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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

1395

15 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Airborne and Amphibious Landings

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." This article is a critique of a previous article concerned with airborne-amphibious landing operations conducted to capture islands. The authors of the critique take issue with several of the article's major premises, including the concept of conducting landing operations solely with airborne and amphibious troops. They then present their own theories about the purposes and scope of landing operations and the factors necessary for their successful implementation. This article appeared in Issue No. 1 (71) for 1964.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.

[Redacted Signature]

David H. Blee

Acting Deputy Director for Operations

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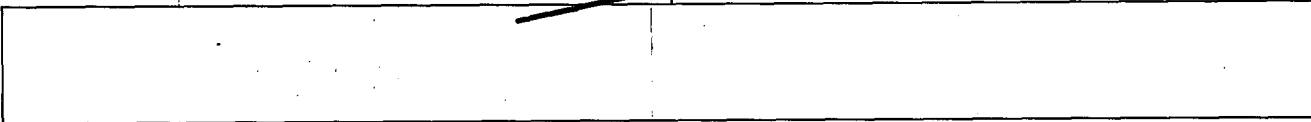
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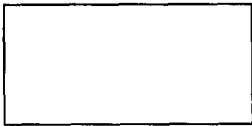
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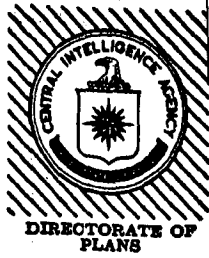
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# Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1964

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DATE 15 August 1973

## SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Airborne-Amphibious Landing Operations

SOURCE Documentary

### Summary

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (71) for 1964 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The authors of this article are Colonel I. Sutormin and Colonel A. Flaksin. This article is a critique of a previous article concerned with airborne-amphibious landing operations conducted to capture islands. The authors of the critique take issue with several of the article's major premises, including the concept of conducting landing operations solely with airborne and amphibious troops. They then present their own theories about the purposes and scope of landing operations and the factors necessary for their successful implementation.

End of Summary

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### Comment:

There is no information in available reference materials which can be firmly associated with the authors. Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past--TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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AIRBORNE-AMPHIBIOUS LANDING OPERATIONS

by  
Colonel I. Sutormin.  
Colonel A. Flaksin

The conduct of landing operations to capture islands has assumed, under modern conditions, particularly urgent significance to the maritime military districts. However, methods of carrying out landing operations have not been sufficiently developed and have not been given enough attention in the military press. For this reason the article by Colonel I. Snezhkov and Lieutenant Colonel A. Klyuyev attracted the attention of generals and officers in those districts where these matters are constantly being explored and worked out within the operational-tactical training system.\*

In our opinion, the article sets forth with sufficient consistency the role of aviation, the navy, and airborne landings in an operation; and of the use of self-propelled landing-crossing equipment and the organization of troop control. The illuminating discussion of the problems raised in the article, utilizing experience already accumulated during exercises and games, will doubtless help generals and officers at all levels of the armed forces to study in greater depth the problems involved in the conduct of modern landing operations to capture large islands.

At the same time we would like to express some of our own views. For example, we cannot agree with the assertion by the author that a landing operation to capture islands will always be part of a larger landing operation, an intermediate link.

In our opinion, one cannot exclude the possibility of conducting independent landing operations to capture islands which do not have as their objective the laying of a foundation for a landing operation against the mainland. For example, the islands in the Far Eastern Theater of Military Operations clearly constitute targets for an independent landing operation.

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\* (Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", No. 1 (68), 1963)

An operation to capture large islands, including island countries, is quite possible. It would deprive the enemy of naval and air bases located close to the mainland, eliminate his control over the straits zones, and impede his transfer of combat actions to the mainland.

Also, a landing operation against the mainland will not always include an operation to capture islands. This is because under modern conditions the enemy on the islands may be so neutralized that he can offer little organized resistance to landing operations against the mainland.

Finally, an operation to capture large islands can be an integral part of a front offensive operation on a maritime axis if the immediate transfer of the combat actions of ground forces to another mainland is envisaged.

Recently, it has frequently been asserted that the landing of a large-scale amphibious landing is not feasible, because the enemy, with nuclear weapons at his disposal, can comparatively swiftly destroy the landing force and frustrate the operation.

In our opinion, the authors of the article correctly refute this view but do not adequately substantiate their arguments. For example, they believe that the availability of high-speed landing craft with speeds of at least thirty to thirty-five knots, and the extensive use of airborne landings in the operation, are essential to the success of a landing operation.

Unquestionably, one cannot but agree with this. The use of high-speed landing craft and airborne landing forces creates favorable conditions for the conduct of a landing operation and is a large factor in its success. However, all this cannot completely eliminate the enemy ability to frustrate the operation. In our opinion, the dominant factor is the certain neutralization of the enemy by using nuclear weapons, particularly the destruction of those nuclear means he can readily use to frustrate the landing operation.

The effective neutralization of enemy nuclear means makes it possible to disembark the troops directly from the transports after the ports have been captured by airborne landing forces or

by advance detachments operating on landing craft. This method of landing troops is being increasingly used by staffs and in the operational and combat training of troops. Specifically, Minister of Defense and Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. Malinovskiy gave this method his approval in the operational (front) CPX held in the Far Eastern Military District in fall 1962.

Moreover, according to estimates made jointly with the navy, the execution of a landing operation to capture a large island, involving, let us say, a combined-arms army comprising four divisions, a rocket brigade, and other army units without support weapons, will require up to 220,000 square meters of deck space. Accordingly, it is clearly impossible to plan to conduct a landing operation by relying only on landing craft, as do the authors.

It is incomprehensible why the authors recommended that not all motorized rifle and tank divisions which take part in a landing operation have tactical rockets. In our opinion, the role played by tactical rockets increases substantially in this type of operation, most particularly during the capture of large islands, and also during combat actions conducted on them.

Tactical rocket battalions can be landed on islands and made ready to deliver nuclear strikes more quickly than army nuclear means. Therefore, if the islands are at a considerable distance from the mainland, beyond the range of army rockets, their tactical rockets will occasionally be a more advantageous means of delivering nuclear strikes against enemy targets on the islands.

The article also endeavors to prove it undesirable to extensively employ nuclear weapons against islands targeted for capture during an operation. It seems to us that this is not quite so, particularly when large islands are involved. In our opinion, the effective delivery of nuclear strikes is the one factor which is indispensable to the success of a landing operation.

This is different from the prohibition against the use of surface and low-altitude air bursts against islands which are to be captured immediately after nuclear strikes so as to avoid the creation of complex radiation conditions. In these instances, the yield of the nuclear munitions to be employed must be determined separately each time in relation to specific conditions.

In our opinion, the new name given the operation by the authors, "airborne-amphibious landing operation," is far from original. The fact of the matter is that a successful landing operation is achieved through the coordinated efforts of all branches of the armed forces and all arms of troops, with the strategic rocket troops playing a leading role. The use of operational and tactical airborne landings in any landing operation, as in a ground operation, should be considered an everyday occurrence, particularly since the airborne landing forces are a component of the ground forces.

For this reason, the use of the term "landing operation" (amphibious or airborne) is, in our opinion, completely satisfactory. It fully expresses the essence of such an operation and it is pointless to further define it or change it. The objectives and tasks of landing operations vary according to the specific conditions existing in a given theater of military operations.

\* \* \*

In their article Colonel I. Snezhkov and Lieutenant Colonel Klyuyev discuss problems of modern warfare that are extremely important and have great theoretical and practical significance. However, since not all aspects of amphibious operations have been fully covered and since a number of their opinions are controversial, we would like to express our own views and, as far as possible, supplement the presentation made by the authors.

First of all, let us take note of the fact that our armed forces acquired considerable experience in the preparation and landing of landing forces during World War II. Unfortunately, this experience has been largely forgotten and the development of the theory of preparation and landing of such forces under the conditions of nuclear warfare is not receiving proper attention, despite the fact that the use of landing forces will unquestionably be the outstanding feature of a nuclear war.

We share the view of the authors that with the emergence of new combat means a number of generals, admirals and officers have begun to doubt the feasibility of landing amphibious landing forces, especially on a large scale. They attempt to substantiate these doubts by stating that an enemy possessing nuclear, rocket, and chemical weapons will be able to quite easily destroy or crush any landing force long before it approaches its landing zone.

They then propose to accomplish the tasks of a landing operation by employing only airborne landings, instead of amphibious landings in coordination with rocket troops, aviation, and naval forces, and occasionally by limiting themselves to using only nuclear strikes.

We believe that such proposals are not merely in error but harmful. Nevertheless, the article does not demonstrate the bankruptcy of these proposals and does not adequately convey the objective necessity of employing amphibious and airborne landings in a future war, especially when conducting front operations on maritime axes.

The existence in almost all theaters of military operations of numerous islands, straits zones, ports, naval bases, and other targets of military and economic importance inexorably leads to combat actions by the opposing sides for the purpose of capturing and holding them.

The battle for islands and straits used by the enemy for basing his naval forces and organizing his anti-submarine lines will take on especially great significance.

One can agree with the authors that it is advisable to employ toxic and radioactive substances and occasionally to deliver nuclear strikes against targets which need not be captured in order to prevent the enemy from using them for his own purposes.

At the same time there will be islands and island areas which must be captured and held, and it will be necessary to land amphibious and airborne landing forces on them. Landing forces will also be required for reconnaissance, to destroy enemy means of nuclear attack, and to perform other tasks in the enemy rear area.

Consequently, amphibious and airborne landings will be extensively employed in a nuclear war. As regards the possibility of replacing amphibious landings with airborne landings, this obviously will take place in a number of cases. Each time it will be necessary to evaluate the specific existing conditions, as well as the strong and weak points of airborne and amphibious landings.

Airborne landings unquestionably have a number of advantages. However, because their load-carrying capacity is inadequate, aircraft



and helicopters are not yet able to accommodate medium and heavy tanks, rocket launchers, and artillery of 100 mm and greater. Consequently, an airborne landing force is less capable of engaging in prolonged combat (actions) against a well-armed enemy and therefore, requires greater support from rocket troops and aviation. In addition, in air-landing a landing force, the success of its actions depends on the presence in the landing area of serviceable airfields which must be seized by parachute subunits.

An amphibious landing force, on the other hand, which has at its disposal all the necessary types of armament and combat equipment, has greater combat effectiveness; and not only can it successfully capture targets and engage in prolonged combat (actions) with the enemy, but it can also launch an all-out offensive on the shore after landing. A large-scale airborne landing requires an enormous number of transport aircraft, which are needed not only to transport the airborne landing forces in offensive operations of the ground forces but also to bring up materiel supplies, to evacuate the wounded, etc. Therefore, it is feasible to talk of substituting a small amphibious landing force with an airborne landing force for the solution of certain tasks. Both amphibious and airborne landings must be employed in a landing operation.

Unquestionably, landing forces may suffer substantial losses when nuclear weapons are employed against them. In order to prevent this, it is necessary:

- to skilfully and effectively employ new combat means to support amphibious landing forces;
- to promptly locate and destroy enemy nuclear and chemical means;
- to conduct amphibious landings on a broad front;
- to provide reliable antiaircraft defense for the landing force during embarkation, while at sea, and during debarkation;
- to have the landing forces deployed in dispersed (anti-nuclear) order and battle formations.

By increasing the distance between the transports of an amphibious force up to twenty cable lengths, losses from nuclear strikes can be substantially reduced.

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It is also desirable that special high-speed landing craft be small in size. When landing craft are used that carry four or five medium tanks each, or the same number of guns with prime movers, and they employ anti-nuclear formations, the losses inflicted by medium and small yield nuclear munitions are decreased by a factor of five to eight in comparison with shipments in which large transports are used. To sink a division, which requires up to two hundred landing craft to transport it, the enemy must expend up to two hundred small caliber nuclear munitions and sixty to eighty medium and large caliber nuclear munitions.

Because they have shallow drafts, these craft are able to embark and disembark an amphibious landing force in shallow waters and on unprepared sectors of the beach. Since they are quite fast and stable (seaworthy), they can maneuver freely and arrive at the designated areas by surprise. As a result, unnecessary losses from enemy nuclear strikes are eliminated and the combat capabilities of the landing force are increased.

In our opinion, the authors do not have adequate grounds for calling a landing operation "airborne-amphibious." The fact of the matter is that it is intended that such an operation will be conducted with the close coordination of the efforts of all the branches of the armed forces. Strikes by strategic rocket troops and long-range aviation, plus a strong anti-air defense, are indispensable to its success. Airborne landing, motorized rifle, and tank large units, as well as naval infantry and air transport units, will comprise the landing force. It is therefore preferable to call this type of operation a "landing operation."

An objection must also be made to the assertion by the authors that a landing operation to capture islands is not an end in itself but a part of a larger landing operation or an intermediate link to it. The validity of this assertion depends on the objective of the operation, the size of the island to be captured, its economic and military importance, the strength of its defenses, etc. For example, a landing operation that follows massive nuclear strikes on large, strategically important islands may have the objective of completing the destruction of the enemy and of capturing island territory. This would be an independent operation; it is also possible to have an independent landing operation to capture an extensive island area containing a large number of islands. In the latter case the capture of individual islands or groups of islands would constitute an intermediate phase of an operation.

A landing operation may form a part of a front offensive operation conducted on a maritime axis. The authors propose that the front (army) troop commander be given command of the landing operation. We believe that this is definitely not appropriate in all cases. As we have already mentioned, a landing operation to capture large islands requires the participation of all branches of the armed forces. Strategic rocket troops and long-range aviation have a decisive role in the destruction of enemy nuclear, ground, air, and naval groupings. Consequently the preparation and conduct of such an operation will be under the direct control of the Supreme High Command.

If a landing operation is part of a front offensive operation, it will be conducted by front and naval forces with the participation of the Air Defense Troops of the Country, long-range aviation, and occasionally the strategic rocket troops. In this case it is advisable that the troop commander of the maritime front be given command over all forces. In our opinion, for direct command over landing forces, it is necessary to create (make available) a corps or even an army control element. It is desirable that such control be specially prepared in each maritime military district even now in peacetime.

Without doubt, landing operations are intended to follow on massive nuclear strikes, inflicted primarily by strategic rocket troops. They will have the deciding role in the destruction of enemy nuclear, ground, air, and naval groupings on large islands. In operations to capture small islands, straits zones, coastal areas, and other important targets, the destruction of enemy groupings will for the most part be accomplished by nuclear strikes of front and naval means.