

Emergency Preparedness Committee

BESLAN

Events & Lessons Learned

School Hostage Incident

**September 1, 2004:
Middle School seized.**

**Siege ends September
3, 2004**

**Town Population
33,600**



Whe
Best



Facts

- Hostages: 1200; Annual School Opening Celebration;
- Killed: 338, including 156 children;
- 700 injured, including 336 children;
- 32 hostage takers (2 women); 31 killed,
- 1 captured (on trial now);
- 30 Special Forces; 11 killed, all wounded;
- 4 emergency workers killed;
- Duration of event: 62 hours;
- September 1 - September 3, 2004
- Required 10 hours of combat to end siege.

Wednesday, September 1

- 9 a.m.: School seized by gunmen, shots exchanged with police. More than a dozen wounded. Some attackers reported wearing suicide-bomb belts.
- Noon: More gunfire, explosions reported.
- 4:40 p.m.: At least 12 children and one adult escape after hiding in boiler room.
- 7:30 p.m.: Authorities establish contact with hostage takers.
- Separate command centers established for: Local police; Army; Interior Ministry and FSB (Domestic Counter-terrorist SWAT).

Thursday, September 2

- 10 a.m.: Putin promises that all efforts by authorities will be devoted to the "main task ... to save the lives and health of those who became hostages.
- 4 p.m.: Ruslan Aushev holds talks with hostage-takers in school gym.
- 4:45 p.m.: First hostages released, women and small children taken to safety. A total of 26 released, though one woman returns to school to remain with still-captive children.
- Perimeter control reduced to 250 yds.
- 8:00 p.m.: Officials say the number of hostages, previously thought to be around 350, could be more than 1,000.
- 9:00 p.m.: 20 male hostages were executed inside school. Negotiations with the hostage-takers continue.

Friday, September 3

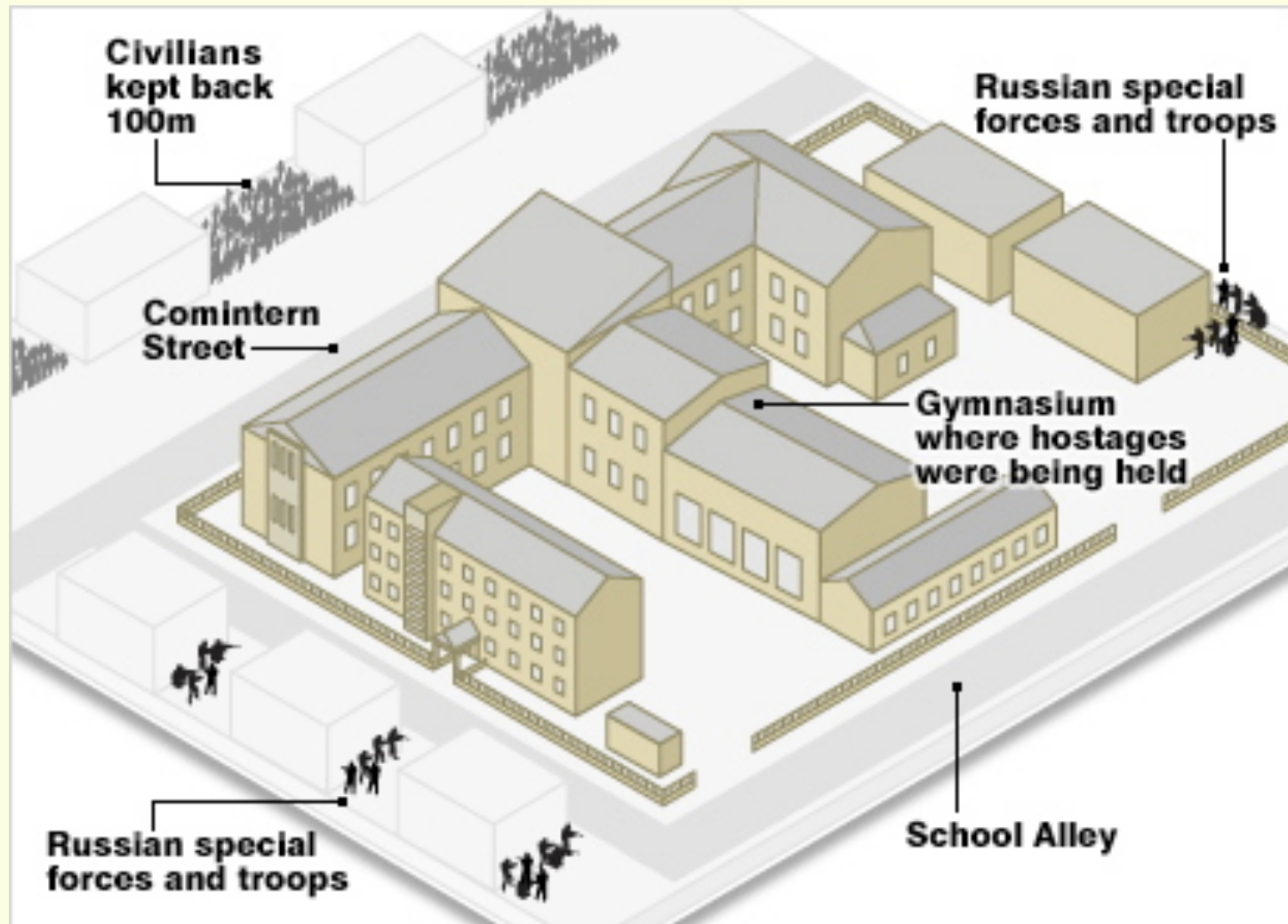
- 8 a.m. F.S.B. SWAT team leaves for exercise in next town.
- 1 p.m.: Two loud bangs heard, authorities call it unprovoked firing by hostage-takers.
- 1 p.m.: Emergency workers approach school with agreement of militants to retrieve bodies of dead hostages. Hostages take it as signal to flee, militants open fire on fleeing hostages.
- 1:45 p.m.: Militants begin fleeing building. F.S.B. SWAT returns.
- 2:15 Militants attacked with tank fire and schmels.
- Security forces and vigilantes pursue them in the town and storm the school building.
- 3:25 p.m.: Escaped militants are holed up in local home. Tanks destroy home.

Picture at Start of School Opening



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Standoff for Negotiated Outcome



Civilians at Site. Vigilante Mixed in with Troops

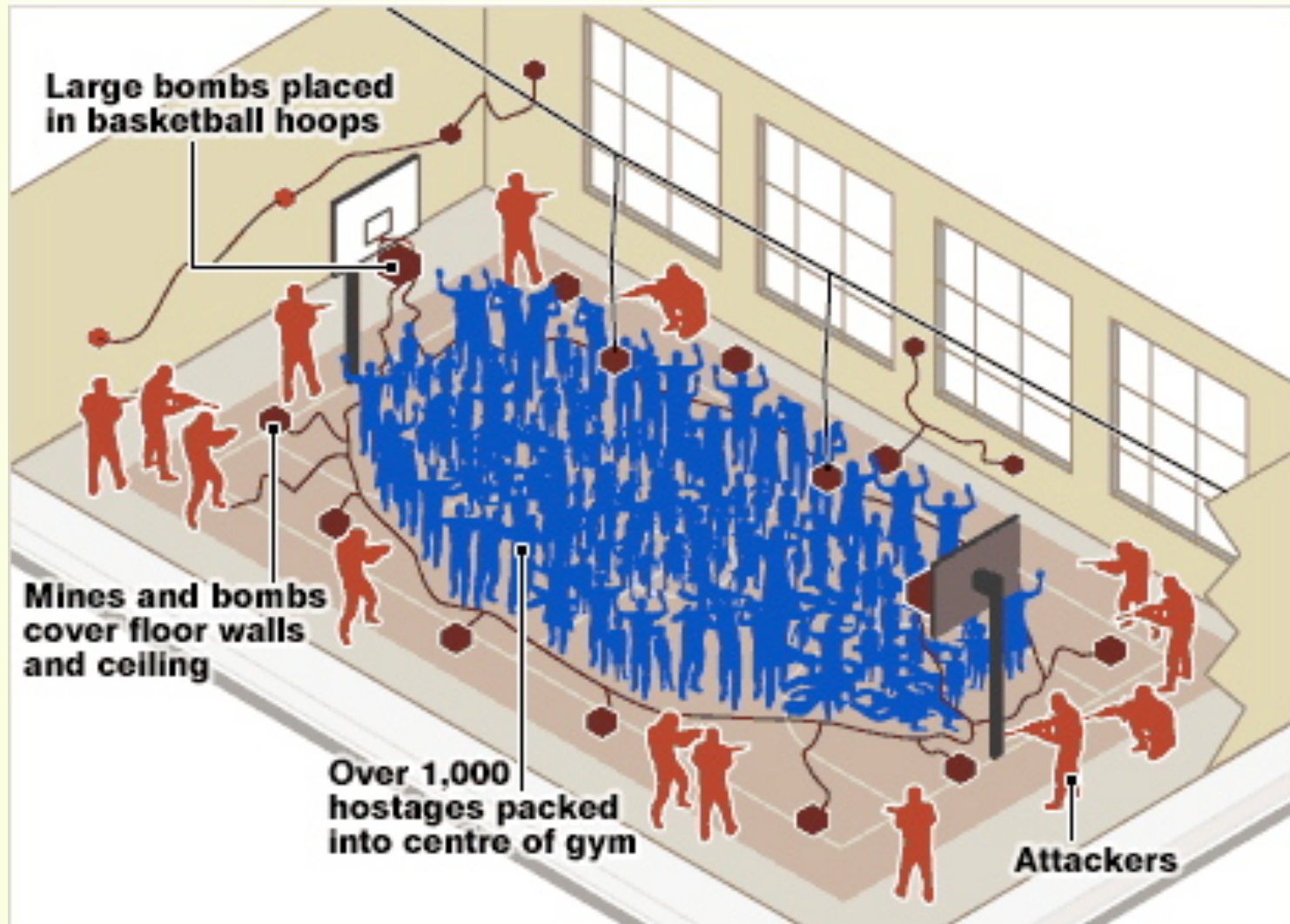


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Political Objective

- Mining the room with explosives and forbidding hostages from eating, drinking or using the toilet, the group hoped to pressure Moscow into negotiating over Chechnya, where tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in two wars and Russia is accused of large-scale human rights abuses.

Hostage Taking Pre-Planned and Follows Suicide Script



Children and Teachers Lined Up Against Walls



Detonators Activated



The Wiring of the Detonator Network



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Terrorists Well Equipped and Well Armed



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Russian Spetznats On Standby



Canon Used to Counter Snipers

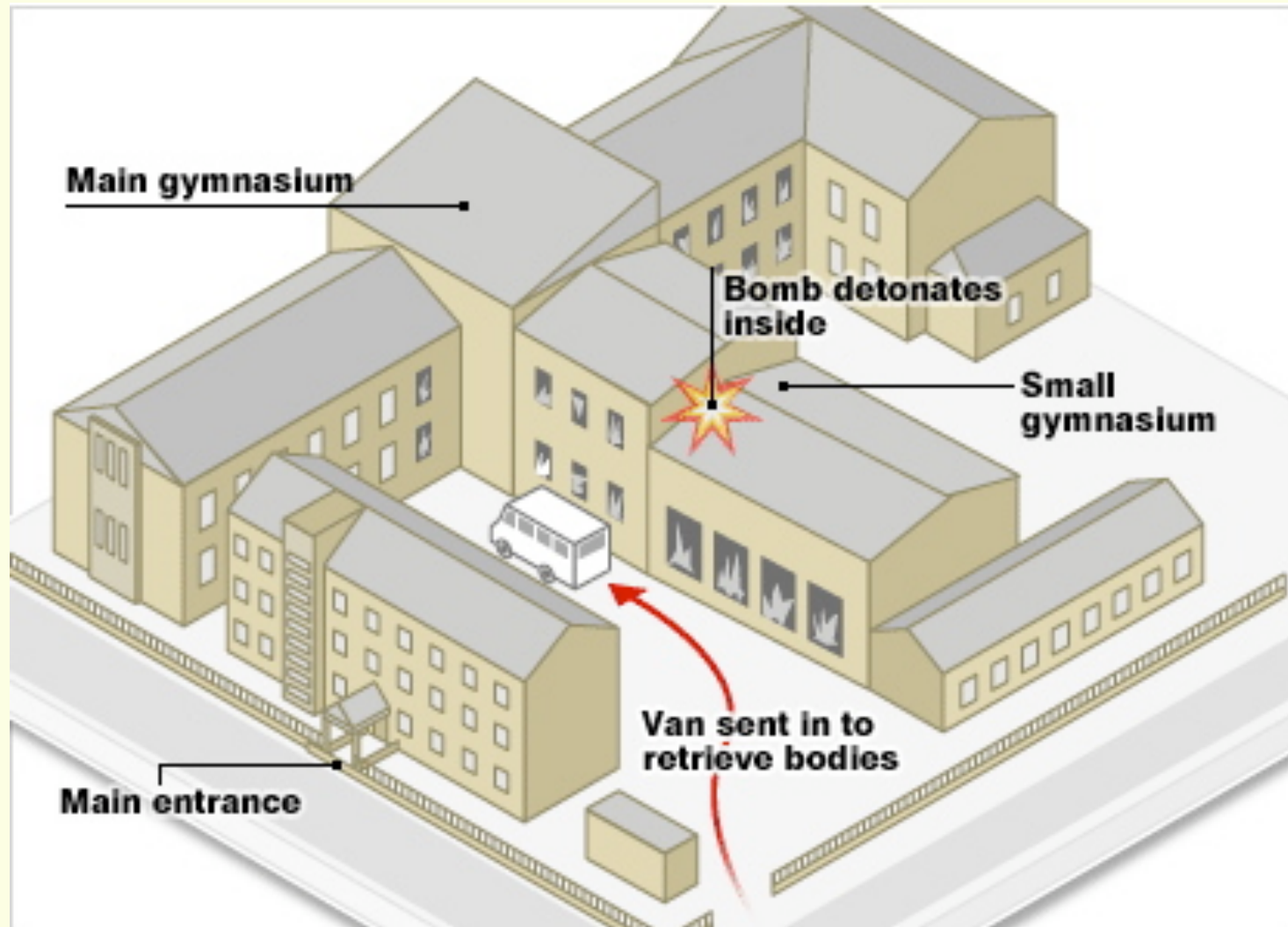


Shmel Used to Attack Hostage Occupied Auditorium

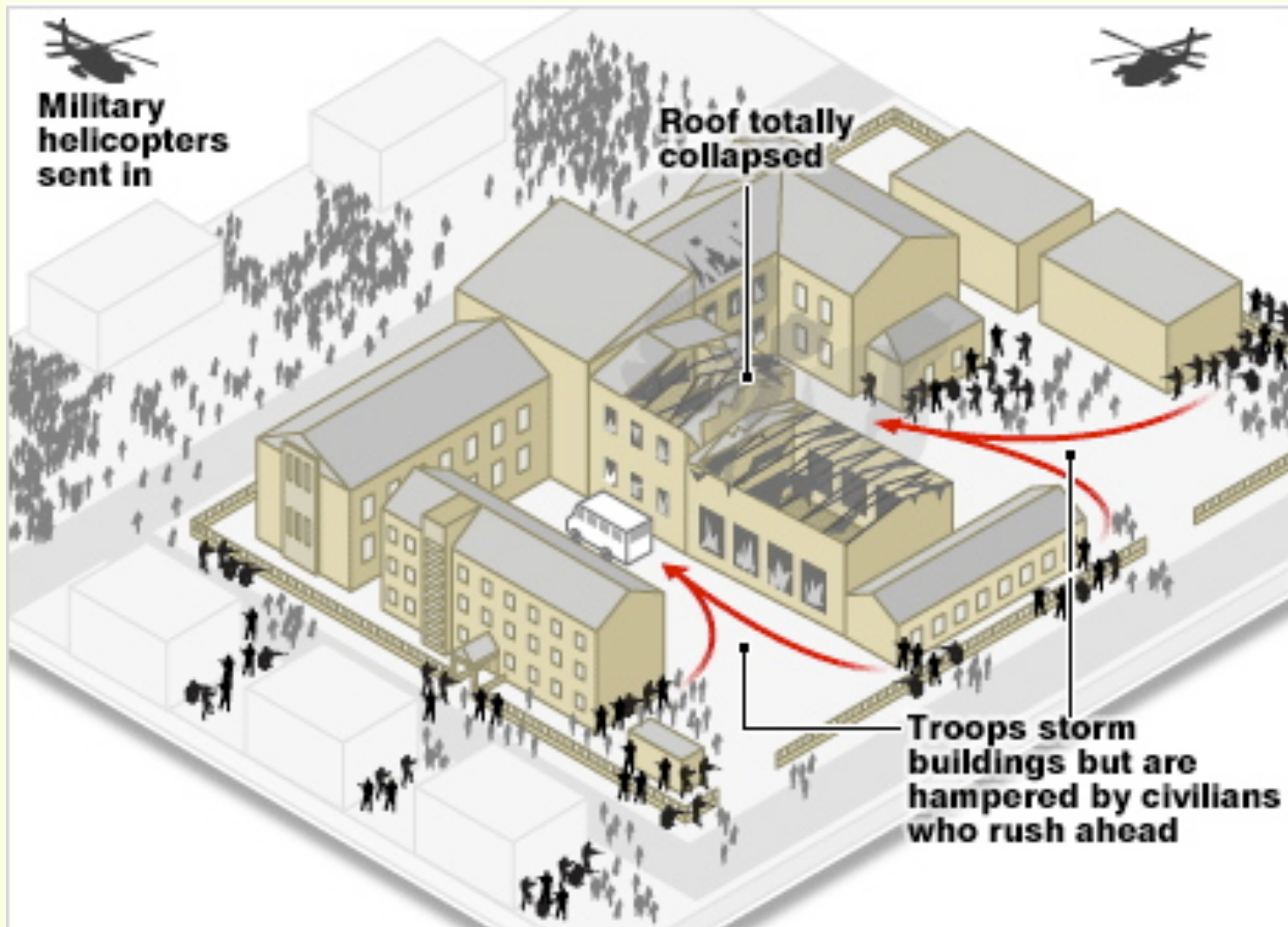


The RPO-A (Recoilless Infantry Flame Thrower) *Shmel* ("bumblebee"), is a single shot, disposable, lightweight, shoulder-fired, recoilless "rocket" launcher. Designed to kill personnel in dug-in and covered fighting positions, buildings and shelters.

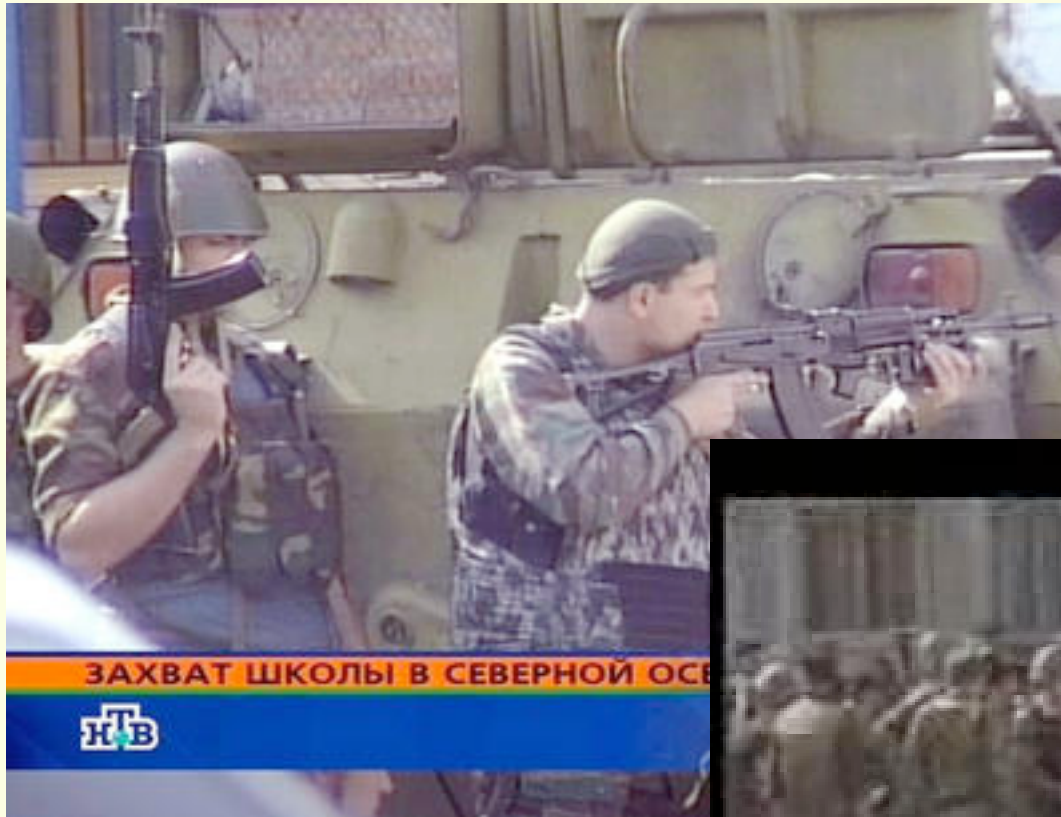
The Unexpected Happens - Responders Unprepared



Chaos Increases Casualties and Impedes Countermeasures



Troops Seek Cover Behind Armored Vehicle



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Civilians and Vigilantes in Rescue Effort



Civilians Mix with the Military



Civilians Mixing with Spetsnaz. Armed Vehicle Useless



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25

Escape Under Fire Adds to Casualties



The Carnage



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27

Identifying the Victims



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Urban Setting and Civilian Crowd Allowed Escape



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Many Attackers Escape - Prolonged Fighting Continues



The Day After



1. Assault Not Anticipated

Security forces directed from Moscow to stand down for negotiations. Preparing for assault. When it occurred it was unplanned. Security forces rushed in without flak jackets. Caught in cross-fire between terrorists and local vigilantes.

Lesson: Federal or State command cannot respond to sudden local unanticipated developments.

A designated local incident commander, with full authority, must be in control.

2. No Perimeter Control

There was no perimeter control to remove unauthorized civilians from proximity to hostage site. Frantic and armed civilians mixed with the responders obstructing action and increasing casualties while allowing hostage takers to escape. .

Lesson: Civilian perimeter enforcement, is a priority.

3. No Shared Communications

Though a few Special Forces had radios, none of the other responders had any communications gear. The ending of the event was unnecessarily prolonged as the military, the militia and the armed vigilantes acted randomly and in confusion, firing small weapons indiscriminately.

Lesson: Unless immediately reachable by common radio from the incident command post, all responders must remain outside of the security perimeter.

4. Armed Civilians are Dangerous

A contingent of what appeared like local volunteers or militia kept firing at building still filled with survivors, thus increasing casualties.

Lesson: Armed action must be reserved exclusively to specially trained professionals at all times and then only by the local commander.

5. Security Perimeter Must be Protected on Both Sides

When any semblance of a security perimeter collapsed remaining terrorists (now in civilian clothing) escaped into the neighborhood where fighting continued for up to 10 hours.

Lesson: : The security perimeter must be manned by specially trained personnel, with a priority communication channel to the command post.

6. Fire and Armed Personnel Need Joint Training

The uniformed firemen in bright orange & bright blue suits kept away from shooting while the school was burning. The only fire hose seen in action was operated by what looked an unprotected civilian volunteer. Many burn victims.

Lesson: In case of fire during combat a special protective maneuver must be authorized by the command center.

7. Medical Triage and Care Must be in Near Proximity

Transportation of wounded was improvised by the local population in personal cars and taxis - there was no local emergency medical triage set-up.

Lesson: The medical team must control the dispatching of ambulances from as close as possible to the command center.

8. EOC Control of Vehicle Access at Site is Mandatory

The only police car in the video blocked the path for the improvised ambulances. Citizens picked up the police car and removed it by turning it over.

Lesson: Within the security perimeter the positioning of all emergency vehicles (fire engines, EMS, public works, State and Federal support) must be controlled from the incident command center.

9. Casualty Tracking a Key Responsibility for EOC

Local volunteers took over the job of informally posting the penciled names of casualties and or people removed for treatment adding to confusion and interference with responders

Lesson: The EOC must be designated as the single source of all information about casualties.

10. Never Assume What Could be a Probable Outcome

The security and emergency forces had almost three days to set up and get organized for counter-terrorist actions and kept assuming that ultimately a negotiated agreement will resolve the incident.

Lesson: Always prepare for the worst contingency scenario. The role of the EOC is to anticipate what can conceivably happen. The attackers' profile and operating methods clearly indicated that this would be a suicide mission.

11. Be Ready to Take all Clues Seriously

Terrorists stashed supplies and explosives a month prior to the raid while the school was under construction. .

Lesson: Expect attackers to prepare for a raid. Citizens to be alert for anything suspicious and be encouraged to report even improbable events.

As Summed up by Mr. Putin

*"We have showed weakness in the face of danger
and the weak get beaten up."*

An Afterthought: Hostage Rescue, Entebbe Airport, 1976

- Hostages: 100 airline passengers;
- 200 Elite troops in rescue; 1 killed.
- Rescue launched at 1AM;
- All hijackers killed (7 terrorists, 20 soldiers);
- Action time: 5 min, Elapsed time: 35 min.
- Hostages lost: 1