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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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8 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Commitment of a
Combined Arms Army to Combat from the March

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 draws on Carpathian Military District exercises to describe the actions of a combined-arms army preliminary to its commitment to battle after a march. The significance of the employment, or potential employment, of nuclear and chemical weapons to both the march and initial combat operations are stressed. The phasing of halts and fuel management are important aspects of the author's exposition. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970.

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.

William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Page 2



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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Commitment of a Combined Arms Army to an Engagement from the March (From the experience of command-staff exercises and war games in the Carpathian Military District)

SOURCE Documentary
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel I. Magerya. This article draws on Carpathian Military District exercises to describe the actions of a combined-arms army preliminary to its commitment to battle after a march. The significance of the employment, or potential employment, of nuclear and chemical weapons to both the march and initial combat operations are stressed. The phasing of halts and fuel management are important aspects of the author's exposition.

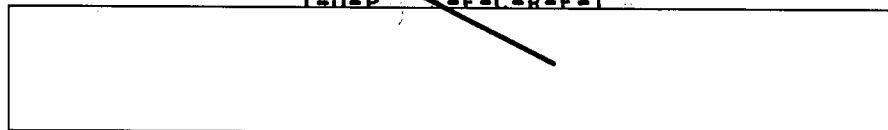
End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:

Col. Magerya was identified in an an article about the requirements and nature of a staff officer, (Voyenny Vestnik, No. 9, 1971). 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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The Commitment of a Combined Arms Army to
an Engagement from the March
(From the experience of command-staff exercises and war
games in the Carpathian Military District)

by

Colonel I. Magerya

Despite the difficulties of organizing it, the commitment to an engagement of a large troop grouping from the march will be widely used in a future war, because it is most responsive to the highly maneuverable nature of operations, it assures secure preparation and surprise in the delivery of a strike by fresh troops, and it also helps reduce troop losses from possible enemy nuclear strikes. The purpose of this article is to examine, by using as examples the front and army command-staff exercises and war games conducted in the Transcarpathian Military District in 1969, the possible conditions and methods of committing a combined-arms army to an engagement from the march, as well as to show ways of resolving individual problems of these types of army operations applicable to all conditions.

The experience of exercises has demonstrated that the most typical conditions of a situation in which an army can be committed to an engagement from the march are the following.

First of all, an army can be committed to an engagement under conditions wherein the enemy, having suffered heavy losses in a previous engagement, is conducting delaying actions, while at the same time concentrating his reserves in his depth. The timely commitment to an engagement of an army under such conditions will allow us to quickly and decisively defeat the opposing enemy grouping, to forestall his counterstrikes, and to launch a swift offensive in depth.

Page 4



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The commitment of an army to an engagement is possible in a situation in which the enemy is trying to go over to the defensive on a favorable line and to stop the advance of our troops. Under these conditions, the army which is being committed to the engagement is capable of breaking up an organized attempt by the enemy to go over to the defensive, to destroy his reserves, and to continue the offensive.

An army can also be committed to an engagement from the march under conditions in which the enemy, having prevented our troops from bringing up reserves from the depth and having achieved a superiority in forces and means along individual axes, is pressing home the attack and applying pressure against the troops of our operational echelon. In this case, the army, being able to organize an attack under conditions more favorable than those of the enemy who is engaged in combat, has the opportunity to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy in a meeting engagement.

Besides that, an army may be committed to an engagement for the purpose of starting an offensive along a new axis which has developed as a result of an abrupt change in the situation.

The commitment of an army to an engagement may be accomplished by various methods. In the non-nuclear period of a war, the most advisable method of committing an army to an engagement is when the majority of the large units of its first echelon are moving out and deploying from the march. In this way, the maximum power of the initial strike will be achieved.

y || In a nuclear war the buildup of strike forces is assured mainly through the use of nuclear and chemical weapons. Under these conditions not only is it possible to have simultaneous commitment of the army large units to the engagement, but also successive commitment as they approach the engagement area. The advisability of this method is dictated by the necessity of maintaining the pace of the offensive and of making maximum use of the results of a nuclear strike by the operational-tactical means and by aviation. This method is also more acceptable because the army troops dispersed along the front and the depth are less vulnerable to the threat of being hit by enemy nuclear weapons.

Page 5

~~T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T~~

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Depending on the distance from the enemy that the last daytime halt (concentration) of the army troops took place, the commitment of the army to the engagement from the march can be carried out with a short halt to refuel the combat equipment and to clarify troop tasks, or it can be carried out without any halt at all. If the area of the last halt by the troops is less than 100 kilometers from the line of commitment, the refueling halt is not made, because the march reserve of the combat equipment is sufficient to complete the advance and to conduct actions during the first day. For example, in the Pereval command-staff exercise, the halt area for the second echelon of the combined-arms army was designated at a distance of 80 to 100 kilometers from the line of commitment, and its commitment to the engagement was planned without a halt for refueling the combat equipment.

However, when conditions are such that the last halt area has to be located at a greater distance from the line of commitment, a refueling area must be designated for the troops, and time provided for this. It is advisable to designate areas for equipment-refueling as close as possible to the line of commitment but beyond the range of the tactical means of enemy nuclear attack. Based on the range of modern tactical nuclear means, these areas should be 40 to 60 kilometers from the front line.

Calculations and the experience gained from exercises prove that when an army moves 130 to 150 kilometers the troops use up no more than one fueling of diesel fuel and up to half of a fueling of motor vehicle fuel. This amount of fuel is carried by regimental and divisional transport. Therefore, the refueling of equipment can be limited to the use of regimental and divisional transport and refueling means. But if these supplies are kept in the rear services columns of regiments and divisions, the refueling of divisional equipment will take 5 to 6 hours. To reduce the refueling time, it is advisable during the march to have the regimental and divisional refueling means in the battalion columns, and to make use of barrels placed on tanks and cans with fuel. Then refueling will take no more than 3 hours, thus avoiding the disruption of the organized movement of troops towards the line of commitment.

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Exercises confirm the advisability of the aforementioned distances from the line of commitment for refueling areas and for a brief halt for the troops, not only for refueling purposes but also to take advantage of the halt to enable the rocket troops and artillery to move out and deploy in their siting areas, to conduct the final reconnaissance of the enemy, and to make a detailed review of the plan and the tasks assigned to the troops.

A well-organized advance and the timely deployment and commitment to an engagement of an army from the march are assured by designating for the first-echelon large units their line of departure and their phase and deployment lines, and by establishing the time these lines are to be crossed. It has been confirmed by exercises that the line of departure must be at a distance from the forward perimeter of the area of concentration (the last daytime halt) which would allow phasing the columns for the march. This requirement is met by using a distance of 8 to 10 kilometers, which equals the depth of the lead column and the distances between the battalion columns. These norms can also be followed when designating the phase line near the forward perimeter of the refueling area. The other phase lines, as is the case with short halts, are established at 2 to 3 hour intervals of movement.

Distances of deployment and attack lines in an offensive undertaken from the march can be the same as in an offensive by troops moving out from waiting areas. Depending on the nature of the terrain, the line of deployment for battalion columns was usually set at a distance of 8 to 12 kilometers and the line of deployment for company columns at a distance of 4 to 6 kilometers from the enemy FEBA. This assured that the troops moving out in company columns would be out of range of the fire of antitank guided missiles, and the direct fire of artillery guns and tanks; and it also assured that battalion columns would be out of range of most indirect artillery fire. As a rule, the attack lines (commitment to battle) were designated as close as possible to the enemy FEBA, using natural cover in order to protect the troops from enemy observation and the direct fire of enemy artillery.

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Because of significant changes in the situation during the forward movement of the troops, not one, but two lines of commitment, 10 to 20 kilometers apart, were designated for the army (division) in the exercises.

As indicated by the exercises and by calculations, the time available for organizing the commitment of an army to an engagement from the march will be extremely limited. Therefore, the highest degree of efficiency will be required in the work of the formation commander and his staff.

To achieve this level of efficiency, we have used various methods of work connected with organizing the commitment of an army to an engagement. In particular, during the command-staff exercises, we first worked out only such important problems as the selection of the main strike axis and the breakthrough sectors of enemy defenses, the creation of a troop grouping, the assignment of its missions for the first day of the operation, and the sequence of moving out and deploying from the march. After this, the army commander's plan and the troop tasks were carefully reviewed and refined.

Under the conditions, the army staff was especially concerned with the timely collection of information on the situation needed to draw up a plan; and, later, it was concerned with collecting more information while the troops were moving out in order to refine the plan and the troop tasks. Therefore, in addition to the information for the front staff, provisions were made to receive data on the enemy, on the disposition and actions of our troops, and on the nature of the terrain (primarily roads and water crossings); this information was supplied by troops in the very front and was sent via the forward command post and the group of officers dispatched to the headquarters of the army (or division) operating in the zone to which the army is to be committed. Upon receipt of the task for commitment to the engagement, the army means of radio, radiotechnical, and special reconnaissance moved out and deployed near the line of commitment.*

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", 1970, No. 1 (89)

Page 8

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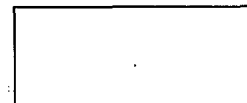
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The exercises demonstrated that the determining factor in drawing up the plan for committing an army to an engagement at the beginning of a non-nuclear war was the constant awareness of the possibility that, at any moment, the enemy might use nuclear weapons. Therefore, the plan included a variant of combat actions in which nuclear weapons were used. At the same time, provision was made for the commitment to an engagement in which only conventional means of destruction were employed. The plan specified the objectives to be destroyed by nuclear and chemical weapons and the tasks for rocket troops and aviation in the use of these weapons. At the same time, problems of fire support using conventional means of destruction were carefully worked out. The axis of the main strike, the zones for the offensive by the divisions, and the breakthrough sectors were selected to correspond, first of all, to the conditions of combat actions in which nuclear weapons are used; and they were also selected to meet the requirements of combat actions in which only conventional means of destruction are used.

The basic method of work of the army commander and his staff in working out the plan and informing its executors of their tasks was, as a rule, for the staff departments to work in parallel with the chiefs of the arms of troops and subordinate staffs. The commander, using a map, adopted his plan in the presence of his chief of staff, and the chiefs of the operations department and of intelligence and the chiefs of the arms of troops, who assisted him with their calculations and suggestions. The officers of the planning group of the operations department took notes on the plan and plotted it on the maps.

As the plan was being formulated, tasks were assigned to the troops. For the purpose of assigning tasks, the division axis officers, as a rule, prepared brief combat instructions according to the map on which the commander's plan had been formulated. With the concept of the plan as their basis, the chiefs of the arms of troops and rear services determined the order of the combat use of subordinate units and issued them their tasks. In formulating the plan and working out the instructions for the troops, use was made of previously prepared calculations, map overlays, and formalized documents, all of which greatly expedited the work of the staff officers.



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To hasten the delivery of tasks to the troops, use was made of all available communications lines, radiorelay communications, and mobile means of communications (primarily helicopters). As a rule, the use of radio communications was restricted for security reasons, but in a number of cases some radio means were used to transmit urgent instructions. Commanders and staffs of large units and units under the army command worked in parallel with army headquarters. As information and combat instructions were received from army headquarters, they studied the situation and organized the offensive. At the same time, they maintained control over the troops moving out.

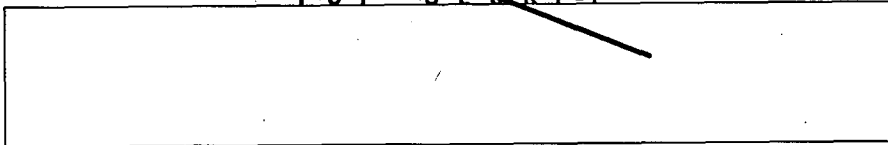

The parallel method of work by the staffs and the extensive use of previously prepared calculations and formalized documents have fully demonstrated their value during the exercises and showed a 30 to 40 percent reduction in time spent in formalizing the plan and assigning tasks to the troops. As a rule, it took no more than 3 to 4 hours to adopt the plan and to work out the combat instructions, and 1 to 2 hours to transmit them to subordinate troops.

To formalize the commander's plan and to plan the operation (in parallel with the assigning of tasks and the work of subordinate staffs) took 6 to 8 hours. At least 6 to 8 hours were required for the commanders of divisions, regiments and battalions (batalon - divizion) to organize the commitment of subordinate troops to battle and to dispatch (retarget) reconnaissance groups, forward detachments, advance guards and movement security detachments.

The aforementioned indicates that the amount of time spent at all levels of army control to organize the commitment of an army to an engagement from the march was 9 to 12 hours, i.e., the basic measures were implemented during a one-day halt. Thus, exercises and calculations confirm the possibility of organizing the commitment of an army to an engagement from the march within 18 to 23 hours after the assignment of its tasks, i.e., within a 24-hour period.

The attacking troop grouping was created while moving out, in accordance with the concept of the army commander.

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The troops of the army first echelon moved out from their last daytime halt area in march formation, in strict adherence to the concept for commitment to an engagement. Division and regiment reconnaissance groups moved out ahead and on the flanks. Movement security detachments and advance guards of the lead regiments usually followed behind reconnaissance elements along each route of march.

If, during the period of regrouping, the artillery and mortar units proceeded along independent routes, organized as artillery large units, then on the penultimate or the last daytime halt area, they would be included in the columns of those combined-arms large units to which they were to become subordinate in accordance with the plan.

If necessary (especially in case of an unstable situation in front of the operating large units), it was planned to dispatch forward detachments, formed in battalion to regimental size along the important axes, to seize lines and areas favorable for committing troops to an engagement and to hold them until the arrival of the main forces.

Rocket troops, artillery units and subunits, and air defense means moved out behind the advance guard. By not stopping in the refueling areas, they reached their siting areas 3 to 4 hours prior to the commitment of troops to the engagement. Behind the rocket troops and artillery came the motorized rifle and tank regiments designated to attack from the march in the first echelons of the divisions, and units and subunits of special troops; then came the first echelons of the rear services of the divisions and the regiments of the second echelons, followed by the second echelons of the rear services of the divisions and by the rear services units of the army.

The antitank reserves of the divisions also moved out along the threatened axis between the advance guard and the main forces of the divisions. The army antitank reserves usually proceeded along the army route or within the columns of the first-echelon large units ready to support their deployment and to prevent a breakthrough by enemy tanks into the depth of the operational disposition of the army. A division of the second echelon started to move out after the troops of the first echelon went over to the offensive. In some cases it can move within one or two days' march behind the first echelon of the army.

Page 11



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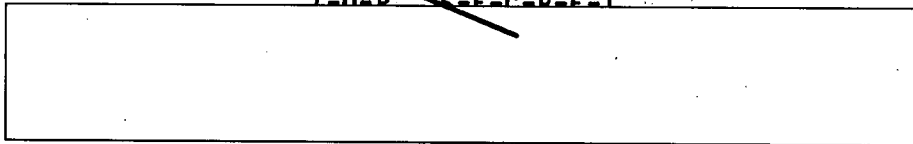
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In our opinion, the most favorable time for committing an army to an engagement from the march is in the morning, because in this case the approach to the enemy and the deployment of troops will be carried out in the dark period of the day; and this will contribute to the concealment of the movement and to the element of surprise in the offensive. In command-staff exercises, the starting time for the commitment of an army to an engagement was calculated to allow 2 to 3 hours of daylight prior to it to permit final reconaissance of the enemy and to allow tasks to be refined for rocket troops and artillery. Large units in direct contact with the enemy, by conducting aggressive actions, must seize the lines of commitment of army troops to the engagement and hold them firmly or develop an offensive to provide favorable conditions for the approaching army large units.

It is advisable to start the preparatory fire for the commitment as the regiments of the first echelon approach the line for the deployment of troops into battalion columns, so that the deployment can be carried out after the delivery of a nuclear strike against the enemy and under the cover of artillery fire and air strikes. Its duration in this case would be 35 to 45 minutes. The duration and intensity of preparatory fire depend on the nature of enemy defenses and on the availability of artillery and ammunition in the army.

Under favorable conditions, when enemy nuclear means of attack and his artillery grouping are hit by nuclear weapons and are considerably weakened, the duration of preparatory fire (raid) may be reduced to 10 to 15 minutes. In such cases it is advisable to start the preparatory fire as the troops approach the effective fire zone of antitank means, i.e., a distance of up to 3 kilometers from the enemy.

During the non-nuclear period of a war, the rocket troops must be constantly ready to deliver nuclear strikes. In a nuclear war they and aviation will deliver nuclear and chemical strikes against objectives previously selected and then pinpointed by final reconaissance.



Final reconnaissance of the enemy immediately before the commitment of an army to an engagement is especially important for accurate planning and for the effective delivery of nuclear strikes, as well as for preparatory fire. If time is limited, the forces and means of the army will not be able to fulfill all of their reconnaissance tasks. Therefore, aerial reconnaissance becomes the basic means of obtaining timely reconnaissance information.


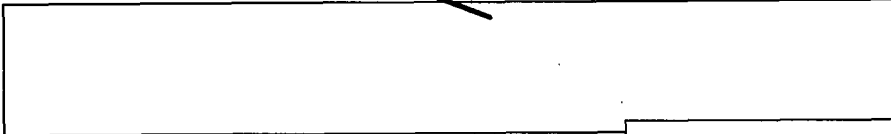
The experience of exercises has demonstrated that it is advisable to conduct reconnaissance with the objective of receiving precise reconnaissance information 1 to 2 hours prior to the delivery of nuclear strikes and the beginning of preparatory fire. This will make it possible to pinpoint the objectives to be destroyed by nuclear weapons and to define clearly the tasks of preparatory fire.

The sequence for the direct commitment of the large units of an army to an engagement depends on the situation that has developed. In some cases, the forward detachments of the large units of the army first echelon (if they are being sent out) and the advance guards can seize the lines of commitment and hold them until the approach of the main forces of their divisions. Under favorable conditions, without waiting for the complete deployment of rocket troops and artillery or for the approach of the main forces of the divisions, they will go over to the offensive, thereby creating more favorable conditions for the commitment of the main forces from the march in approach march formations or in columns.

In cases when the large units operating in front are firmly holding the lines designated for the commitment of the army to the engagement, the advance guards, in order to conceal the approach by the divisions to the front line, can halt at the line where they are supposed to deploy into battalion columns before the approach of the main forces of the divisions, and then move out with them to their own line of commitment.

At the designated time (Ch), or as the divisions are getting ready, the troops of the first echelon must go over to the offensive.





Based on the experience gained from exercises, the control of troops, while they are moving forward and deploying for their commitment to the engagement from the march, was effected according to the principle of "every man for himself", because in this way more favorable conditions were created for quickly collecting information on the situation and for precisely defining the tasks for the troops moving out. With this purpose in mind, provisions were made to set up, even in the area of the last daytime halt, a forward command post headed by the first deputy commander at a distance of 10 to 20 kilometers from the line of commitment of the large units to the engagement. This permitted the army forward command post, located beyond the range of enemy artillery fire, to maintain reliable communications with the large units operating ahead, with the army reconnaissance means, and subsequently, with the forward detachments and advance guards of the divisions of the army first echelon. The existence of reliable communications between the command post and the forward command post made it possible to provide the command post with the information on the situation needed by the army commander to draw up his plan.

After drawing up his plan and assigning the troops their combat tasks, the army commander, together with the chiefs of the main headquarters departments and the chiefs of the arms of troops, moved from the army concentration area to the forward command post.

Depending on the situation, the army command post moved simultaneously with the main forces, or it remained in the area of concentration to control the troops moving out until the army commander arrived at the forward command post. After that, it moved to an area 40 to 60 kilometers from the front line, beyond the range of enemy tactical nuclear means.

The forward command posts of the divisions of the first echelon, headed by the deputy commanders of the divisions, moved out to the line of commitment to the engagement simultaneously with the army forward command post or following it. Their deployment was carried out in concealment at a distance of 3 to 5 kilometers from the front line, as a rule, beyond the range of enemy artillery and tanks prepared to conduct direct fire. The division commanders moved from the area of concentration to their

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forward command posts immediately after their plans were formulated on the map and the units were assigned their tasks, which was usually done before the troops began to move out.

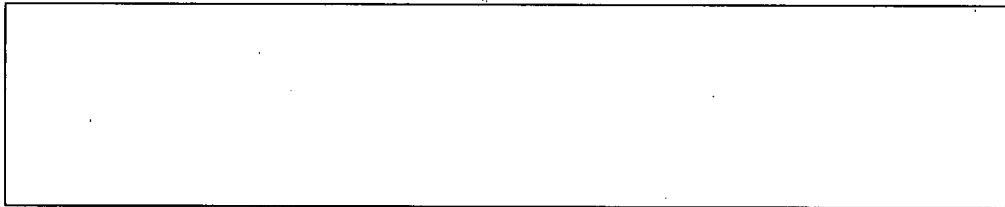
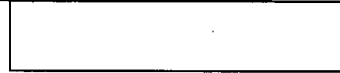
Under these conditions the division command posts moved simultaneously with the first-echelon regiments, deploying in sequence in the refueling areas and near the line of commitment to the engagement. The deployment of the forward command posts of the army and the divisions, and then the work of the commanders of large units and units in refining their plans and tasks for the troops, were carried out under the cover of the troops, forward detachments, and advance guards of the divisions of the first echelon operating ahead of them.

Speaking of the means of army control, it should be pointed out that the radio sets now in use by the troops have inadequate operating ranges, are not suitable for use during a move, and have poor anti-jamming capabilities; and with only one helicopter squadron available in the army (and none in the divisions), the requirements for this type of communication are not filled.

Considerable attention was given by the staffs to the commandant service and to traffic control, which are extremely important under the conditions of committing troops to an engagement from the march and which are very difficult to organize. It was learned from exercises that the organic commandant service units and subunits for traffic control are inadequate to perform these functions under these conditions. Therefore, motorized rifle subunits from the regiments of the second echelons were provided for this purpose, up to one motorized rifle battalion for one or two routes of march. Commandant battalions were used to perform commandant service functions along the army routes of march and in difficult sections of other routes.

Those are some of the conclusions arrived at as a result of the command-staff exercises and war games conducted for the purpose of working out the problems of organizing the commitment of a combined-arms army to an engagement from the march.

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Page 16



T-O-P ~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

