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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
The Marxist-Leninist Theory of Knowledge and Its Significance In Soviet Military Science and Practice, by Maj Gen N. Sushko and Capt 2d Rank V. Puzik	1
Essence and Phenomenon in Military Affairs, by Col I. Grudinin	17
Combat Operations by Tank Units Against Operational Defense Reserves, by Lt Gen (Res) B. Arushanyan	29
Factors Influencing the Organizational Structure of Ground Forces, by Col M. Kir'yan	36
Logistical Support for Troop Regroupings, by Maj Gen A. Skovoroda	45
A New Edition of a Scholarly Work on War and the Army	51
A Necessary Book for Generals and Officers	59

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR TROOP REGROUPINGS

by Maj Gen A. Skovoroda

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In modern highly maneuverable operations the role of troop regroupings becomes much more important. They will be a particularly common phenomenon in the initial period of war, when the most abrupt situational changes are possible, causing the necessity of introducing substantial revisions into troop groupings organized earlier. Our military-theoretical press devoted much attention to a study of the problems of conducting and supporting regroupings. A number of articles in the journal Voyennaya Mysl' (Military Thought) have discussed in sufficient detail the aims and objectives of tactical regroupings, the effect of new conditions on the nature and methods of their organization and execution. Techniques of negotiating destruction zones and zones of radioactive contamination have been examined, as well as engineer support, problems of reconnaissance, effective air cover for ground forces, road commandant service and troop control. These are all very complicated facets of combat operations, which have a most direct effect on executing regroupings. Naturally logistical support of troop regroupings becomes very important, primarily continuous supply of tactical ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya with various types of fuel, medical assistance to the wounded and ill, maintenance and repair of combat equipment while on the march. Logistical support becomes considerably more complicated when troops are using rail and water transport. During the Great Fatherland War the Soviet Army supply services received much practical experience in organizing support of large troop regroupings. This experience indicates that in organizing support for operational regroupings three major tasks must be met simultaneously: full support to operational ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya in preparing for and carrying out a march (providing truck, rail and water transport); timely organization of facilities in new staging areas for supporting subsequent combat operations; transfer and deployment of support and supply chasti and administrative units with troop grouping in new areas.

In conducting regrouping operations one must always bear in mind that soyedineniya and chasti should arrive at the staging areas as a rule with supplies on hand enabling the forces to go into combat immediately. Support and supply organizations of all elements will of course participate in meeting all tasks connected with troop regrouping, but the primary role will be played by those which are directly organizing and planning the regrouping. All principles enumerated, formulated on the basis of extensive experience from the last war,

have not lost any of their significance. But in a missile-nuclear war the conditions and nature of the regrouping activities will change substantially. The cost in men and materials will rise, and communications and transport operations will be much more complex.

CPYRGHT

Let us examine the primary features of logistical support of large regroupings under these conditions. In organizing support for troop regroupings it is essential first of all to bear in mind their larger scope, greater speed of execution and reduced time interval. Supply outfits should be capable of furnishing forces within a limited period of time and over great distances an increased quantity of material, rapidly fuel combat and transport vehicles, repair damaged equipment and evacuate the wounded. A quite logical contradiction arises: on the one hand the quantity of supplies, particularly fuel, increases greatly, while on the other hand the high speed of troop movements sharply reduces the time available for meeting these requirements. It is therefore difficult at present to count on bringing up everything necessary from dumps and bases far to the rear during the process of troop movements. Support and supplies in the regrouping areas should as a rule be organized ahead of time, before the troops move out. Tendencies in this direction were observed in the last war, where supply dumps and field hospitals were set up along the route of troop movements. A characteristic example of this is the organization and operations of supply outfits of the Second Belorussian front preparing for the Berlin operation in April 1945. In accordance with a directive by the front deputy troop commander for supply, one main and one auxiliary fuel dump were set up to replenish fuel consumed during the regrouping, as well as two main and one auxiliary dump for replenishing food supplies. In addition, essential mobile fuel reserves were organized by supply outfits. We believe that the early placement of dumps of primary supplies along troop regrouping routes will find extensive application under modern conditions as well. Primary attention must be focused on fuel dumps, for fuel consumption now comprises more than two thirds of the total quantity of supplies allocated for regrouping support. In the aim of maintaining a high degree of troop combat readiness during regrouping, expended supplies should be replenished daily, preventing a sharp drop from established norms. This must be done as rapidly as possible, with a minimum expenditure of manpower and equipment. These demands can be met to a considerable degree as a result of bringing supplies as close as possible to the enroute rest and bivouac areas. Bearing in mind the higher speed of troop movements and increased daily mileage therefrom, it is possible to place dumps considerably farther apart from one another than during the Great Fatherland War. But the quantity of supplies in each dump, particularly fuel, will increase sharply since average daily consumption increases. Early organization of supplies along troop routes constitutes only one of the fundamental conditions for continuous enroute supply. It is also very important to organize rapid issue of the supplies to the passing troops as well as vehicle refueling. This problem is met by the combined utilization of various types of transport, as well

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as with an automated system of fuel releases from dumps and high-flow fueling equipment. Refueling time can also be reduced by coordinated utilization of fueling equipment from different supply outfits. This makes it possible more efficiently to utilize all fueling equipment, to set up a considerably larger number of refueling stations, scattering them throughout the area where troops are resting or bivouacking. In this case there are no great shifts of refueling equipment, and vehicles can be fuelled directly at the designated stopping points. Time required to refuel combat and transport vehicles is thus sharply reduced.

The above method of refueling demands particularly careful planning in the hauling of fuel and utilization of refueling equipment during regrouping, bearing in mind the enroute troop formations, routes and movement schedules. Depending on the specific situation, it is advisable to set up refueling stations at rest and bivouac points either before or immediately after the arrival of advanced units. Therefore trucks carrying fuel and refueling equipment should either move out ahead of the others or advance with the columns of *chasti* and *podrazdeleniya*.

Under modern conditions, whereby railroads and highways can be subjected to enemy attack to a considerably greater degree than during the Great Fatherland War, particularly with nuclear weapons, the role of air transport is much more important in support operations during long-distance regrouping. Air transport can be effectively utilized to deliver supplies during abrupt changes in direction of regrouping movements, upon the destruction of supplies placed ahead of time on routes of movement, during truck delays in heavy destruction and contamination zones. Air transport can also move important support and administrative units considerable distances in a short time, support and administrative units needed to support line units moving into combat. Transport aircraft can be used on return runs to evacuate wounded from *soyedineniya* and tactical *ob'yedineniya* directly to hospitals in the rear. In view of these facts the necessity of constant development of military transport aviation is quite obvious, in order to use it more extensively in tactical combat support units and central support organizations.

Complex tasks will have to be met by road transport units of tactical *ob'yedineniya* in securing troop movements together with engineer units. The assignment of wider corridors and considerably more routes for regrouping operations will of course require more equipment and manpower for road building and maintenance. One should also bear in mind that the time required to rebuild destroyed roads should be as short as possible in order not to delay the advance of fast-moving troops. Hence there are two very important conditions which must be borne in mind when organizing troop regrouping road building and maintenance: routes of troop movement should be prepared ahead of time to the extent that this is possible and there should be available requisite supplies of repair and rebuilding materials for the fast neutralization of the results of enemy attack; a certain number of alternate routes and parallel roads

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enabling shift of traffic to be provided if maneuvering is necessary during troop movements.

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Enroute traffic detachments in our opinion should also be extensively used, detachments assigned to support troop regroupings and to move transport and supply columns. The role of such detachments in the operations zone becomes much more important under conditions of heavy destruction and contamination of communications and transport. In combination with road commandant units handling the primary and secondary roads, they make it possible to utilize the entire road system in a designated zone and thus guarantee continuous transport operations for the hauling and timely transfer of supply and administrative units.

In order to break up the regrouping operation the enemy will endeavor to direct nuclear strikes at the troop columns and create zones of heavy radioactive contamination. According to foreign military specialists these strikes are most effective when troops are crossing large water barriers, mountain passes, defiles and other narrow points en route. Therefore a particular concern of the headquarters of the regrouping troops should be organization of road commandant service along the entire route and particularly at the most crucial points. Without going into detail on this matter, we shall mention that the basis of road commandant service in the rear-echelon area can be dispatcher points for road commandant units servicing primary and secondary roads. But one should bear in mind that road commandant units, in addition to guaranteeing troop movements, should be shifted to new areas in a timely manner and prepare the roads in these areas for organizing the hauling of supplies.

Bearing these facts in mind, road commandant units should be utilized in the overall commandant service system, particularly in rear-echelon sectors and areas requiring particularly painstaking organization of troop movements. In this connection we are in full agreement with the idea expressed by Maj Gen P. Fomichev and Engr-Col V. Rudenskiy in an article entitled "Some Problems of Traffic Dispatch in Modern Warfare," that under modern conditions it is advisable to "locate road commandant podrazdeleniya chiefly at junctions and in major sectors, that is in garrisons, and extensively utilize patrols and technical control devices" (Voyennaya Mysl' [Military Thought], 1964, No 12, page 45).

During mass troop regrouping and extremely heavy road traffic it is very important to correctly plan utilization of the road system in the interests of meeting the overall needs of the tactical ob'yedineniya of the various branches of the armed forces, the different types of units and support outfits. The primary organizer in this matter should be the combined arms headquarters which, in accordance with decisions of the commander in chief, plans troop regrouping and comprehensive support. It is necessary that traffic control on the roads be unified and centralized. This can be achieved by clear assignments for the manpower and

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units, troop movement control, podrazdeleniya) and by delineation of zones (regions) where they are to be used. Nonobservance of these principles may lead to a lack of coordination in directing traffic, uneven vehicle loads on truck routes and, what is most dangerous, to the forming of "bottlenecks" and truck jam-ups. The problem of most effective utilization of roads, improved organization and traffic safety during major troop regroupings can be resolved by employment and precise following of traffic schedules approved by headquarters and smooth operations by the dispatcher service.

Success in supply operations during troop regroupings depends to a great extent on the quality of preparation of combat and transport vehicles for the march. Resolution of this task is somewhat facilitated, since modern armed forces are equipped with vehicles with a greater operating range, extended time and mileage between servicing, good terrain-negotiating capability and high cruising speeds. But nevertheless it is essential to see that the troops are constantly ready to execute extended marches without special preparations. This is dictated by the extremely limited time allotted to organizing regroupings and the high speed of such operations. Extremely important for the timely restoration and repair of damaged and out-of-commission equipment is the early stockpiling and proper spacing of supplies of ready units, assemblies and components, as well as efficient distribution of repair chasti and podrazdeleniya along the columns. Repair chasti of a tactical element, depending on the situation, should be moved out ahead of time into the planned rest areas (major bivouacs) or to probable areas where major equipment losses will be sustained. A high rate of enroute progress is promoted by well-organized technical support of the columns, effected chiefly by regular repair podrazdeleniya. In order to repair damaged equipment it is necessary to make extensive use of local repair facilities in the regrouping zone and deployed repair outfits in front of the active forces. It is well known that during major regrouping operations troops may sustain considerable personnel losses, particularly in crossing water barriers, in troop concentration areas, on mountain passes and in other vulnerable areas. Therefore in order to carry out medical-evacuation measures en route it is essential to utilize the manpower and equipment of all elements of the medical service, skillfully combining them with local medical facilities. After giving medical assistance to the sick and wounded, they should be evacuated to well-equipped field hospitals (civilian hospitals) or transferred to medical outfits ahead of operating ob'yedineniya. A decisive role in coordinating these matters is played by the medical service of the next higher command.

It is essential to take particular care in working out measures connected with medical assistance in mass destruction zones. A procedure of cooperation should be set up ahead of time between medical podrazdeleniya and other chasti brought in to counteract the results of enemy attack. It is an extremely complicated matter to transfer supply

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chasti and administrative elements should be transferred to new areas. Support chasti and administrative elements should be transferred to new areas with the thought of utilizing them in forthcoming combat operations. Therefore the grouping of support chasti and administrative units en route as well as the time required for transferring them should be closely coordinated with the operational arrangements of the regrouping forces and schedules of arrival in the new areas.

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In principle it is advisable to assign a minimum number of support chasti and administrative elements of the tactical unit for troop support during regrouping, bearing in mind that the main objective consists in timely organization of supply and support in the new area. Therefore the bulk of support chasti and administrative units of tactical ob"yedineniya should immediately be moved to operate in the new regions, moving them into these areas as rapidly as possible.

The procedure of transferring support chasti and administrative units into new areas may differ. It is important only that the integrity of the support chasti and administrative units not be disturbed and that the columns made up of these units represent a specific support grouping. Since there are very many support chasti and administrative units with varying assignments, they should apparently be moved in echelons, following up the supported troops or following specially assigned routes.

In conclusion we should like to make a few comments on directing support units during troop regrouping. In a nuclear war direction of support units constitutes a very complex and multi-faceted process. This is connected with frequent and abrupt changes in the situation, greatly extended lines of communication, changes in traffic routes and troop structure en route. One must also remember the fact that as a rule after regrouping troops will be required to engage the enemy without pause. All this gives rise to the necessity of dividing tactical support unit control entities so that support units will be under direction in the areas of initial departure, en route and in the new areas at the beginning of combat operations. Under these conditions there is much more importance attached to tactical support groups working in close contact with combined arms headquarters and capable of taking upon themselves direction of support units at any time. During the process of regrouping an important part is played by reliable communications with support columns, as well as timely formulation and specification of their assignments. Without these elements, support units cannot be properly transferred nor can they do their job of supplying regrouping forces in an organized and totally satisfactory manner.