

# The Final Score: Russian Armor Losses in Chechnya Reflect Lethality of an Urban Fight

by First Lieutenant Adam Geibel

On 3 September 1996, Colonel-General Alexander Galkin, head of the chief armored vehicle and tank directorate of the Russian defense ministry, told journalists that federal forces in Chechnya had lost 260 armored fighting vehicles, including T-72 and T-80 tanks as well as APCs.<sup>1</sup>

Galkin, describing lost AFVs as equipment absolutely unrepairable, noted that this figure did not include assets lost during a later offensive, called the Second Battle of Grozny.

The general reiterated that the high figure was due to the nature of city fighting, and not any inherent defects in Russian AFVs, adding “if we had not brought tanks into Grozny, then more infantrymen would have been killed, because the tanks did protect the infantry.”

The later offensive, which appeared to have ended the war, added heavily to the total: MOUT fighting during the Second Battle of Grozny, from 6 to 28 August, was as intense as the New Year’s Eve

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Day Battle (31 December 1994). On 12 August, the Russians admitted to losing three T-72 tanks, one light tank,<sup>2</sup> 22 BMPs, and 18 other APCs. Two days later, the rebels claimed that they had destroyed 120 tanks and 65 APCs.

Throughout the war, both sides have exaggerated casualty counts — the rebel figures probably include totals from the simultaneous fighting around Gudermes and Argun, as well as several unconfirmed but highly successful ambushes. Their count might also include lightly-damaged vehicles as well.

The Interior Ministry, which made up the bulk of the Grozny garrison, claimed

to have lost 26 AFVs by the 16th. However, on the 28th, the Russian command said that the rebels had captured 31 armored vehicles (tanks, APCs, and IFVs) in good working order, which they were now using, plus an unknown number of lightly-damaged Russian AFVs which the Chechens have hidden for quick repairs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>An all-inclusive term: BTR-70s and 80s, MTLBs and BMP-1, 2, and 3s, unless otherwise differentiated.

<sup>2</sup>Implies that at least one PT-76 was fielded.

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