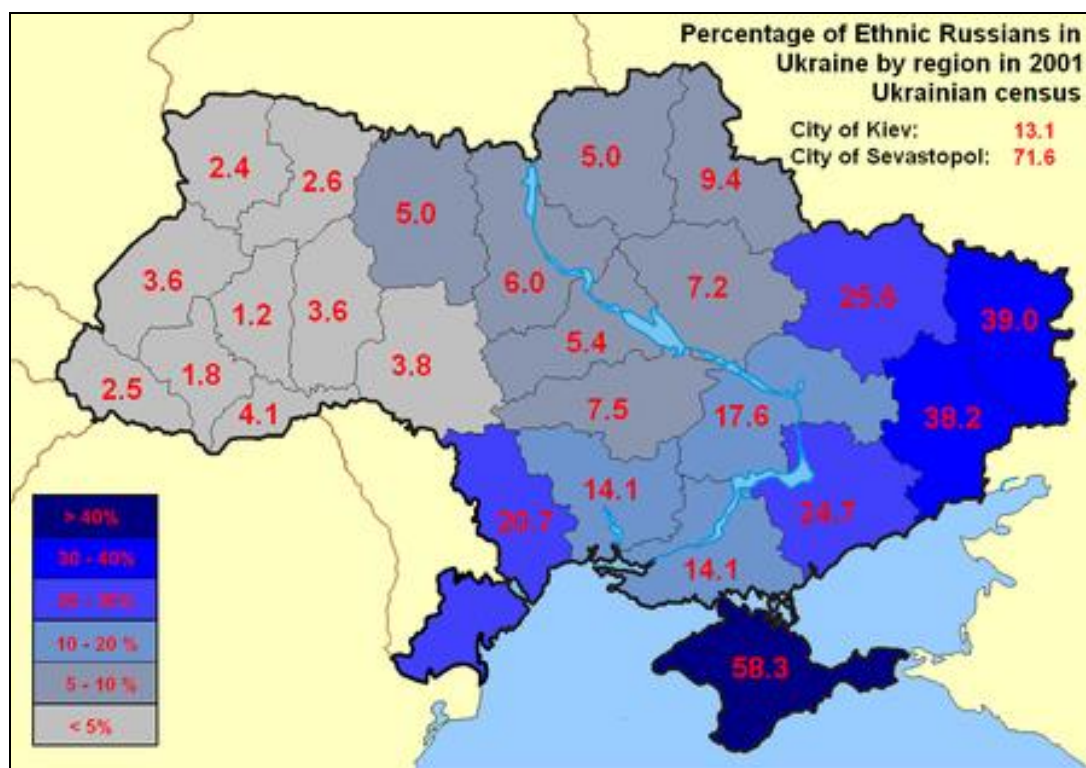


Figure 14. [2001 Census State Statistics Committee of Ukraine](#)

The Russians in the east generally tended to live in the cities, working in industrial jobs. The Ukrainians usually lived in the smaller cities, towns, villages, and rural areas. This area has historically had few problems between Russians and Ukrainians, until the conflicts in 2014–15.



# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



The Russian population did not show any signs of not wanting to be Ukrainian citizens, but did favor good relations with Russia. Russia used this situation to slowly and methodically build up a network of covert operatives, insurgent organizations, political parties, and Russian civic organizations and clubs that pushed the narrative of Russian oppression by the Ukrainian majority. As stated by Andrey Illarionov, former advisor of Vladimir Putin, the Russians started this effort as early as 2003, planning for possible conflict in 2015. Building on the success of the operation in Crimea, the Russians used the same approach in Donbass, using the same tactics that were discussed in the Crimea section.

## Seize Government Buildings

Pro-Russian protests had been going on in Donbass since the Euromaidan protests began in Kiev. They became more vocal, violent, and frequent in late February of 2014. Protesters had attempted to seize the Donetsk Regional State Administration (RSA) building several times in February, and occupied the RSA from 1–6 March 2014 before being evicted by Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). On 6 April, 1,000–2,000 people gathered at a rally in Donetsk to demand a status referendum similar to the one held in Crimea in March.<sup>83</sup> The demonstrators stormed the RSA building and took control of its first two floors. They said that if an extraordinary legislative session was not held by regional officials to implement a status referendum, they would take control of the regional government with a "people's mandate," and dismiss all elected regional councilors and members of parliament. As these demands were not met, the activists held a meeting in the RSA building, and voted in favor of independence from Ukraine. They claimed the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR).<sup>84</sup> Separatists also occupied the SBU building in Luhansk on 9 April 2015, and began setting up a shadow government in Luhansk.

After proclaiming the new republic, government buildings in Druzhkivka, Horlivka, Kramatorsk, Makiivka Mariupol, Sloviansk, Yenakiieve, and Zhdanivka were occupied by the separatists. The basic tactic was to call for a demonstration, assure that the militias and those political leaders that supported separatist goals were present, and then simply encourage the crowd to swarm the building. Most times, security personnel in the building allowed the separatists to occupy the building, assisted them, or did not show up to work that day. Separatists also took over buildings on days when they knew the staff would not be there—weekends, holidays, etc. Separatists were also able to take over armories and distribute weapons to supporters. They then erected barricades and fortified positions outside of government buildings, police stations, and municipal centers.

Once the DPR had a foothold in Donetsk, they began to appoint ministers, mayors, and municipal workers, giving the DPR a sense of legitimacy. The new "government" attempted to take over civic administration such as water, electricity, garbage collection, etc., but with no support from the Ukrainian government, services were significantly degraded.

This swift seizure and control of governmental responsibilities is all part of the Russian template for waging war. The main goal is to gain control of key centers of power and government with a small, dedicated core of supporters assisted by Russian advisors and volunteers. This makes the uprising look bigger than it actually is, appearing to have widespread support. Once in power, the new DPR called for a referendum on independence. This move allows the new government time to solidify power, establish governance, and organize local and foreign militias to defend against the inevitable counteroffensive. It





also gave Russian paramilitaries, volunteers, and SPF time to infiltrate weapons and fighters into Donbass. On 12 April 2015, Igor Girkin, a retired colonel in the Russian GRU, along with fifty-two supporters, stormed the police department and several other municipal buildings in Sloviansk. Girkin and most of his men were from Crimea, and were quickly joined by two hundred local supporters. Girkin expected the Russians to invade Donbass in a repeat of the Crimean seizure. All through Donbass, local militias assisted by foreign volunteers were setting up checkpoints, taking over government buildings, and installing new officials. As all of this is occurring, the DPR continued its campaign for statehood in the media, using TV, radio, and social media. This was generally unsuccessful, as many polls indicated that 50-75% of the population did not support independence for Donetsk.

On 13 April 2015, the Ukrainian Army attempted to take back the RSA building in Donetsk. Ukraine used helicopters and rocket launchers in the attack but were unsuccessful. They did manage to destroy several separatist checkpoints, but were otherwise ineffective. Pro-Russian militias also broke up pro-Ukrainian rallies and put several demonstrators in the hospital.

## Transportation Hubs

Separatists set up checkpoints throughout Donbass to prevent or at least slow down any reinforcements from the Ukrainian Army or pro-Ukrainian militias. On 15 April 2015, an armored column sent by Ukraine established a checkpoint 40 km from Sloviansk. The SBU claimed that the rebels there had been reinforced by several hundred soldiers from Russia's Main Intelligence Directorate.<sup>85</sup> Separatists also manned checkpoints in most major cities and towns to control movement and traffic. Finally, separatists managed to gain control of most of the border checkpoints on the Russian border. This allowed for free movement of Russian convoys containing weapons and equipment for the separatists. On 16 April 2015, six BMD-2 armored vehicles were captured by the separatists at a checkpoint near Kramatorsk. Images later showed the vehicles being driven by separatists. Fourteen Ukrainian Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) with 100 soldiers were surrounded by a large crowd in Pcholkino, but were able to leave after surrendering their ammunition.<sup>86</sup> The commander of Ukraine's airborne troops, Col. Alexander Sveths, another officer, and a civilian contractor were abducted after refusing to lay down the weapons.

Col. Sveths, the officer, and the contractor were released on 18 April 2015. This tactic allowed the rebels to control movement in certain areas of Donbass, monitor Ukrainian Forces' movements, acquire equipment and disarm Ukrainian troops, and supported the Russian INFOWAR campaign that portrayed the Ukrainian government and Armed Forces as incompetent.

## INFOWAR

Russia has had an extensive and thorough INFOWAR campaign in eastern Ukraine. Much like Crimea and Georgia, Russian TV, radio, and Internet were available and predominant in Donbass and other ethnic Russian areas. A steady stream of anti-Kiev propaganda was available to those who wished to access it, and slowly the message of the "oppressed Russian minority" began to gain acceptance. The events in Kiev and Crimea in 2014 only affirmed this in the minds of many Donbas residents.



Russia then activated a vast network of insurgents, political operatives, and covert intelligence agents that began to organize military operations in Donetsk and Luhansk. The Russians used networks of *Internet trolls*—individuals who set up phony blogs to discuss the situation in Donbass and push the Russian narratives. Most of these networks were set up and operated out of Russia by Russians who worked for “independent” companies that paid their employees with cash and had no paperwork or records for plausible deniability.<sup>87</sup> Videos were also produced that showed “ethnic Russian residents of Donbass” commenting on the situation in Donbass. The Russians were exposed when it was discovered that the same person was used in multiple videos that were attributed to the Euromaidan Protests, Crimea, and Donbass.

## Targets of Opportunity

Separatists were adept at using social media and cell phones to organize large groups of civilian protesters, using information from those manning checkpoints, and separatists acting as recon assets. In many cases this allowed the separatists to engage targets of opportunity. In Pchylkino, a village south of Sloviansk, several citizens surrounded fourteen Ukrainian armored vehicles from the 25<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade and forced them to leave and surrender their magazines before they turned around. This led Ukrainian President Turchynov to disband the brigade.

This tactic is effective in two distinct ways. First, it allows the separatists to make up for the disadvantage in weapons and personnel by using civilians to confront military personnel. The potential for unarmed civilian casualties at the hands of armed military men would be an INFOWAR disaster for the military side. Second, it shows that the separatists were able to isolate small military formations and overwhelm them with sheer numbers once they were close. Forcing the Ukrainian soldiers to surrender magazines and ammunition also gave the separatists an INFOWAR victory.

## Intimidation

Separatists used intimidation tactics to coerce mayors, civic authorities, and police forces to side with them. Those who failed to do so were replaced, and in some cases imprisoned, beaten, or killed. Humanitarian aid was also prevented from reaching civilians, unless it came from Russia or pro-Russian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

## Limit Opposition Success

By using all of the tactics listed above, the separatists managed to limit the Ukrainian Armed Forces’ success in taking back Donbass. The separatists did not require a total victory; they just need to hold on to a few key population centers, control the movement of supplies, foreign “volunteers,” Russian paramilitaries and soldiers allegedly on leave, and arms. Russia has undoubtedly been funneling arms to the rebels to reinforce them and limit Ukrainian success. On 26 August 2014, a mixed column composed of at least three T-72B1s and a lone T-72BM was identified on a video from Sverdlovsk, Ukraine by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. The sighting undermined Russia’s attempts to maintain plausible deniability over the issue of supplying tanks and other arms to the separatists. Russia continuously claimed that any tanks operated by the separatists must have been captured from



Ukraine's own army. The T-72BM is in service with the Russian Army in large numbers. This modernized T-72 is not known to have been exported to nor operated by any other country.<sup>88</sup> Reuters found other tanks of this type near Horbatenko in October 2014.<sup>89</sup> In November, the United Kingdom's embassy in Ukraine also published an infographic demonstrating specific features of the T-72 tanks used by separatists not present in tanks held by Ukrainian army, ironically addressing it to "help Russia recognize its own tanks."<sup>90</sup>

Once the rebels establish a foothold with control of local governments and infrastructure, they can appeal to Russia for recognition as a de facto independent state and call for referendums on independence, thus establishing legitimacy. Another factor in eliminating opposition success is time. The longer the separatists stay in power with minimal setbacks the better. The separatists realize that they cannot ultimately defeat the Ukrainian Armed Forces alone, but if they can keep Donbass in a state of perpetual conflict, then they can attempt to get a favorable diplomatic resolution to the crisis they created.

## **Battle of Donetsk Airport**

After initial hostilities broke out in Donbass, the Donetsk Airport became a key piece of terrain for both the separatists fighting for the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians feared that Russia would use the airport to insert troops into Donbass as they had done in Crimea, so it became essential for the Ukrainians to maintain control of the airport. The Donetsk Airport was also symbolic to Ukraine, as it had undergone extensive renovations and had a new terminal, hotels, and housing built for the EURO 12 soccer championships in Donetsk.

On 26 May 2015, separatists captured the terminal building and demanded that Ukrainian forces vacate other buildings on the airport. Ukrainian National Guard troops then issued an ultimatum to the separatists, which was quickly rejected. Ukrainian paratroopers attacked the DPR positions, supported by fixed wing and rotary wing assets. By nightfall on 26 May 2014, the Ukrainians were in control of the airport. Ukraine maintained control of the airport until September and the Minsk Protocol ceasefire agreement, signed on 5 September 2014. Sporadic gunfire and shelling of the airport had continued through the summer, and it increased after the ceasefire.

The separatists ramped up attacks in the last days of September, using mortars and artillery fire in harassing attacks. On 28 September 2014, DPR forces attacked the Ukrainians using tanks and artillery. Eight Ukrainian soldiers were killed when their APC suffered a direct hit from a tank shell. Twenty-seven Ukrainian soldiers were also wounded. Separatists used the terrain to their advantage, taking up positions in apartment blocks that overlooked the airport. The DPR troops used these positions to direct artillery and for sniper positions. They also took advantage of the inevitable Ukrainian response—artillery fire on rebel positions—to advance their INFOWAR campaign. When the Ukrainians fired artillery or mortars at the rebels in the apartments, there was unavoidable collateral damage in the form of property damage and the occasional civilian casualty. This was exploited by DPR and Russian media outlets. Displaced civilians were also used as a source of propaganda, despite the fact that they had been displaced by the very rebels that were now using them in their INFOWAR campaign.

## Threat Tactics Report: Russia



The DPR forces began to place artillery and rocket systems in the urban areas around the airport, and on 1 October 2014 ten civilians (all adults) were killed by artillery fire when a bus stop and a school were hit, although it was never established who was responsible.<sup>91</sup> This was exploited by the DPR and became instrumental in swaying public support around the airport to the DPR. DPR forces, supported by tanks and artillery, began to move into the airport on the same day, and were able to capture several hangars, a fuel storage facility, and a few outer buildings, maintenance sheds, and small storage sheds. The rebels then moved artillery and tanks up to these positions and began to bombard the Ukrainians in the old and new terminals and the air traffic control tower.

From 1–3 October 2014, the rebels managed to take over the hotel, police station, and part of the old terminal. By 5 October 2014, the situation had turned into a stalemated artillery duel. The DPR forces were holed up in the buildings they had taken, and the Ukrainian forces were positioned mainly in the new terminal and control tower. Once the DPR gained a foothold at the airport, they began to reinforce their position with weapons and troops.

The Ukrainians managed to push the rebels out of half of the old terminal the next day, beginning a situation that saw the Ukrainian forces and DPR forces occupying and controlling parts and different floors of the same building. At one point, the rebels controlled the underground tunnel network and second floor of the new terminal, while the Ukrainian forces occupied the first floor and the third and fourth floors at the same time.

For the next two months, the rebels and the Ukrainians exchanged artillery, mortars and rocket fire, most of it centered on the control tower. As the battle raged, reinforcements poured in on both sides. Ukrainian members of the Right Sector paramilitary/militia group arrived to assist the beleaguered Ukrainian Army forces. The Russians funneled civilian volunteers, Russian soldiers “on leave,” and Spetsnaz and Airborne troops into the airport. The Russians also supplied tanks, artillery, and multiple rocket launcher (MRL) systems. This was a macro version of the Russian tactics of Limiting Opposition Success, Isolating Government Forces, and Leaving Difficult Targets for Later (the air traffic control tower). The DPR forces were content to wait out the Ukrainians and maintain control of what they had already conquered at the airport while the DPR negotiated a favorable settlement.

As the stalemate continued into late November of 2014, the Ukrainian government accused the Russians of sending Spetsnaz commandos to the fight at the airport. The Russians denied this despite intercepted radio transmissions of DPR troops speaking a distinctly Russian dialect. The Russians continued the strategic ambiguity façade until 2 December 2014 when they sent Russian Lt. General Aleksandr Lentsov to negotiate a ceasefire with Ukrainian Lt. General Vladimir Askarov. The curious fact that the Russians sent a Russian General to negotiate a ceasefire in a conflict where there were “no Russian troops” fighting, no Russian material and logistical support, and no Russian intelligence assistance only added to the absurdity of Russian claims that they were not helping the DPR. Again, this all fits into the Russian INFOWAR campaign—create a crisis, deny involvement, appear to be above the fray while secretly supporting one side, and then assist the aggrieved party by engaging in negotiations for a favorable outcome.

## Threat Tactics Report: Russia



On 5 December 2014, heavy shelling forced the Ukrainian forces to abandon the old terminal. The battle now centered on the new terminal and the air traffic control tower. By this time the airport was useless for airline traffic—the runway was almost completely destroyed, as were the new and old terminals, and the control tower. The civilian areas around the airport were also in ruins. The village of Pisky was heavily damaged and was one of the few areas outside of the airport that the Ukrainian forces controlled. Pisky gave the Ukrainians control over the main supply route (the so called “Road of Life”) for the besieged troops at the airport. The battle lines remained relatively stable until 29 December when the DPR launched attacks on Ukrainian positions throughout the airport.

The rebel attacks did little to change the situation on the ground. Both sides continued daily shelling and infantry attacks until 12 January 2015. The DPR gave the Ukrainians an ultimatum to leave the airport by 1700 hours. The Ukrainians ignored this and the DPR began heavy shelling of Ukrainian positions, to include the air traffic control tower which collapsed that night. DPR forces were then able to get within 400 m of the Ukrainian positions.

On 17–18 January 2015, the Ukrainians launched an assault on the entire airport and almost cleared the facility of DPR forces. During this assault the Ukrainians shelled targets in and outside of the airport, resulting in extensive damage to residential areas adjacent to the airport. The Ukrainian troops pushed the DPR out of the airport and a fight for the Putyivskiy Bridge which connects the airport and the city.<sup>92</sup> The momentum swung back to the DPR on 19 January 2015, when the rebels were able to take back most of the airport. Both sides had taken significant casualties, the DPR claimed that 62 of its fighters had been killed or injured and the Ukrainians claimed 100 killed and wounded. Another major assault by the Ukrainians was repelled by the DPR (with help from Russian advisors and Russian tanks, APCs, artillery, and multiple rocket launcher systems [MRLS], that conveniently appeared at this crucial time in the battle).

The DPR troops managed to collapse the second floor of the new terminal with explosives (with the help of Russian engineers, according to the Ukrainians), and this killed and wounded a significant number of Ukrainian troops. Those who survived were taken prisoner. This was a turning point in the fight, and after this the DPR gained control of the now destroyed airport.

In the aftermath of the fight, the DPR had control of a non-functioning airport that would require extensive repairs to serve as an airport or airfield. The control tower was a twisted heap and the runway was pock marked with mortar and artillery shell holes. The Russians had also been exposed as actively supporting the DPR with soldiers, equipment, and advice. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Russians maintained that they were not involved and continued to press for a negotiated settlement to the Donbass crisis. The Ukrainians, even though they had been defeated militarily, had surrendered a non-functional, destroyed airport to the rebels, and had shown an ability to put up a good fight, even if they were eventually beaten.



## Tactical Vignettes: Separatist and Russian Tactics in Ukraine

The following tactical vignettes explore two tactical actions in detail, accompanied by tactical diagrams to graphically depict the actions.

### 1. Simple Battle Position Defense in Airport Rubble

Separatist paramilitary and Russian military forces defended against numerous assaults by Ukrainian military forces in the infrastructure rubble of the Donetsk airport.<sup>93</sup> Continuous combat actions severely damaged or destroyed buildings, terminals and main concourse, and support facilities. Close combat among dismounted soldiers were engagements often only meters apart. Simple battle positions (SBPs) oriented on likely enemy directions of attack and used available materiel in the airport to fortify fighting positions and create obstacles to disrupt assaults and shape kill zones in the complex urban corridors.<sup>94</sup>

As Ukrainian and separatist or Russian forces struggled for control of the airport, the complexity of this multidimensional urban terrain called for plans and actions that considered aspects of surface, super-surface, subsurface, and aerial space. Camouflage, cover, concealment, and deception (C3D) was skillfully used to create kill zones focusing combat power with frontal or flanking direct fires from SBPs.<sup>95</sup> Once Ukrainian elements were located in the airport, direct and indirect fires were massed to isolate and defeat or destroy the Ukrainians. Opposing SBPs were often so close to each other that neither indirect fires nor attack aviation could be employed. One example of direct fires in January 2015 included a main battle tank (MBT) team of two tanks supporting other separatist defenders in a terminal building complex with 125-mm main gun fires into a Ukrainian battle position.<sup>96</sup>

When conditions were appropriate, separatist and Russian elements transitioned from defensive to offensive actions, but were flexible in reverting to the defense when necessary. As long as separatists held portions of the Donetsk airport, they prevented its use to Ukrainian forces as a practical military capability, and presented a symbol of separatist [and Russian] commitment to a long-term persistent conflict in the region.

#### Training Implications

These type of defensive tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against threats in complex operational environments (OEs).<sup>97</sup> In the Donetsk airport, separatist and Russian disruption elements had *security* functions of defeating enemy reconnaissance efforts; determining the location, disposition, and composition of Ukrainian forces; and in some cases targeting designated elements of the Ukrainian combat system. Elements conducting the *main defense* were often platoon or smaller, and immediate *reserves* may be as small as a squad or team-size element. A *support* element typically supported direct and/or indirect fires, ad hoc engineer capabilities or specialized augmentation by Russian forces posing as irregular elements, and combat service support focused on ammunition, rations, and water resupply, and medical evacuation. Command and control was often by personal presence or by unsecure radio or cellular telephone to coordinate defensive actions of—

- Select defensive kill zones on known or likely enemy approaches.
- Establish SBP using C3D.
- Conduct security tasks to detect, disrupt, and/or delay approaching enemy.
- Orient available armored fighting vehicle (MBT) support.<sup>98</sup>



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- Mass defensive fires into the kill zone.
- Decide if an assault is appropriate to complete defeat or destruction of the enemy.
- Complete defeat or destroy the enemy.
- Consolidate combat power of SBP and reorganize as required to continue defense of the SBP.
- Continue the mission task.<sup>99</sup>

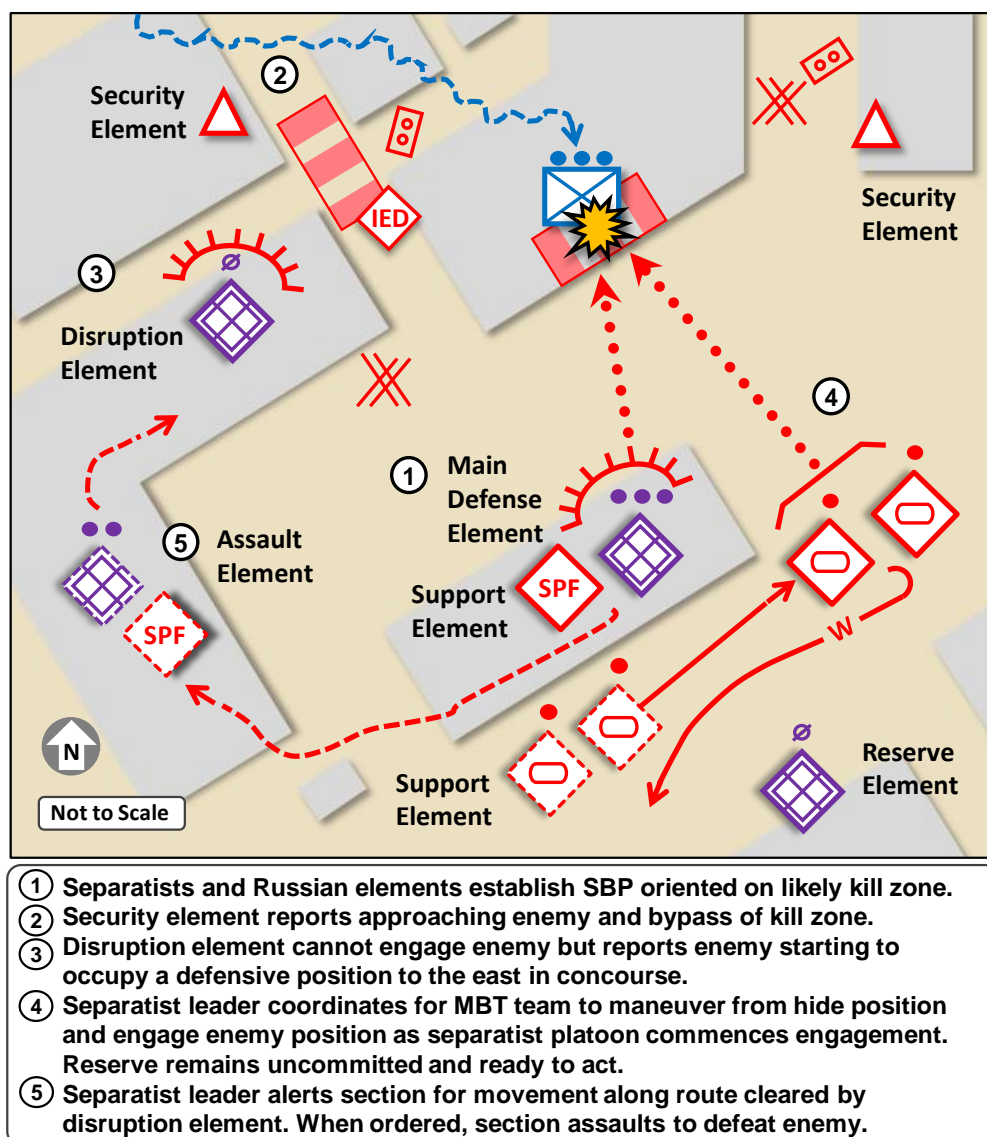


Figure 15. Separatist-Russian elements defend simple battle position (example)



Information warfare with continuous audio and video releases to regional and global social media aimed at promoting separatist actions as a legitimate claim for independence, as well as presenting images and stories to diminish and defeat Ukrainian resolve to continue combat actions.<sup>100</sup> Russia, even with credible evidence of their direct participation, continued to deny direct involvement in this Ukrainian conflict.

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of simple battle positions and armor support in a complex urban environment. Defensive actions can be analyzed as a disruption zone, a battle zone that could transition to an attack zone for limited offensive actions, and a support zone.<sup>101</sup> The disruption zone does not always exist in defense of an SBP, but can provide early warning of an enemy approach and/or delay an enemy assault into friendly forces.<sup>102</sup>

Armored fighting vehicles in many situations serve an anti-infantry role based on their protection, mobility, and firepower.<sup>103</sup> Separatists and Russians were attentive to Ukrainian anti-armor capabilities and usually kept their armored vehicles in hide positions until called to act in an engagement. Some armored vehicles were also used for resupply and medical evacuation tasks.<sup>104</sup>



Figure 16. [Tank team prepares to engage Ukrainian position](#)

When a defensive posture changes to an offensive mission task, task organization of an element can typically consist of the following functions: security element, clearing element, action element (as in an assault), and support element. The *security element* provides local tactical security and prevents the enemy from influencing mission accomplishment. The *clearing element* ensures the action element has a direction of attack clear of obstacles, debris, and rubble that would disrupt its movement and maneuver. The *action element* moves from a covered and concealed position and maneuvers to fight and accomplish the primary tactical task such as assault. The *support element* provides C2, combat support, and combat service support.<sup>105</sup>

Military and paramilitary elements in simple battle positions can create conditions that deny an enemy success in terrain or facility objectives, and/or provide time for friendly force reinforcements to arrive, seize the tactical initiative, and transition to the offense.<sup>106</sup> Complex urban terrain provides significant advantages as a multidimensional operational environment (OE) to a trained force; however, leaders must plan for the likelihood of decentralized C2 to small-echelon elements, be willing to accept the probability of increased casualties, high consumption of logistics, and methodical time-consuming operations that can require large-echelon forces in the contested area of responsibility.

*Note.* The SBP figure is a generalization. Military symbols and echelon amplifiers for separatist, Russian, and Ukrainian elements are estimates for the purpose of tactical illustration.

Russian military and separatist paramilitary forces conducted offensive actions against Ukrainian military forces in the infrastructure rubble of the Donetsk airport. Engagements among individuals were close combat, often only meters apart. Multi-level buildings often developed into horizontal and vertical





defensive engagements and assaults on SBPs.

Buildings, terminals and main concourse, and support facilities were severely damaged or destroyed during continuous combat actions. Actions occurred in some instances where separatists and Russians occupied one level of a building, Ukrainians were in the next upper floor, separatists and Russians were on a floor level above the Ukrainians, and other areas of a building were temporarily unoccupied or contested with both elements moving or maneuvering for a tactical advantage.

In January 2015, Ukrainian elements occupied simple battle positions (SBPs) on multiple levels of an airport building oriented on likely enemy directions of attack. Positions on upper levels provided fields of fire not available at ground level, and also supported observation posts to report on activities in the airport complex or nearby urban areas, and request calls for indirect fires. Kill zones inside and outside of the building focused available direct and indirect fires from SBPs.<sup>107</sup> Ukrainians used expedient materiel to create obstacles in the canalized stairways and corridors of the building to disrupt or block assaults.<sup>108</sup> Control of this multidimensional urban terrain had to consider aspects of surface, super-surface, subsurface, and aerial space in the airport.<sup>109</sup>

Separatist or Russian elements assaulted the ground level of a key building and seized a foothold inside the building. Ukrainian elements were forced to withdraw under pressure to the second floor. With interior stairwells blocked and no effective way to maintain the momentum of the assault with small arms, grenades, and/or flame-thermobaric weapons, separatist and Russian elements maneuvered to the third floor from outside the building. With the second floor isolated, they placed explosives on the floor of the third level and detonated the improvised device to collapse a portion of the second floor ceiling. Speculation exists that special purpose forces or combat engineer expertise may have assisted the assault. Separatist and Russian elements breached and seized the second floor, consolidated their gains in control of this floor, and continued their offensive actions inside and outside of the building. Ukrainian elements on the second floor were either killed or wounded by the concussion and/or spall. Several Ukrainians were captured by the separatists while several Ukrainians were able to withdraw to other buildings of the airport.<sup>110</sup>

This close combat was one brief action in the contested control of the Donetsk airport or major areas near the airport complex that changed several times in subsequent months between the Ukrainian elements and the separatist and Russian forces. Recurring offensive and defensive actions resulted in a non-functional international-size airport, persistent conflict in a complex urban environment, and represented a Russian commitment to a long-term strategy of expansion and influence in the region.

## Training Implications

These type of assault tactics are evident in the US Army's Training Circular (TC) 7-100 series for training against threats in complex OEs.<sup>111</sup> In this Donetsk airport combat action, separatists and Russians task-organized security elements and other functional elements for the assault such as a clearing element, assault element, and support element. The *security element* provides local tactical security and prevents the enemy from influencing mission accomplishment. The *clearing element* ensures the action element has a direction of attack clear of obstacles, debris, and rubble that would disrupt the assault element movement and maneuver. The action element, the *assault element* in this instance, maneuvers quickly through a cleared breach and assaults to destroy the enemy and occupy the position. The *support element* provides C2, combat support, and combat service support.<sup>112</sup>

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To prepare for the assault, security elements conduct security functions to disrupt and defeat enemy reconnaissance efforts; determine the specific location, disposition, and composition of enemy forces; and in some cases target designated elements of the objective. Assault elements in this vignette could be platoon or smaller sections or squads. Immediate reserves may be as small as a squad or team-size element. Support element tasks would typically be support with direct and/or indirect fires, ad hoc engineer capabilities or specialized augmentation posing as irregular forces, and combat service support focused on ammunition, rations and water resupply, and medical evacuation. C2 was often by personal presence or by unsecure radio or cellular telephone to coordinate offensive actions of—

- Isolate the objective.
- Suppress defensive fires.
- Breach the battle position and neutralize enemy at the breach point.
- Assault into the battle position.
- Seize the battle position and defeat or destroy the enemy.
- Consolidate the immediate area and reorganize.
- Continue the mission task.<sup>113</sup>

Information warfare with continuous audio and video releases by separatist and Russian outlets to regional and global social media aimed at promoting separatist actions as a legitimate claim for independence, as well as presenting images and stories to diminish and defeat Ukrainian resolve to continue combat actions.<sup>114</sup> Russia, even with credible evidence of their direct participation, continued to deny direct involvement in this Ukrainian conflict.

Several functional characteristics apply to this example of an *assault* in the confined space of a building interior in a complex urban environment.<sup>115</sup> Action areas can be analyzed as a disruption zone, a battle zone that could transition to an attack zone for limited offensive actions, and support zone.<sup>116</sup> A disruption zone does not always exist in defense of an SBP, but can provide early warning of an enemy approach and/or delay an enemy assault into friendly forces.<sup>117</sup>

Military and paramilitary elements can create conditions that seize enemy terrain or facility objectives, and/or deny the terrain or facility use by an enemy.<sup>118</sup> Complex urban terrain provides significant advantages as a multidimensional OE to a trained force; however, leaders must plan for the likelihood of decentralized C2 to small-echelon elements, be willing to accept the probability of increased casualties, high consumption of logistics, and methodical time-consuming operations that can require large-echelon forces in the contested area of responsibility.

*Note.* The SBP figure is a generalization. Military symbols and echelon amplifiers for separatist, Russian, and Ukrainian elements are estimates for the purpose of tactical illustration.

## Summary

In all three of these conflicts, Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2014, and Eastern Ukraine in 2014–2015, the Russians have used conventional military forces in conjunction with political, covert, intelligence, and INFOWAR tactics. Russia uses this approach to make up for a lack of military power, and to ensure they

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have an entrenched presence before, during, and after the conflict. This allows the Russians to know the terrain beforehand, identify targets and weaknesses, and plan for primary and alternate objectives. The tactic of leaving behind a residual force of covert agents, insurgents, and local supporters enables the Russians to continue to influence events in that area or country.

## Training Implications

All of these operations by the Russians have one key element that US and Allied forces need to take into consideration—the ability of Russian forces to constantly adapt, update, and change tactics to counter enemy actions. The West has consistently underestimated the effect of the collapse of the Soviet Union and more importantly the “Soviet Empire” in 1991 on the Russian psyche and national pride. As noted in this report, the Russians reorganized and reconfigured their Army after the first Chechen War to streamline C2 and allow more independent action by Spetsnaz and regular units. US forces must therefore consider several things when planning and executing training against these tactics.

First, key terrain and objectives must be identified. These will consist mainly of government buildings, airports, and politically important targets. As seen in Ukraine, the Russians or insurgents will quickly seize these using militias and civilian supporters. Units should plan for some or all of these targets to already be under the control of the Opposing Force (OPFOR) when they arrive. Units also need to identify future OPFOR objectives and plan to deny the OPFOR freedom of movement in the vicinity of these areas.

Second, the OPFOR and their supporters will have been active in the area for weeks or months prior to the arrival of US troops. Support for the insurgents by the population must be factored in. US forces must identify if support is widespread (as in Crimea) or if insurgents have simply seized key terrain and made it appear that they have more popular support than they actually have (as in Donbass). The ability to assess the actual level of popular support will enable US forces to decide which facilities, airfields, and villages, etc. to target first, and what kind of force should be used (kinetic vs. non-kinetic). Third, an aggressive and sustained INFOWAR campaign will have been ongoing for months or years prior to US involvement. Units must plan for a counter INFOWAR campaign that identifies the targeted audience and counters the OPFOR INFOWAR effort.

Third, the OPFOR will continue to infiltrate soldiers, fighters, and volunteers into the area. US forces should identify infiltration routes and possible destinations for these fighters. US forces also need to identify all military bases and police stations that have been or can be seized by the OPFOR to assess OPFOR strength due to captured weapons, tanks, IFVs, and APCs. US planners need to anticipate fighting elements that range from squad- to company-size units that will have a variety of equipment and weapons.

Finally, US units must quickly preempt or counter OPFOR actions. The OPFOR does not need to win a “total victory;” they just need to continue the fight and keep the disputed territory that they are operating in in a state of chaos and instability. The longer this situation exists, the more likely outside governments that support the OPFOR will attempt to negotiate a political solution favorable to the OPFOR.



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## Conditions in DATE and Doctrine

As the [DATE](#) and Hybrid Threat Opposing Force are composite models synergized from real-world actors and actions, ISIL's capabilities can be found throughout these products. The following table assists the exercise planner with the locations of key elements in these products of the actions and techniques described in this report.

Real-World Condition	Comparable Condition in DATE	Sections in DATE	Relevant Information in Threat Doctrine	Manual and Page(s)
<b>Insurgents capture an airbase (Donetsk Airport)</b>	South Atropan People's Army attacks Rimzi Airbase	Donovia—Doctrine and Tactics	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force Tactics, p 3-1
<b>Regular Forces attack a city (Tskhinvali)</b>	Donovian Army attacks a city in Gorgas	Donovia—Doctrine and Tactics	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force Tactics, p 3-1
<b>Insurgents capture Government Buildings (Donbass)</b>	Coalition of small anti-government groups	Donovia—Doctrine and Tactics, Non State Paramilitary Forces, Insurgent/Guerrilla Forces	Offense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100</a> , Hybrid Threat, p 3-1
<b>Regular Forces conduct defense of city (Gori)</b>	Donovian Army forces and local Gorgan militias.	Donovia—Doctrine and Tactics, Non State Paramilitary Forces, Insurgent/Guerrilla Forces	Defense operations	<a href="#">TC 7-100.2</a> , Opposing Force Tactics, p 4-1

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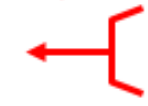

















## Appendix A: Military Symbols, Control Measures, and Mission Tasks

This appendix presents the military symbols, mission task symbols, and control measures from a threats perspective. The primary adversary or enemy is presented in the color blue. The color purple and special threat symbol notes a separatist entity.

	<b>RU</b>	Russian Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF)		Armor		Infantry
	<b>SOM</b>	South Ossetian Militia		<b>ATGL</b> Anti-Tank Grenade Launcher		Light Infantry
	<b>RU</b>	Russian Motorized Rifle		Brigade Tactical Group (BTG)		Armor
		Russian Airborne Assault		Battalion Detachment (BDET)		Internal Security Forces
		Attack Aviation Fixed-Wing		Special Purpose Forces		Police Agencies
		Police Agencies		Special Purpose Forces		Observation Post Indirect Fires
		Separatists		<b>CACHE</b> Cache Multiple Logistics		Indirect Fires (Multiple Types)
		Indirect Fires (Multiple Types)		Observation Post Security		Special Purpose Forces
		Internal Security Forces		Combatant Ship		<b>RES</b> Reserve
				Commercial Boat		Combatant Ship "Blue" Enemy of Threat

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	Explosion		Withdraw		Simple Battle Position Sector of Fire Planned
	Improvised Explosive Device (IED)		Withdraw under pressure		Attack by Fire Position (Ready)
	Destroy		Indirect Fire (Planned)		Attack by Fire Position (Engaging)
	Road Block Complete		Indirect Fire in Progress (Engaging)		Support by Fire Position (Ready)
	Minefield Antipersonnel		Direct Fire (Planned)		Support by Fire Position (Engaging)
	Minefield Anti-Armor		Direct Fire in Progress (Engaging)		Ambush Position (Planned)
	Aerial Axis of Advance		Simple Battle Position Threat Force or Element		Ambush Position [Engaging]
	Ground Axis of Advance		Simple Battle Position "Blue" Enemy of Threat Force or Element		

*Note.* These symbols are present in this *Threat Tactics Report*. Source documents are DOD Military Standard 2525-D (2014) and Army Reference Doctrinal Publication (ADRP) 1-02 (2015). Some symbols are adaptations for threat training literature in support of the US Army TC 7-100 series.

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- <sup>102</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-118.
- <sup>103</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-134.
- <sup>104</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-143; 6-45.
- <sup>105</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-46–6-47.
- <sup>106</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-38–6-39.
- <sup>107</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-102 and 6-13.
- <sup>108</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-4, 4-102, and 4-107–4-109.
- <sup>109</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-41–6-42;
- <sup>110</sup> Sergei Loiko. "[How Ukraine's outgunned 'cyborgs' lost Donetsk airport](#)," Los Angeles Times. 28 January 2015. para. 19. See also, Oleg Sukhov. "[Donetsk airport overrun by rebels, say army volunteers](#)," Kyiv Post. 22 January 2015. para. 3 and 4. See also, "[Russian Rebels Declare Victory in Battle of Ukraine's Donetsk Airport \[Combat Video\]](#)," Dignitas News Service. 16 January 2015. para. 3.



# Threat Tactics Report: Russia



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- <sup>111</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 3-106, 6-41, 6-46, and 6-54.
- <sup>112</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-46–6-47.
- <sup>113</sup> Department of the Army, [Exercise Design](#), Training Circular 7-101, 26 November 2010, para. B-3 and B-12.
- <sup>114</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-58.
- <sup>115</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-38, 6-41, and 6-60–6-61.
- <sup>116</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-41; figure 6-3.
- <sup>117</sup> Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 4-118.
- <sup>118</sup> Department of the Army, [Hybrid Threat](#), Training Circular 7-100, 26 November 2010, para. 2-13–2-21 and 2-24–2-27;  
Department of the Army, [Opposing Force Tactics](#), Training Circular 7-100.2, 9 December 2011, para. 6-38–6-39;  
Department of the Army, [Irregular Opposing Forces](#), Training Circular 7-100.3, 17 January 2014, para. 1-48–1-51, 1-54; Ch 2.



# THREAT TACTICS REPORT: CHINA

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TRADOC G-2 ACE THREATS INTEGRATION

VERSION 1.0  
SEPTEMBER 2015





## Executive Summary

- The United States (US) intelligence community classified China as a threat actor capable of challenging the US's security interests in the Asia-Pacific region.
- There a number of issues that would likely prompt China to use its military force to protect its national interests. These issues are: Taiwan, territorial disputes, and internal instability.
- China has spent the past two decades modernizing its military forces. Modernization efforts have included the acquisition of new technologies and weapon systems, updated training efforts, and revamped doctrine.
- The People's Liberation Army's Army, China's land forces, have focused modernization on its special purpose forces, amphibious, and aviation capabilities. It has also procured more modern armor, artillery, and air defense systems.
- The Chinese Army updated its tactics doctrine in 2009 to reflect the importance of the concept of informationization.
- Chinese tactics can be replicated using the TC 7-100 series of threat doctrine.

This (U) **Threat Tactics Report (TTR)** was produced in accordance with (U) **Intelligence Community Directive Number 203: Analytical Standards** (Effective: Jan 2015). This TTR was coordinated with:

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Comments and feedback are welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon S. Cleaves".

Jon S. Cleaves  
TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration



## Introduction

In 2015, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) released a statement on worldwide threats and identified China as a threat actor currently challenging the United States (US) in its cyber, space/counterspace, nuclear, and territorial reclamation activities.<sup>1</sup> These activities, China's growing influence in Asia, and its continued willingness to display its diplomatic and military power present a significant concern for US security interests.<sup>2</sup> Given the US's pivot to the Pacific and the recent influx of US military service members, an understanding of one of the region's largest threat actor's military capabilities, tactics, and techniques is necessary.

This Threat Tactics Report (TTR) will provide an overview of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Army's military capabilities, with an emphasis on its tactics and techniques in order to explain to the US Army training community how China's military fights. In order to accomplish this, this report will include information on the PLA Army's doctrine, force structure, weapons and equipment, and an analysis of its capabilities.

The report contains five sections. Section 1 is an introduction that provides an overview of China's military strategy. Section 2 details China's PLA Army capabilities. Section 3 highlights tactic and technique examples of the PLA's Army, complete with graphics depicting the tactics. Section 4 provides information on key weapons and equipment available to the PLA Army that have the potential to challenge US Army forces. Section 5, the conclusion to this report, culminates with a discussion on training implications and provides a table that shows where conditions specific to the China OE are present in the [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\)](#) and other training materials so that these conditions can easily be implemented across all training venues.

## Section 1: Introduction to China

The state of China is experiencing unprecedented growth in political, economic, diplomatic, and military power. Because of this growth, its role in the Asia-Pacific region as a dominant regional power is expanding. China is capitalizing on this expansion by using its military forces to further its strategic goals for the state. Recent examples of this are China's proclaimed expansion of its air space into the East China Sea, land reclamation activities in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, and continued cyber espionage against the United States. As a result of these actions, the US intelligence community (IC) has classified China as a threat actor capable of challenging US interests in the Pacific region.<sup>3</sup> This section of the TTR will provide an overview of China's military strategy and goals and discuss key alliances of the state of China.

## Strategy and Goals

China has placed great emphasis on growing its economic, military, and diplomatic powers for the past several decades in order to expand what it calls *comprehensive national power*. China's leaders believe that growth in its comprehensive national power will enable China to achieve its five strategic objectives. These objectives are: preserving Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule; sustaining economic growth and development; maintaining domestic political stability; defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity; and securing China's status as a great power and reacquiring regional preeminence.<sup>4</sup>



China claims its pursuit of its strategic objectives is entirely peaceful. In 2013, the government stated that there are three basic ways to use military power: military deterrence, war, and military operations other than war.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that China will protect its national sovereignty and national interests first by deterring others and only resort to warfighting when deterrence fails.

While China claims its pursuit of these strategic objectives is entirely peaceful, some of its actions have demonstrated that China may use these new powers in ways that many states in Asia would not view as peaceful. These actions typically relate to three issues: the Taiwan issue, territorial disputes, and internal instability. These three issues could potentially result in China's use of military force.

## Taiwan

A potential conflict with Taiwan is China's biggest security concern. China, and the majority of the world, does not recognize Taiwan as an independent nation and there are many in China that would like to see Taiwan reunified with the mainland, through force if necessary. China has openly stated that if Taiwan authorities attempt any action in pursuit of independence, China will be forced to use its military. This could result in mainland China using its military assets to forcefully reunify Taiwan with the mainland. Given the US's standing defense agreement with Taiwan, this action would have serious implications for the US military.

## Territorial Disputes

China is actively involved in five territorial disputes with its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region. The first is China's dispute with Taiwan as stated above. While China claims Taiwan, the Republic of China (Taiwan) asserts its sovereignty and resists attempts at reunification. The second territorial issue is the dispute over the Spratly Islands. This particular territorial dispute is extremely complex because six different countries claim parts of the area: Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The third dispute China is involved in is with Vietnam and Taiwan over the Paracel Islands. The fourth dispute is between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The last dispute is between India and China over two separate boundary issues along their mutual border.

## Internal Instability

One of the greatest fears of the Chinese government is internal instability. As a result, the PLA has a secondary assigned mission to prevent instability in the regions where units are located. While its primary mission is to defend China, together with the local police force, the PLA's secondary mission set shows that the Chinese government prioritizes preventing instability at all costs.

## The People's Liberation Army: China's Military Force

People's Liberation Army is the name of all of China's military service branches. Unlike the traditional use of 'army' in American colloquialism, China's use of the term refers to all branches of its armed forces, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as the Second Artillery Force, an independent branch of the Army.

China's armed forces, including the PLA, the People's Armed Police (PAP), and the militia are completely controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). China's armed forces are often referred to as the "party's army" due to the level of control the CCP has over the military. This relationship is directly



## Threat Tactics Report: China



related to the CCP's intent on preserving its rule. To ensure the party maintains absolute control of the armed forces, every company and higher level unit in the PLA and the PAP has both a commander *and* a political officer who *jointly share* responsibility for everything the unit does.

For the past two decades, China has devoted significant time and money to modernizing its military. The PLA that was once known for its outdated equipment, poor training, and personnel issues has been revamped thanks to regular increases in defense spending. It is now a much more capable military with more advanced equipment and better training. While personnel training and reforms are partially responsible for this, much of the PLA's growth in capability is due to the acquisition of new technologies and weapon systems. The PLA's acquisitions have focused on information warfare (INFOWAR) technologies, fourth-generation level platforms, and precision strike systems. The biggest capability advancement the PLA has demonstrated is its ability to conduct joint force operations. The PLA has placed significant focus on the latter area and has made great strides.<sup>6</sup>

On a tactical level, the PLA has concentrated its advancements on its special purpose forces (SPF) and improving amphibious and army aviation capabilities. Additionally, it has procured more modern platforms for use by its ground forces: main battle tanks (MBTs), armored vehicles, artillery, and air defense systems are all examples of systems that have been upgraded in recent years.

Despite the advancement of its capabilities, analysis by the RAND Corporation has shown that the PLA still has some significant weaknesses. These fall into two broad categories—institutional and combat capabilities. The institutional weaknesses stem from ineffective command

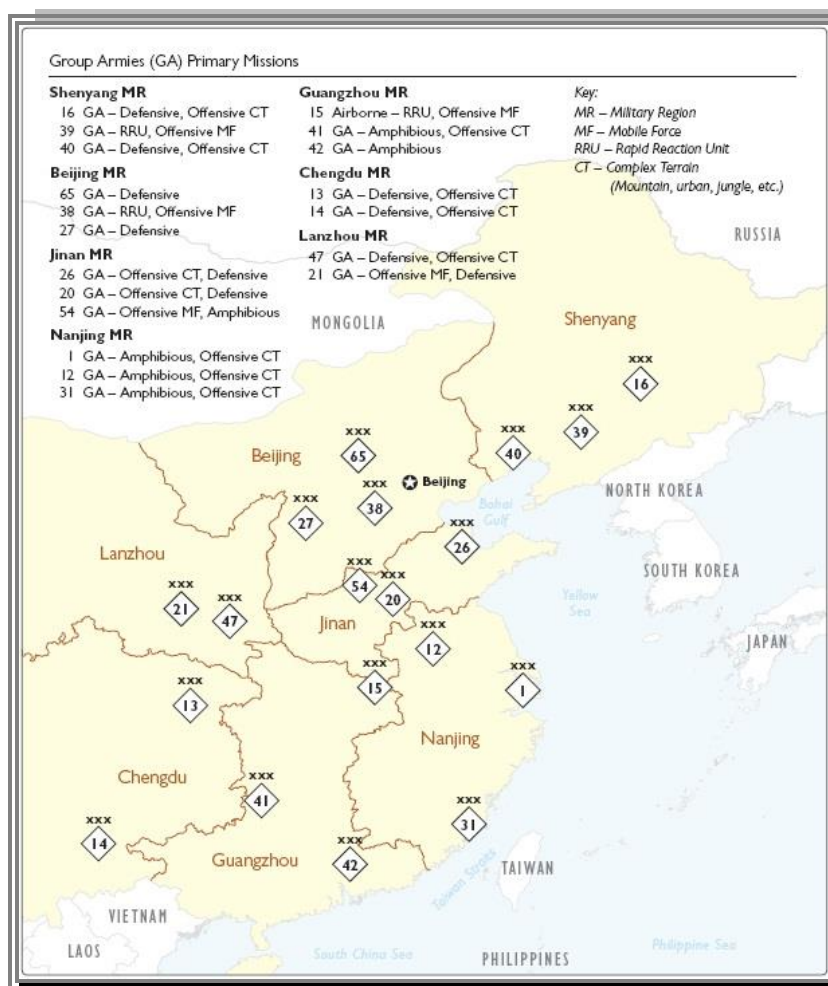


Figure 1. China's Military Regions and Group Army locations

# Threat Tactics Report: China



structures, lack of professionalism among personnel, and rampant corruption. The major combat capability weaknesses include logistical shortfalls and strategic airlift capabilities.<sup>7</sup>

## PLA Army

The PLA's Army is a considerably large force with approximately 850,000 active soldiers and 510,000 reserve soldiers divided into Group Armies. There are 18 Group Armies divided among seven military regions (MRs). Figure 1 above shows the locations of all seven of the MRs and includes the headquarters location for each of the Group Armies. Additionally, the figure highlights the primary mission set for each of the Group Armies. Each army is assigned the mission of some combination of the following: offensive, defensive, complex terrain, mobile force, rapid reaction unit (RRU), or amphibious. With some exceptions, each Group Army has between 30,000 and 50,000 troops normally organized into 2–5 mechanized/motorized/infantry divisions or brigades, 1 armored brigade, 1 artillery brigade, and 1 air defense brigade. Additionally, most combat units are assigned with combat service and service support units such as engineer, communications, chemical defense, reconnaissance, and logistics and repair. Approximately half of the Group Armies have an Army Aviation brigade or regiment and/or an SPF brigade or regiment assigned to them. While most combat units are assigned directly to a Group Army, some are not. Those units that are not assigned to a Group Army are considered "independent" and assigned directly to an MR, military district, or garrison headquarters.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike US Army divisions, PLAA divisions command regiments, not brigades. PLAA infantry and armored brigades are subordinate to army-level organizations, either Group Army or provincial military district headquarters, not to divisions.

Below is a roll-up of the number of combat units currently available to the PLAA. These numbers are likely to change as the PLA undergoes a reorganization of its forces and command structure.

**Table 1. PLA Army Combat Unit Roll-up**

PLA Army									
Infantry		Armor		Artillery		Aviation		Reserves	
Mechanized DIVs	7	Divisions	1	Divisions	2	Brigades	5	INF DIVs	18
Mountain Mech DIVs	2	Brigades	16	Brigades	17	Regiments	5	INF BDEs	4
Motorized DIVs	14	Amphib BDE	1	ADA Brigades	21			ARTY DIVs	3
Amphibious Mech DIVs	2							ARTY BDEs	7
Infantry Brigades	23							AD DIVs	17
Mountain INF BDEs	2							AD BDEs	8
Mechanized BDEs	25							AD Regiments	8
Motorized BDEs	16								

The PLA Army (PLAA) is organized in a three-tiered structure: main forces, local or regional forces, and reserve forces. The main forces are the Group Armies detailed above. These forces are intended to be available to respond to any requirement around the country. To aid in this requirement, each Group Army fields at least one RRU.<sup>9</sup> Local forces are made up of active and reserve PLA units as well as the

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PAP and local militia, and are responsible for local defense, and for maintaining internal security in their local area.<sup>10</sup> The PAP has a secondary mission of defending China against external enemies.

## PLA Navy

The PLA Navy (PLAN) received a disproportionate amount of focus for modernization from the Chinese government over the past two decades. This is mainly a result of China's strategic efforts to provide military backing for its territorial claims under dispute and to create a robust anti-access/aerial denial (A2/AD) capability, a key tenant of China's mainland defense and offense. The PLAN is organized into three main fleets: the North Sea Fleet, the East Sea Fleet, and the South Sea Fleet. Each fleet contains surface ships, submarines, naval air, coastal defense, and marine assets. The PLAN has a small Marine Corp of approximately 10,000 marines organized into two brigades. The PLAN has more than 300 surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships, and patrol craft, which amounts to more vessels in service than any other country in Asia.

## PLA Air Force

The PLA Air Force (PLAAF), like the PLAN, has received a disproportionate amount of focus for its modernization also. It too is seen as integral to China's plan to provide military backing for its territorial claims and is key in China's A2/AD capability. The PLAAF is organized into seven Military Region Air Forces and 24 Air Divisions. The PLAAF has a surface-to-air missile (SAM) corps and it is divided into SAM division and brigades. According to the Chinese 2015 white paper, the PLAAF "will endeavor to shift its focus from territorial air defense to both defense and offense, and build an air-space defense force structure that can meet the requirements of informationized operations."<sup>11</sup>

The 15<sup>th</sup> Airborne Army, depicted in the map in the "PLA Army" section of this report, is subordinate to the PLAAF and not the PLAA.

## Second Artillery Force

The final key component of China's A2/AD capability is the Second Artillery Force. This element of the PLA is responsible for the China's strategic missile force. It controls all of China's nuclear and conventional strategic missiles. The Corps is manned by approximately 100,000 personnel comprising six missile divisions. The divisions are independently deployed in different MRs.

## Power Projection

The PLA's modernization has focused on expanding its ability to project power. This has manifested primarily in its air, naval, and missile forces as they have gained capabilities specifically designed to support China's emphasis on expanding its reach into blue waters. In China's first white paper on strategy, released in 2015, it publicly announced that a key strategic goal for its military forces is to project force far from China's coastline.<sup>12</sup> This strategic goal has resulted in a military force that is being modernized for the explicit purpose of projecting its power outside of its national boundaries. China often claims this effort is simply intended to protect its territory, including the disparate island chains it claims as territory. However it is often seen by its regional neighbors and the US as an attempt to expand its offensive capabilities.<sup>13</sup>



## PLA Future Military Development Efforts

The PLA is likely to focus its future military development efforts on fleshing out its naval, air, missile, and space capabilities in addition to rectifying the weaknesses addressed earlier in this TTR. The naval capabilities that the PLAN is likely to focus on are those that support the expansion of its operations into the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Air defense, cruise missiles, and aircraft carriers are three areas that could enable the PLAN's operations expansion.<sup>14</sup>

The PLAAF is expected to receive the same emphasis as the PLAN. According to the Department of Defense, the PLAAF "will likely become a majority fourth-generation force within the next several years," in addition to developing as many five-generation systems as possible.<sup>15</sup> The PLAAF is also likely to improve its current unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capabilities.

The final areas of emphasis for future capability growth will be in China's strategic missile force and space/counterspace. China's long-range strike capability is likely to be improved by the deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missile systems.<sup>16</sup> China's space/counterspace capability will continue expanding through many space-based capabilities such as intelligence, surveillance, and communication systems.

According to IHS Jane's, the PLA seeks the capabilities to be able to conduct all future campaigns simultaneously on land, at sea, in the air, in space, and in the electronic domains.<sup>17</sup> The PLA's effort to reach this goal is evidenced by the areas of future capability development discussed above.

## Section 2: PLA Army

China's primary purpose of military development for the PLA Army is to create capabilities that are characterized by mobility, proficiency at exploiting information technology, high-tech firepower, and seamless joint operations.<sup>18</sup> While China's ground forces are leagues ahead of where they were in the 1980s and 1990s, their ability to perform the above-mentioned goals is still not at the level the government wants, and the armies' ability to perform these goals varies among them.

The PLA Army has been very successful at increasing mobility. Units are leaner and equipped with more motorized and mechanized equipment and have been restructured; the number of divisions has been downsized in order to create more brigades. The PLA Army has also been extraordinarily successful at increasing units' ability to exploit information technology. New technology purchases have greatly influenced this.

The PLA Army is slowly improving in the remaining two goals: high-tech firepower and seamless joint operations. China has steadily purchased new systems to field with the ground forces; however, these systems are not prolific throughout the entire force, but rather concentrated in certain units. The PLA's ability to conduct joint operations is improving, but joint interoperability is still one of its biggest weaknesses.<sup>19</sup>

## Professionalism

In the mid-1990s, the PLA was characterized by extremely poor professionalism. This was significantly influenced by the PLA's active role in profitable economic ventures (such as farming) where troops were used to support the venture. In the late 1990s this practice was ended in an effort to increase military



professionalism. The PLA has further advanced its professionalism efforts by recruitment changes and improved training programs. An example of this is the PLA's attempts to create a professional NCO corps. In the late 1990s the PLA began providing NCOs with more education and training, gave them more responsibilities, and allowed them to complete a full 30-year career. However, despite significant progress, it should be noted that the PLA lacks formal combat experience and still struggles with rampant corruption—two very significant roadblocks to a fully professionalized fighting force.

## Readiness

China has prioritized its readiness capability since the 1990s. In an effort to increase readiness, it has built a rapid-reaction capability. The PLA's RRUs were initially created for the purpose of mounting rapid counter-Taiwan operations, but newer RRUs are designed to respond to internal crises. Now, most military regions in China field RRUs.

## Military Capabilities

The PLA Army has successfully transformed itself from the huge army that was designed to fight a protracted war of attrition to a smaller, more modern force designed to fight local, high-intensity wars of short duration against high-tech adversaries.<sup>20</sup> China's modernization of the ground forces has produced a more agile, lean, and mobile force that includes a "special operations force equipped with advanced technology; improved army aviation units using helicopters armed with precision-guided munitions; and C2 capabilities with improved networks providing real-time data sharing within and between units."<sup>21</sup>

China's success in this area and its efforts at refining the way it fights are partially due to its observations of the US Army at war over the past decade. These observations provided China with a number of lessons learned that it is actively implementing through training and doctrinal changes. Key lessons learned include:

- "The centrality of information on the battlefield, and the impact of attacking key nodes rather than across a broad front of activity.
- "The importance of offensive action, pre-emptive strikes, surprise, and deception.
- "The value of high-tech weaponry. Specifically, weapon systems needed to integrate information technology, increase firepower effects and range, higher accuracy, and greater mobility and survivability.
- "The importance of 'real-time' C4ISR [command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], long-range precision strike, and advanced electronic warfare capabilities.
- "The combat-multiplying effect of joint operations.
- "The need for timely comprehensive logistics support."<sup>22</sup>

As a result of lessons learned such as those above, two concepts now drive Chinese military thought. These concepts are local warfare and "informationization" warfare. While the Chinese military once thought it would fight protracted war on Chinese soil with guerrilla warfare, its analysis of Western

# Threat Tactics Report: China



conflicts over the past two decades has caused it to now believe it will fight what it calls “local wars.” These wars will be characterized by shorter conflicts, potentially lasting only one campaign; will most likely *not* entail the occupation of China; and will involve joint military operations across land, sea, air, cyber, and space using advanced technology, particularly information technology.<sup>23</sup> China has adopted the phrase “informationization warfare” to describe this type of joint environment supported by advanced information technology.

China’s emphasis on informationization is key to understanding its military capabilities. The idea of increasingly fielding more high-tech systems and integrating the use of those systems with its capabilities is a significant change for the PLA and an extremely important piece of information for those studying how China will fight.

The rest of this section will detail China’s capabilities as they pertain to specific categories. It is important to keep in mind the concept of informationization and understand that China is actively pursuing systems to advance each of the following capability categories.

**Informationization.** “The PLA is convinced that systems integration is more important than individual high-tech hardware. Informatization is thus singled out as the driving force for PLA transformation. This reflects a new understanding about the type of war the PLA expects to face in the future: even if the combat is between conventional platforms, **the key to victory is the IT systems.** The idea of adding numbers of platforms to enhance capabilities is obsolete. Therefore, INFOWAR is no longer seen as only one method of combat, but the dominant form and the core of all other types of military engagement. Nor is IT upgrading a matter of mere technical significance—it is now considered the lifeline of the PLA’s survival.” (You Ji, “China’s Emerging National Defense Strategy,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, 2004.)

## Command and Control

At the national level there are four departments: the General Staff Department (GSD), the General Political Department (GPD), the General Logistics Department (GLD), and the General Armaments Department (GAD). Since there are not national military-level headquarters, these departments serve as a headquarters between the Central Military Commission and the forces commanded by the MRs and the services. As discussed above, the PLAA is completely controlled by the CCP. This control extends down to the lowest echelons with every company and higher level unit having *both* a PLA commander *and* a political officer who *jointly* command the unit.

Modernization efforts have affected the PLAA’s ability to conduct command and control. This is primarily through increased training efforts at teaching young officers not only new C2 techniques, but also teaching them how to use new technology designed to enhance command and control capabilities.





Figure 2. Chinese soldiers learn how to use new command and control platform

### Maneuver

The PLA Army is a maneuver force. Since the 1990s, China has prioritized fielding maneuver systems to the troops, pushing trucks down to all units in order to ensure the entire force was at least motorized. Recent modernization efforts have significantly increased the number of motorized and mechanized units, resulting in a significant growth in units with access to armored personnel carriers (APCs). Because of the PLA's heritage of light infantry, those on foot move fast and can maintain a pace of 25 miles per day.<sup>24</sup> This heritage has also caused the PLAA's maneuver tactics to emphasize rapid tactical action and movement. The PLAA prioritizes retaining sufficient freedom of maneuver in order to envelop enemy positions and attack from the front.

### INFOWAR

China's INFOWAR capabilities are extremely robust but are primarily focused on protection and security measures and computer warfare. In 2011, China confirmed the existence of an online army unit that exists to boost the military's defense capabilities and improve Internet security.<sup>25</sup> Hackers from China routinely engage in cyberespionage targeting the US government, the US defense industry, and other privately held US companies. Hackers are often seeking access to intellectual property and other information in the search for strategic intelligence.

Chinese hackers from PLA unit 61398 are widely known to target US corporations and government information in order to collect intelligence data. It was recently discovered that the PLA hackers are intentionally targeting a very specific set of US companies—those involved with controlling the US power grid, gas lines, and water works. This indicates that the PLA may be vying for access to target the US homeland's utility systems. Targeting such systems while the US military is engaged in conflict in the Pacific region could result in serious issues on the homeland which in turn could upset the effectiveness of any US military campaign in the Pacific.



Figure 3. 2006 motorized division exercise

### RISTA

China has placed significant emphasis on growing its RISTA capability and is estimated to be well on its way to having capabilities similar to the US.<sup>26</sup> China's RISTA capability is provided by its growing arsenal of UAVs and access to information from reconnaissance satellites. China's acquisitions and development efforts indicate that it is closely watching the US's use of unmanned devices for RISTA, and is replicating it. China's advancements in this area have been described as "alarming."<sup>27</sup> China's RISTA capability advancements demonstrate its attempts to dominate the information environment and fight informationization warfare.

On a tactical/operational level, the PLAA has been increasingly fielding systems designed to catch up with the Army's peers on the battlefield. For example, the PLAA does not have the same ability to conduct night operations as other countries. This is primarily due to the fact that PLAA forces are not all equipped with night vision goggles (NVGs) and they rarely train at night. As a result the PLAA is making an effort to increase training in this area.



## Fire Support

One of the PLA's biggest capability strengths is its indirect fires. PLA doctrine uses fires as a means of bringing war to the enemy's territory. To this end, the PLA has placed significant emphasis on growing its artillery and missile arsenal. The PLA is likely to not only use its fire support assets as indirect fire support for conflicts that should arise on mainland China, but also as direct main force attacks on Taiwan, should conflict arise there. Saturated conventional missile attacks at military targets and communication hubs is assessed to be China's first move in the event of war breaking out with Taiwan.<sup>28</sup>

## Protection

As part of China's effort to make the PLA more mobile, it has begun procuring systems that also provide for better protection. While the Army's main battle tanks provide the most protection for soldiers on the field, new infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers are helping to increase protection force-wide. It should be noted, however, that these systems are not being procured for their protection capabilities, but rather for their mobility capabilities. Many of the systems are air-transportable and amphibious, characteristics that are given high priority by the PLA over heavy protective armor.

## Logistics

Chronic resource shortages define the PLA Army's logistics capability, leaving it extremely weak in this area.<sup>29</sup> China has reorganized its units into brigades with more firepower and mobility, but it has not updated the logistics for those units, leaving them vulnerable.<sup>30</sup> Exercises have shown that the PLA needs to improve everything from combat uniforms<sup>i</sup> and personal protective equipment, to transport equipment and systemization of the logistics train. Properly feeding the troops is also a challenge for the PLA, especially for those in more remote areas. Resupplying ammunition is a challenge, so PLA soldiers tend to carry more ammo on their person than soldiers in other armies. China fully recognizes these issues and has publicized them,<sup>ii</sup> acknowledging that logistics is a force multiplier and without proper logistics the PLA will be unable to conduct sustained operations outside of China's borders.<sup>31</sup>

## Air Defense

Air defense is a key mission area for the PLA. This is in part because it plays a significant role in China's A2/AD capability, but also because it plays a significant role in China's targeting "three attacks, three defends" strategy that emphasizes targeting stealth aircraft, cruise missiles, and attack helicopters while defending against electronic attacks, precision strikes, and reconnaissance efforts. To enable this strategy China has developed a national-level, integrated air defense system (IADS) capable of defending key strategic cities, borders, and various territorial claims. China's IADS is a multilayered defense composed of weapon systems, radars, and C4ISR platforms. China's IADS and recent air defense system acquisitions indicate that China's land-based air defense capability is robust.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> PLA soldiers were just equipped with underpants with elasticated waistbands for the first time. Until recently, soldiers kept their underpants up with rope. (Peter Ford, "[What China's Army-issue underwear reveals](#)," *CS Monitor*, 8 December 2014.)

<sup>ii</sup> In China's most recent white paper, released in May of 2015, it acknowledged its weakness and prioritized future development of its logistics capability.



## Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

China has placed great emphasis on increasing its UAV capability in recent years. It has begun fielding more UAVs to its PLAA units and is expected to use these systems for more than just reconnaissance. China is known to have procured UAVs capable of carrying missiles designed for ground attacks, such as the Harpy. In January 2015, details behind the design of a new UAV under development by a Chinese defense manufacturer gave indications that China's UAV capability is growing and improving. Modifications to the engines and air intake in this new design appear to be intended to make the UAV a stealth aircraft.<sup>33</sup>

UAVs at a tactical level are still primarily small and short-range. They are being used to support tactical reconnaissance and to support artillery fire. In addition, these systems can be used for radio-delay and INFOWAR.

## Special Purpose Forces

The PLAA is estimated to have around 14,000 SPF with one group assigned to each MR. China has prioritized development of these forces for the past twenty years and this has resulted in an SPF that is equipped with advanced technology, contains highly trained personnel, and is capable of being mobilized in the early stages of conflict to attack key personnel and infrastructure targets and to secure air facilities for use by follow-on forces.

The PLAA's SPF do not have the kind of air and naval assets available to US special operations forces (SOF) and, as a result, the PLAA's SPF has limited range and sustainability. SPF units train with regular force units and their equipment, not special equipment. It is assessed that most SPF operations would be conducted to support tactical or operational PLAA commanders.<sup>34</sup>

## Training

Because the PLAA lacks formal experience on the battlefield, it prioritizes training in order to give its combat units an element of experience. The PLAA's training program is a combination of force-on-force events, advanced simulation use, and practice using automated tools to aid in command decisions. The PLAA is taking its lessons learned from US conflicts and implementing them in their training program. As discussed above, these lessons learned have resulted in a shift in Chinese military planning and thought in addition to changes in Chinese PLAA training and doctrine. In 2009, China released updated tactics doctrine that reflects many of the lessons learned discussed in this TTR. PLAA training events are still working on implementing the new doctrine.

Chinese doctrine and military strategy assume that the PLAA will be the weak force in most encounters, so training events are designed to teach this to PLAA units and prepare them for this environment. This is partially reflected by the results of the PLAA's training events. The PLAA has a dedicated opposing force (OPFOR) brigade. It is often referred to as the "blue force" while the PLAA units are referred to as the "red force." The dedicated brigade is a professional force and recent training events indicate that it significantly challenges the PLAA training units.<sup>35</sup>





## Section 3: How the PLA Will Fight—Tactics and Techniques

This section of the TTR will detail the specifics of Chinese offensive and defensive tactical actions. It will first recount the Chinese doctrinal description of tactical actions, then provide four graphical representations of an analytical interpretation of sample tactical actions using [TC 7-100.2, \*Opposing Force Tactics\*](#) terminology and graphics.

Chinese doctrine outlines two basic tactical actions—offensive and defensive. It argues that while these two types of tactics are fundamentally different in nature, it is not possible to have one without the other. Thus, defensive actions only exist because there are offensive actions and conversely, with only the presence of defensive action and the absence of offensive action, the final objective of war can never be fully realized.<sup>36</sup>

This statement demonstrates that Chinese military philosophy necessitates offensive action in order to achieve victory in war. Because of this, a key tenant of Chinese military action is “gaining initiative by striking first.”<sup>37</sup> This applies to local wars and is a means of gaining initiative on the battlefield. Chinese military thought holds that not striking first causes the loss of momentum and creates the possibility of decisive defeat. This concept holds true for both offensive and defensive missions. Chinese doctrine requires that all defensive actions be planned and conducted with the aim of changing over to the offensive as quickly as possible.<sup>38</sup>

### PLA Doctrine

#### Offense

Chinese military doctrine holds that victory can only be won by attacking. This is a fundamental tactical principle that holds true for all echelons. PLA doctrine also states that victory is more likely with numerical superiority. The ratio of 3 to 1 is the minimum required, but much higher ratios, such as 10 to 1, are preferred.<sup>39</sup>

For the PLA, the key purpose of offensive action is to annihilate the enemy’s effectiveness and occupy the enemy’s important terrain and targets. To accomplish this, Chinese doctrine divides offensive tactical actions into offensive *operations patterns*. These patterns, or actions, have a number of basic tasks, the most important of which is annihilating the enemy.<sup>40</sup> Table 2 below details the three types of operations patterns and the eight basic tasks for offensive actions.

Chinese offensive doctrine also highlights key principles for offensive actions. These principles are: centralize strength to form superiority; conduct full-depth offensive, partition, encirclement, and annihilation; keep in mind the whole situation and attack the enemy’s vital points; make changes in accordance with the situation and flexibly launch attacks; and fight a quickly decisive battle and annihilate the enemy through sudden and vigorous actions. The table below provides a description for each of these principles.



**Table 2. PLA Army Offensive Tactics**

Offensive Operations Patterns	Basic Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Offensive operations toward the enemy in defense</i></li> <li>• <i>Offensive operations toward the enemy not well-established</i></li> <li>• <i>Offensive operations toward the enemy on the move</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Break through enemy positions</i></li> <li>• <i>Eliminate the enemy in defense</i></li> <li>• <i>Occupy important areas/targets</i></li> <li>• <i>Attack/annihilate enemies in stagnation or on the move</i></li> <li>• <i>Occupy the enemy's key depth points</i></li> <li>• <i>Cut apart the enemy's operations disposition</i></li> <li>• <i>Block the enemy's route of withdrawal and reinforcement</i></li> <li>• <i>Contain and annihilate the enemy</i></li> </ul>
Key Principles in Offensive Operations	
<i>Centralize Strength to Form Superiority</i>	Use of organic and reinforced forces and weapons systems to create comprehensive superiority over the enemy in both quantity and quality and to form absolute superiority at a certain time in a local space.
<i>Conduct Full-Depth Offensive, Partition, Encirclement, and Annihilation</i>	Offensive actions should unfold simultaneously in the full depth of the enemy's dispositions in order to divide the enemy's forces in the shortest time possible and weaken the enemy to the point that containment and annihilation is possible.
<i>Keep in Mind the Whole Situation and Attack the Enemy's Vital Points</i>	Carry out prioritized attacks and focused assaults against key enemy targets based on knowledge of the enemy and the whole situation.
<i>Make Changes in Accordance with the Situation and Flexibly Launch Attacks</i>	Make adjustments according to change in battlefield conditions and use a variety of combat measures to strike at the enemy.
<i>Fight a Quickly Decisive Battle and Annihilate the Enemy through Sudden and Vigorous Actions</i>	Employ sudden, firm, quick, and continuous offensive actions to keep intense pressure on the enemy forces in order to ensure a positive outcome of the offensive action in the shortest time possible.

## Defense

Chinese doctrine views defensive tactics as a means of transitioning to the offense in order to secure victory. The PLA Army will assume the defense in order to: preserve friendly force strength, gain time, economize forces, consolidate captured objectives, hold key terrain, and cover a withdrawal.<sup>41</sup>

The main purpose of defensive actions is to cause the enemy casualties, protect a key area or target, delay or foil the enemy's offensive, race against time, and preserve combat strength to set the stage for transition to the offense.<sup>42</sup> To accomplish this, Chinese doctrine divides defensive actions into three operations patterns and identifies five basic tasks; see table 3 below.

Chinese defensive doctrine also identifies key principles for successful operations. These principles are full-depth, integrated defense; amassing strength to form focused resistance; close combination of protection, resistance, attack, and counterattack actions; and fight for initiative through firm and active actions. Table 3 provides a more detailed description of each of these principles.





**Table 3. PLA Army Defensive Tactics**

Defensive Operations Patterns	Basic Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Positional Defense</i></li> <li>• <i>Mobile Defense</i></li> <li>• <i>Maneuver Defense</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Safeguard important areas or targets to foil the enemy's offensive</i></li> <li>• <i>Block the enemy's reinforcement, breakthrough or retreats, and delay enemy actions</i></li> <li>• <i>Suppress and attract the enemy to create favorable battle opportunities for annihilating the enemy or covering offensive actions of the main force</i></li> <li>• <i>Consolidate occupied areas, resisting the enemy's counter-assault, or assure the flank safety of the main force</i></li> <li>• <i>Cover the centralization, maneuver, transfer, or rest and reorganization of the main force</i></li> </ul>
Key Principles in Defensive Operations	
<i>Full-Depth, Integrated Defense</i>	Maximize use of the terrain and the capabilities of available friendly forces to conduct an integrated defense.
<i>Amassing Strength to Form Focused Resistance</i>	Centralize defensive forces to mass combat power and provide protection from the enemy's offense. Keep the forces maneuverable.
<i>Close Combination of Protection, Resistance, Attack, and Counterattack Actions</i>	Conduct close protection to preserve combat power, block the enemy's offensive tactics, and attrite its forces in order to prepare friendly forces for assuming offensive actions.
<i>Fight for Initiative through Firm and Active Actions</i>	Fight for local superiority in generally inferior circumstances by using forces flexibly, planning actions smartly, and applying tactics with imagination.



## Tactical Diagrams

The purpose of this section is to provide a picture of how the PLA Army will fight based on an analytical interpretation of the compilation of available PLA doctrine and intelligence community analytical assessments of the ground forces.

All diagrams are an analyst's rendition of what a PLA Army action could look like. None of the diagrams are pulled directly from Chinese doctrine,<sup>iii</sup> but the actions, tasks, and principles that will be identified in the graphic or accompanying description will be. The diagrams will depict PLAA actions, tasks, and principles using [TC 7-100.2, \*Opposing Force Tactics\*](#) terminology and graphics. There are four diagrams in this section: two offensive actions and two defensive actions. The graphics are titled according to the Chinese doctrinal action but also includes the TC 7-100.2 action equivalent in parentheses.

### Tactical Offense: Offensive operations toward the enemy on the move (annihilation ambush)

In this first diagram, the PLA red force battalion is conducting an offensive action against a blue force company on the move. The red force comprises three infantry companies with two artillery platoons, a MANPAD platoon, and close air support tasked from higher. The battalion is conducting an annihilation ambush, in order to destroy the blue company's headquarters and combat service support.

This diagram is an example of a Chinese offensive operation toward an enemy on the move and the following Chinese doctrinal tasks are depicted: attack/annihilate the enemy on the move, cut apart the enemy's disposition, block the enemy's route of withdrawal and reinforcement, and contain and annihilate the enemy. Additionally, this graphic demonstrates three key offensive principles: conduct full-depth offensive, partition, encirclement, annihilation; keep in mind the whole situation and attack the enemy's vital points; and fight a quickly decisive battle and annihilate the enemy through sudden and vigorous actions.

Graphic Description: The blue force company, as part of a larger maneuver, is traveling along a main avenue of approach. The red force battalion, aware of the maneuver in advance, ambushes the company in order to destroy the headquarters element and the combat service support element. An observer post established to the east acts as an early warning system for the battalion. As the blue company moves west, the ambush element—two infantry companies and an attack helicopter—move into position and prepare to attack. When the headquarters element enters the kill zone, the ambush elements begin the attack. The ambush is supported by two support elements, an infantry platoon that engages the lead vehicles and an artillery platoon that targets the convoy with indirect fire. To stall reinforcements and protect the ambush elements, the battalion has three security elements, two infantry platoons, and an air defense platoon equipped with MANPADS.

<sup>iii</sup> ACE Threats Integration's review of available Chinese doctrine revealed no known diagrams readily available.

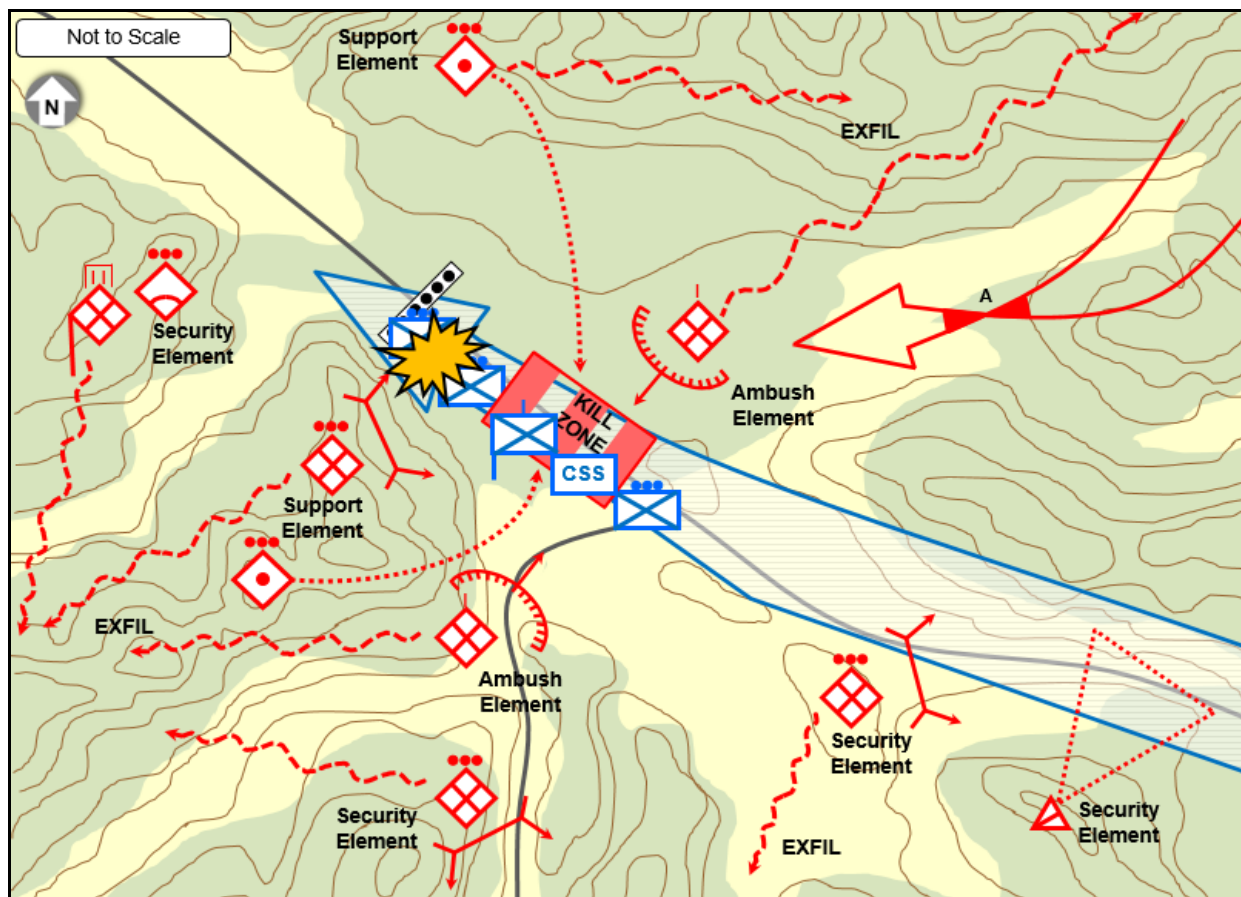


Figure 4. Tactical Offensive: Offensive operations toward the enemy on the move (annihilation ambush)

### Operational Offensive: Offensive operations toward an enemy in the defense (integrated attack)

In this second diagram the PLA red force is an amphibious armored brigade attacking an island where a blue battalion is in the defense. The red force is comprised of three armored battalions, one mechanized infantry battalion, one artillery battery, one air defense company, and one SPF company. The brigade is divided into smaller forces in order to facilitate the commander's objective of destroying the blue force. This diagram is an example of a Chinese offensive operation toward an enemy in the defense and the following Chinese doctrinal tasks are depicted: eliminate the enemy in the defense, occupy important areas, annihilate enemies in stagnation, cut apart the enemy's disposition, block the enemy's route of withdrawal and reinforcement, and contain and annihilate the enemy. Additionally, this graphic demonstrates four key offensive principles: centralize strength; conduct full-depth offensive, partition, encirclement, and annihilation; keep in mind the whole situation and attack the enemy's vital points; and fight a quickly decisive battle and annihilate the enemy through sudden and vigorous actions.

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Graphic Description: The blue force battalion, in defense on an island with hilly terrain, is attacked by a red force amphibious brigade. The brigade has divided its assets into smaller forces in order to enable its main effort attack on the battalion's combat service support element. Three battalions of armor and three battalions of mechanized infantry are tasked with fixing the blue battalion's three defensive positions. They are supported by artillery fire. An additional fixing force, an attack helicopter, is tasked with fixing the blue battalion reserve. While the blue main defense force is fixed, an SPF company infiltrates to the enemy's rear in order to observe the combat service support element. With the area under observation and the enemy battalion's main defense forces fixed, the exploitation force—two armored battalions, an air defense platoon, and indirect fire from a naval vessel—seize initiative to attack and destroy the battalion's combat service support.

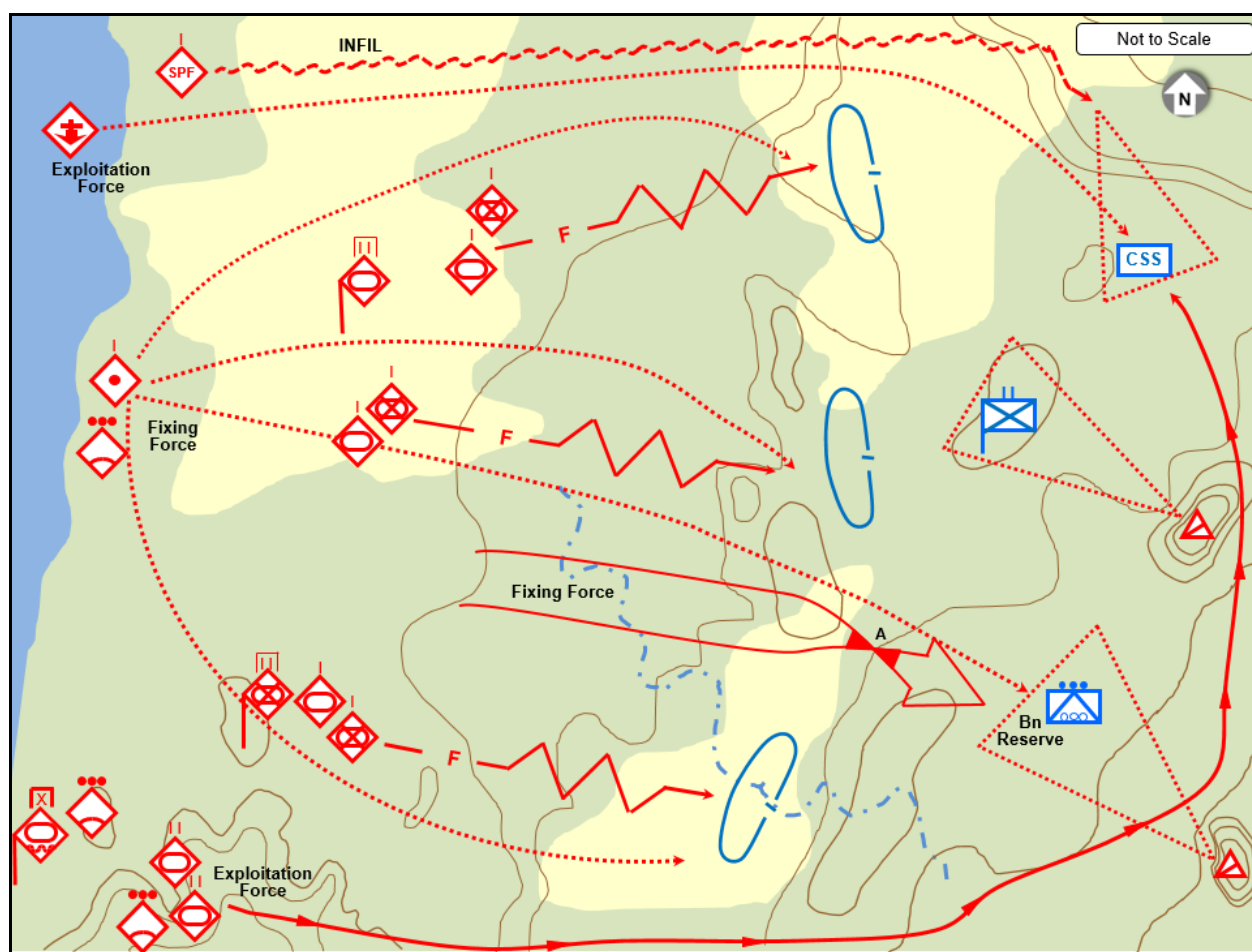


Figure 5. Operational Offense: Offensive operations toward the enemy in the defense (integrated attack)



### Tactical Defense: Mobile defense (maneuver defense)

For this next diagram, the PLA red force, a motorized infantry battalion, is in the defense. The blue force is conducting an offensive action, attacking from two avenues. The red force elects to conduct a maneuver defense in order to inflict as many casualties as possible while preserving its own forces.

This diagram is an example of a Chinese mobile defense and the following Chinese doctrinal tasks are depicted: suppress and attract the enemy to create favorable battle opportunities for annihilating the enemy and consolidate occupied areas. Additionally, this graphic demonstrates three key defensive principles: amassing strength to form focused resistance; close combination of protection, resistance, attack, and counterattack actions; and fight for initiative through firm and active actions.

Graphic description: A red force motorized infantry battalion is in the defense. In order to preserve its forces for a follow-on counterattack, the battalion elects to use the terrain to its advantage and conduct a maneuver defense. As the enemy approaches from the east, it will be engaged by the battalion's disruption elements (three combat security outposts (CSOPs), concealed in the forested terrain. While the disruption element is engaging the enemy, the battalion's artillery (tasked down from higher), fires on the enemy, targeting key components of the enemy's combat system. The artillery barrage and disruption element provide an opportunity for the main defense elements to engage the enemy. After hitting the enemy with max firepower, the contact elements, on order, move to preplanned defensive positions to the west. The main defense's shielding elements conduct ambushes along the enemy's route in order to delay the enemy and provide the necessary cover for the contact elements maneuver.

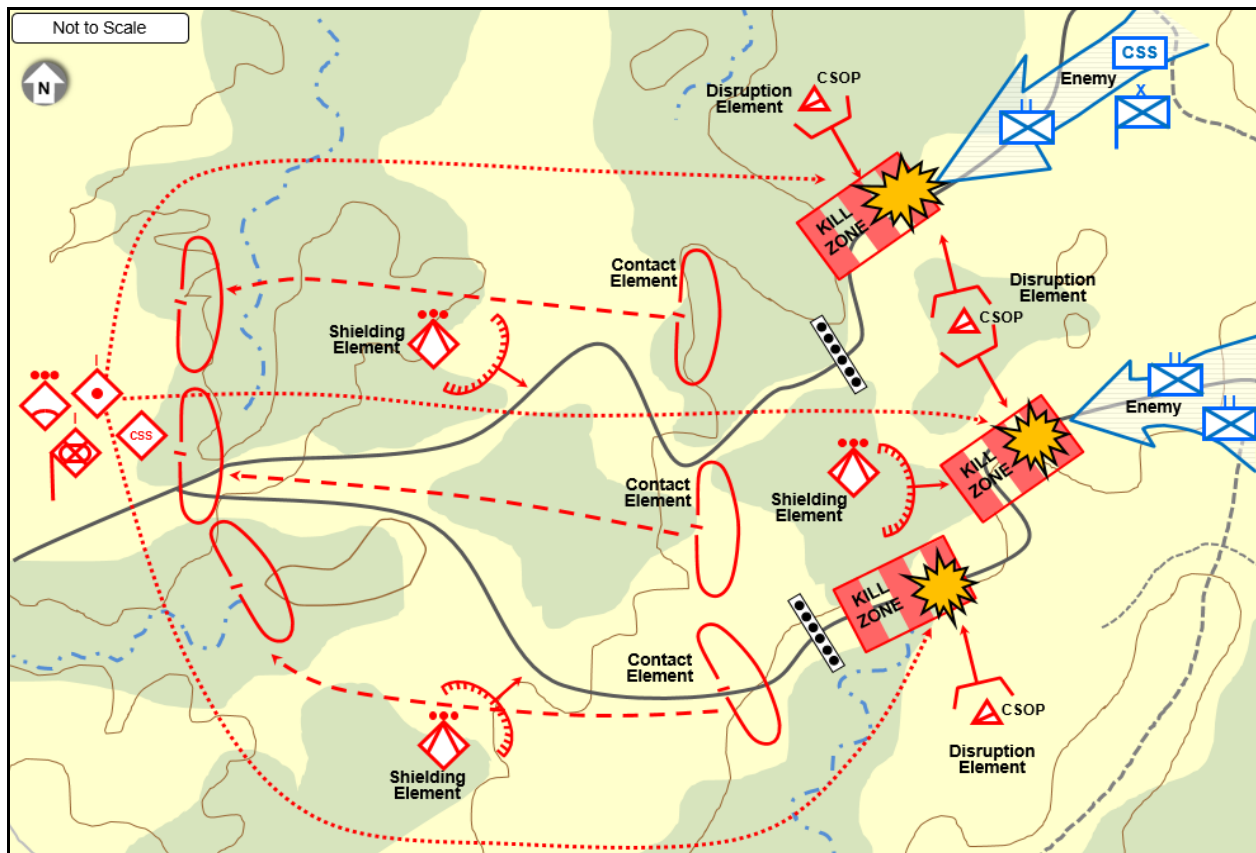


Figure 6. Tactical Defense: Mobile defense (Maneuver defense)

## Operational Defense: Positional defense (area defense)

For this final diagram, the PLA red force, an amphibious armored brigade, is in the defense after seizing terrain. The blue force is attacking from the east. The red force elects to conduct an area defense in order to deny the enemy access to the recently seized terrain.

This diagram is an example of a Chinese *positional defense*, or area defense, and the following Chinese doctrinal tasks are depicted: safeguard important areas or targets, delay enemy actions, suppress and attract the enemy to create favorable battle opportunities for annihilating the enemy, and consolidate occupied areas. Additionally, this graphic demonstrates four key defensive principles: full-depth, integrated defense; amassing strength to form focused resistance; close combination of protection, resistance, attack, and counterattack actions; and fight for initiative through firm and active actions.

Graphic Description: A red force brigade consisting of three armored battalions and one mechanized infantry battalion, supported with one artillery battery, one air defense company, one SPF company, and close air support tasked from higher is in the defense. The force is protecting recently seized terrain. As the enemy approaches from the east, it is engaged by the brigade's disruption force. The disruption force has created three defensive positions in order to deceive the enemy into believing the main



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defense force is farther east than it actually is. The disruption force uses these positions to channelize the enemy. As the enemy progresses farther east, two disruption forces will block the enemy forces while the third disruption force will delay the enemy and on order begin movement back to the main defense force. The enemy, deceived into thinking the red force is retrograding, advances west and encounters the main defense force.

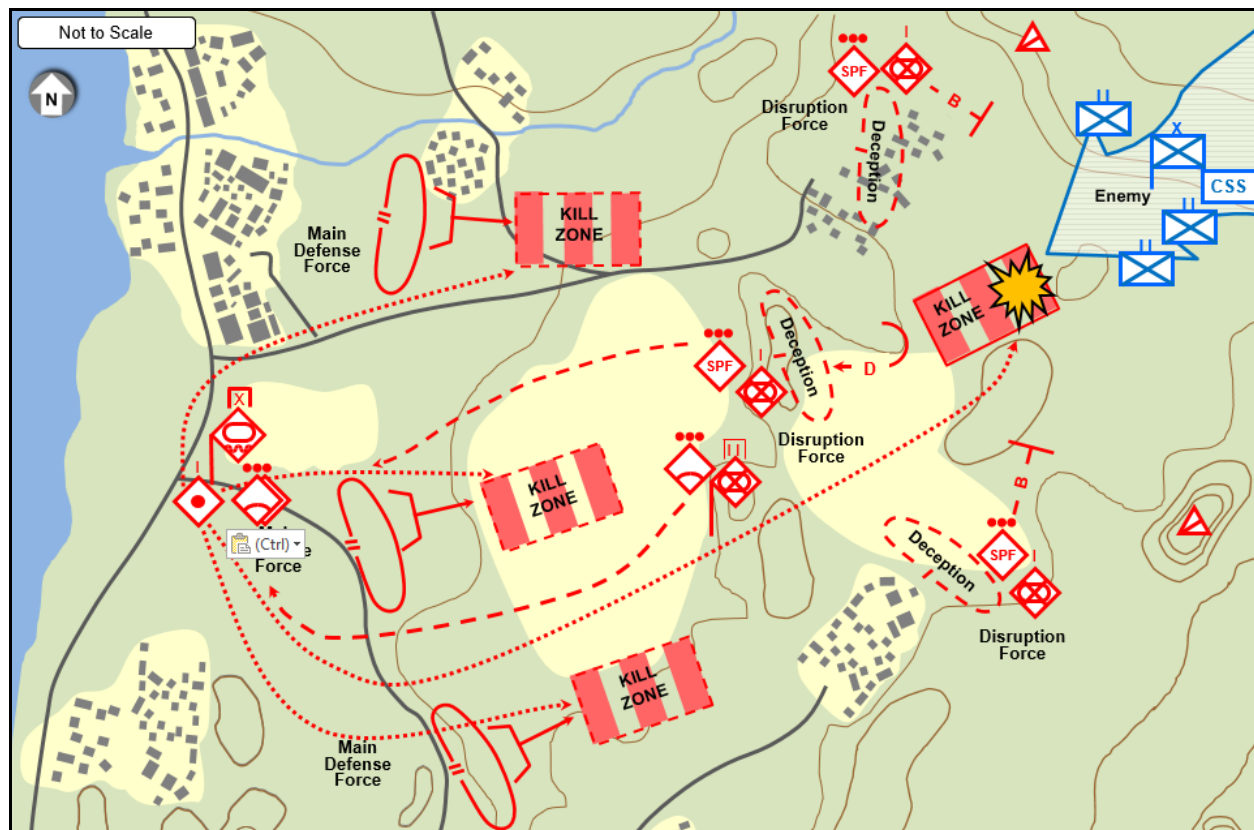


Figure 7. Operational Defense: Positional defense (area defense)

## Section 4: PLA Army Weapons and Equipment

This section details a snapshot of the main types of weapons and equipment available in the Chinese arsenal. This section does not provide an exhaustive list, but rather includes the most common, most important, and most recently acquired systems available to China's PLA forces.

The PLAA's ground combat vehicles consist of main battle tanks, light tanks, and armored personnel carriers. The PLA is slowly modernizing these vehicles by replacing the oldest ones in service with newer, more modern systems. For its MBTs, the PLA still relies heavily on its Type 59 systems, first introduced to the PLA in the 1950s; however, these systems have been retrofitted and modernized with new weapon control system, infrared searchlights, and laser rangefinders.<sup>43</sup> The second most prolific tank type in the PLA is the Type 96. These tanks are considered part of China's second-generation battle

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tanks. Most recently China has been fielding the Type 99 MBT. This system is more enhanced than the majority of systems at the PLA's disposal, particularly because it is equipped with explosive reactive armor.<sup>44</sup> In addition to fielding more tank systems, the PLA is equipping its forces with armored personnel carriers (APCs) and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), many of which are amphibious.

The PLA has a significant artillery arsenal and is believed to have more than 13,000 systems.<sup>45</sup> It is following its modernization trend of motorizing its forces by seeking out self-propelled systems for procurement and development. Some of the PLA's artillery pieces are specifically designed for anti-tank (AT) employment. The PLA's additional AT capability is found in its AT missile arsenal. Recent PLA exercises have demonstrated significant AT missile proficiency with capabilities such as fire-and-forget features and automatic self-guidance systems.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 4: Key PLA Army Weapons and Equipment**

Ground Combat Vehicles in Service		Artillery Systems in Service		AT/SAM Systems in Service	
Type 59 MBT	2200	120mm Type 89 SP AT	750	HJ-9 SP AT	400
Type 96/96A	2000	100mm Type 73 towed AT	1300	HJ-12 ATGM	UNK
Type 98A/99/99A	640	152mm Type 54/66 towed	2100	SA-10	UNK
Type 63/63C	1650	122mm Type 54-1 towed	3800	HQ-16 SP SAM	UNK
Type 99/99A	600	122mm Type 89 SP	750	HY-6 MANPADS	UNK
Type 86/86A AIFV	1250	300/370mm AR3 MRLS	UNK	PGZ-07 SPAAG	UNK
Type 89 APC	1500				
Type 92/92A/92B AIFV	1850				
Type 04 AIFV	750				

The PLA Army is well prepared to conduct air defense. Air defense units are equipped with anti-aircraft guns, self-propelled anti-aircraft guns (SPAAGs), self-propelled gun-missiles, and surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 5: PLA Army Aviation Assets**

Rotary Wing Aircraft in Service		Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Service	
WZ-10 Attack Helicopter	60+	ASN-15 (hand launched)	UNK
Z-9 Family Attack Helicopters	255	ASN-104/ASN-105	UNK
Z-19 Attack Helicopter	48+	ASN-206	UNK
Mi-17 Family Transport Helicopters	202+		

The PLA Army's aviation capabilities are primarily made up of attack and transport helicopters and UAVs. The PLAA has been dramatically increasing the number of aircraft at its disposal, both manned and unmanned systems. China's increased procurement of transport helicopters is indicative of China's



efforts to make the PLAA more maneuverable. China's increased purchases of attack helicopters is indicative of the PLAA's intention to utilize close air support during tactical engagements. The PLAA is estimated to have more than 300 unmanned systems currently in service. These systems are used for short-range reconnaissance missions and to support artillery targeting.<sup>48</sup>

It is important to note that despite extensive modernization efforts and significant procurement of modern platforms, more than half of the PLAA is still equipped with dated technology. The PLAA has attempted to mitigate this weakness by upgrading the dated technology with after-market upgrades. While these upgrades make the platform itself more capable in general, particularly versus a tier 3 or 4 enemy, it does not make it capable versus a better-equipped enemy.

## Section 5: Conclusion

Currently, there are no open source US government products that detail the PLAA. This product is designed to fill that gap and provide the training community with a snapshot look at conditions that shape China's operational environment, and a detailed look at the PLAA's military capabilities, tactics, and techniques.

As has been featured in this report, China has prioritized the modernization of its military in an effort to increase its capabilities and refine its tactics and techniques. Chinese leadership has placed this emphasis on its military because it believes a strong military is essential to achieving great power status and critical to preventing other countries from damaging Chinese national interests.<sup>49</sup>

China holds a unique position in US foreign affairs because it is seen as a partner and a threat at the same time. This unique position exists because Chinese national interests are often times in line with those of the US. However, they are just as often in contradiction to the US. It is these areas of contradiction that should be of particular interest to the US training community. While China may not pose an immediate direct threat to the US and its interests today, its actions can create the potential for future threats to US national interests.

China recognizes this situation, and while professing to be following a peaceful rise, still takes steps to prepare its military to fight in an environment where the US may be present. Its military trains against what are perceived to be US tactics and techniques while the government prioritizes acquisition of systems designed to counter the US's technological overmatch. Understanding this dynamic in a global context and understanding the specifics of the PLAA's capabilities and tactics makes the US Army more prepared for any and all contingencies.

## REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS APPLIED TO TRAINING

The [TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series](#), the [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\)](#), and the [Worldwide Equipment Guide](#) provide training resources for applying real-world conditions to training. The tactics used by the Chinese PLAA can be found as part of the composite threat model that exists in the hybrid threat doctrine series. The PLAA uses principles of offense and defense very similar to those present in [TC 7-100.2, Opposing Force Tactics](#). Additionally, the operational environment outlined in the DATE also includes characteristics of the PLAA and the Chinese OE.



## Replication in Training

Of the countries in the DATE, the one that can most realistically replicate China is Donovia. Like China, Donovia is a country intent on growing its national power through diplomatic and military means. Recent years of economic growth have enabled Donovia to focus on its military development and increase its capabilities. Donovia is not a complete representation of China however due to how its military is equipped. In order to portray China in a training environment, Donovia's military equipment would need to be downgraded to tier 2 and tier 3 systems; Donovia's integrated air defense system (IADS) could remain tier 1.

All four of the PLAA's tactics graphically depicted in this report can be found in [TC 7-100.2, \*Opposing Force Tactics\*](#). For more information on how to replicate these actions, reference the TC 7-100.2. For information on how to build a force structure to conduct these actions, reference [TC 7-100.4, \*Hybrid Threat Force Structure Organization Guide\*](#) (Chapter 3, Section VIII "Building an OPFOR Order of Battle"). The table below contains excerpts from the TC 7-100.2 that define the tactical actions discussed in this report.

**Table 6. Excerpts from TC 7-100.2 *Opposing Force Tactics***

<p><b><i>Offensive Operations toward an Enemy on the Move</i></b> <b>(Annihilation Ambush)</b></p>	<p>3-151. The purpose of an <i>annihilation ambush</i> is to destroy the enemy force. These are violent attacks designed to ensure the enemy's return fire, if any, is ineffective. Generally, this type of ambush uses the terrain to the attacker's advantage and employs mines and other obstacles to halt the enemy in the kill zone. The goal of the obstacles is to keep the enemy in the kill zone throughout the action. Using direct, or indirect, fire systems, the support element destroys or suppresses all enemy forces in the kill zone. It remains in a concealed location and may have special weapons, such as antitank weapons.</p>
<p><b><i>Offensive Operations towards an Enemy in the Defense</i></b> <b>(Integrated Attack)</b></p>	<p>3-64. <i>Integrated attack</i> is an offensive action where the OPFOR seeks military decision by destroying the enemy's will and/or ability to continue fighting through the application of combined arms effects. Integrated attack is often employed when the OPFOR enjoys overmatch with respect to its opponent and is able to bring all elements of offensive combat power to bear. It may also be employed against a more sophisticated and capable opponent, if the appropriate window of opportunity is created or available.</p>
<p><b><i>Mobile Defense (Maneuver Defense)</i></b></p>	<p>4-62. In situations where the OPFOR is not completely overmatched, it may conduct a tactical <i>maneuver defense</i>. This type of defense is designed to achieve tactical decision by skillfully using fires and maneuver to destroy key elements of the enemy's combat system and deny enemy forces their objective, while preserving the friendly force. Maneuver defenses cause the enemy to continually lose effectiveness until he can no longer achieve his objectives. They can also economize force in less important areas while the OPFOR moves additional forces onto the most threatened axes.</p>

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<b>Positional Defense (Area Defense)</b>	<p>4-85. In situations where the OPFOR must deny key areas (or the access to them) or where it is overmatched, it may conduct a tactical area defense. Area defense is designed to achieve a decision in one of two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By forcing the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before he can achieve his objectives.</li> <li>• By denying the enemy his objectives while preserving combat power until decision can be achieved through strategic operations or operational mission accomplishment.</li> </ul>
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Additional considerations for replicating China in training environments would be replicating China's capabilities in five key areas. These areas are INFOWAR, RISTA, fire support, air defense, and SPF. China's capabilities in these five areas have received significant emphasis and growth in the past several decades resulting in capabilities worthy of replicating in training environments. The chart below details how training centers could replicate a capability comparable to China's.

**Table 7. How to use doctrine to replicate China**

Capability (What)	Actor/Order of Battle (Who)	Tactic (How)
<b>INFOWAR</b>	Donovia has an INFOWAR brigade (section 2C-9 of the DATE) that can be used to for INFOWAR replication.	TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 7 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 5  To replicate China: Highlight strategic INFOWAR operations discussed in the FM.
<b>RISTA</b>	Donovia has a very robust RISTA capability with a dedicated command. The order of battle of this command can also be found in the DATE section 2C-9.	TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 8 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 6  To replicate China: Place emphasis on satellite RISTA capabilities.
<b>Fire Support</b>	Donovia has a very powerful fire support capability. Its units are equipped with tier 1 fire support. To replicate China, a training center could use Donovia's fire support orders of battle, however the systems would need to be reduced to tier 2 capability.	TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 9 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 7  To replicate China: Make prolific use of "annihilation fire."
<b>Air Defense</b>	Donovia has a robust air defense capability made of primarily tier 1 systems. Donovanian air defense units can be used to replicate China's air defense assets.	TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 11 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 9  To replicate China: Highlight missile systems.
<b>SPF</b>	China has placed great emphasis on growing its SPF capability in recent years and Donovia's SPF capability can sufficiently represent China's.	TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 15 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 13  To replicate China: Highlight amphibious and airborne operations discussed in the FM.

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## Related Products

See the [Red Diamond Newsletter](#), which contains current articles on a variety of topics useful to both soldiers and civilians ranging from enemy tactics and techniques to the nature and analysis of various threat actors.

For detailed information on weapons and equipment, see the [Worldwide Equipment Guide](#).

To see more products from TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration, visit the Army Training Network (ATN) with CAC access: [https://atn.army.mil/dsp\\_template.aspx?dplD=377](https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dplD=377).

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## Table and Figure Credits

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Table 2. PLA Army Offensive Tactics. Source: Cui Yafeng, "Science of Army Operations," PLA Press, June 2009.

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Table 4. Key PLA Army Weapons and Equipment. Source: "China – Army – Armed Forces Structure," Military Periscope, 1 February 2015.

Table 5. PLA Army Aviation Assets. Source: "China – Army – Armed Forces Structure," Military Periscope, 1 February 2015.

Table 8. Excerpts from TC 7-100.2 Opposing Force Tactics. Source: TC 7-100.2 Opposing Force Tactics.

Table 9. How to use doctrine to replicate China. Source: TC 7-100.2 Opposing Force Tactics

Figure 1. China's Military Regions and Group Army Locations. Source: "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2014," Office of the Secretary of Defense, 24 April 2012.

Figure 2. Chinese soldiers learn how to use new command and control platform. Source: Asia Studies Detachment Report, 2015.

Figure 3. 2006 Motorized Division Exercise. Source: [PLA's Motorized Division Launches War Exercise](#), 2006.

Figure 8. Tactical Offense: Offensive operations toward the enemy on the move (Annihilation ambush). Source: Analyst Interpretation.

Figure 9. Operational Offense: Offensive operations toward the enemy in the defense (Integrated Attack). Source: Analyst Interpretation.

Figure 10. Tactical Defense: Mobile defense (Maneuver defense). Source: Analyst Interpretation.

Figure 11. Operational Defense: Positional defense (Area defense). Source: Analyst Interpretation.

## Endnotes

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