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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

6 May 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Concentration of
Troop Efforts in a Front Offensive Operation

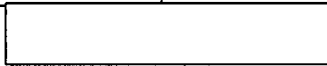
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article examines certain features of the concentration of troop efforts in a conventional front operation in the mountain-desert environment of the Turkestan Military District. Consideration is given to the complexities of planning, preparing and conducting such operations, while maintaining readiness for nuclear actions, with emphasis on the need to form smaller, more maneuverable attack groupings and provide additional rear services and engineer support. The author examines the employment of rocket troops and artillery, aviation, airborne landing forces and airmobile units in this terrain, as well as the peculiar problems of committing second echelons and reserves to maintain a continuous buildup of efforts and shifting efforts to a new axis to deal with the developing situation. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (85) for 1968.

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. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Concentration of Troop Efforts in a Front Offensive Operation

SOURCE Documentary Summary:

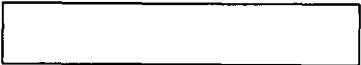
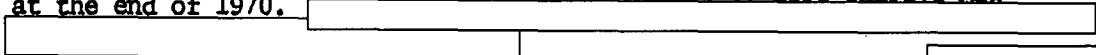
The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (85) for 1968 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is General-Leytenant N. Lazebnikov. This article examines certain features of the concentration of troop efforts in a conventional front operation in the mountain-desert environment of the Turkestan Military District. Consideration is given to the complexities of planning, preparing and conducting such operations, while maintaining readiness for nuclear actions, with emphasis on the need to form smaller, more maneuverable attack groupings and provide additional rear services and engineer support. The author examines the employment of rocket troops and artillery, aviation, airborne landing forces and airmobile units in this terrain, as well as the peculiar problems of committing second echelons and reserves to maintain a continuous buildup of efforts and shifting efforts to a new axis to deal with the developing situation.

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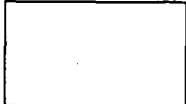


Comment:

General-Leytenant Nikolay Selivertovich Lazebnikov was relieved as Chief of Staff of the Turkestan Military District in 1968. In 1973 he was identified in Pravda as being in the Moscow area. The SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.



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Concentration of Troop Efforts in a Front Offensive Operation
by
General-Leytenant N. Lazebnikov

X The concentration of troop efforts on the axis of the main attack in an operation conducted employing only conventional means of destruction has not lost its importance even under present-day conditions. However, its make-up, scale and methods of implementation have changed immensely.

The presence in the hands of the belligerents of nuclear weapons which may be employed at any moment makes it necessary to disperse large masses of troops along the front and through the depth. Accordingly, the required concentration of efforts of the troops of a front in the initial offensive operation will be carried out primarily by drawing upon available forces and means, but the possibilities for doing this are extremely limited. But, to deliver an attack against the enemy using only conventional means of destruction it is necessary to create a strong, compact grouping in order to have adequate superiority over the enemy in the breakthrough sectors.

These opposing and at the same time interrelated tendencies must be taken into account when planning an operation. Such conditions demand great skill on the part of the commander in knowing how to concentrate the main efforts of the troops on the decisive axis without subjecting them to the danger of being destroyed by nuclear weapons.

X In this article we would like to examine certain features of the concentration of troop efforts in a front offensive operation conducted employing conventional means of destruction under conditions of constant threat of enemy employment of nuclear weapons, and taking into consideration the specific features of the preparation and conduct of operations mainly in a mountainous-desert theater of military operations.

X First of all, let us note that the procedure for concentrating the troop efforts and forming attack groupings in a front offensive operation will depend to a great extent on the way the war is unleashed by the enemy, and on the general situation in the theater of military operations.

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In case of timely discovery of the enemy's aggressive intentions, the front troops can move out to their areas of operational assignment beforehand (under the pretense of conducting exercises) and occupy waiting areas 40 to 60 kilometers from the state border in order to go over to the offensive. This will allow the groupings to be situated in dispersed locations, the protective features of the terrain to be better exploited, the troops to be preserved in the face of possible nuclear strikes by tactical means, enemy reconnaissance to be hindered, and by the same token will allow the axis of the main attack to be concealed. In addition, it will become possible to plan the combat actions in greater detail or to refine the previously developed plan of the operation, and to create conditions for decisive concentration of the main efforts of the troops at the necessary moment.

If, however, war is unleashed suddenly it will be necessary for the troops to move from the areas of permanent deployment directly to their axes of operations, or, if necessary, to move out for a short period of time to the concentration area on the basis of a combat alert. In this case, the attack groupings, as a rule, will be formed while the troops are moving forward toward the state border in accordance with a previously developed plan. Combat tasks, routes of advance, possible deployment lines, the axis of the offensive, and other matters will have to be refined on the march.

An analysis of the nature and conditions of the deployment of troops in peacetime, as well as the experience of exercises, indicate that under present conditions the latter method of forming attack groupings for an offensive is very complex, yet at the same time the most probable, and in a specific type of situation the only feasible one; its advantage lies in the fact that it ensures concealment and surprise of actions.

From what has been said it is logical that a successful solution to the problem of concentration of efforts depends directly on whether or not the disposition of the border military district troops corresponds with their operational assignment, on their proximity to the axes of the forthcoming military operations, on whether reserves of materiel and equipment have been established and on whether concealed control posts have been prepared. Early and detailed study by the troops of terrain conditions, the routes of advance, possible missile siting areas and fire positions, field airfields, and areas for the accommodation of depots and control posts, is of great importance as well.

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It is necessary also to determine beforehand the areas of concentration of troops arriving from the interior of the country by decision of the General Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, and provide for their all-round support. These areas must be reconnoitered and studied by the command personnel of the large units designated for actions on these axes.

Of course, all these matters must be resolved with the probable actions of the enemy taken into account. Only if his intentions are revealed in a timely manner can the axes for the concentration of the efforts of the front troops in the forthcoming operation be correctly determined, and strikes planned in advance against the targets upon whose destruction the success of the offensive operation will depend.

During the preparation and conduct of an offensive operation, the procedure and degree of concentration of efforts of the front troops are influenced a great deal by the unique specific features of the mountainous-desert theater of military operations. Thus, the limited road network, the presence on the roads of a large number of man-made, easily demolished structures, the difficulties of cross-country movement, and also the contrasts in climatic conditions considerably complicate the possibilities for concentrating large troop groupings.

In such cases, on the axis of the main attack, depending on the presence of negotiable passages, not one but several groupings can be formed. Each one of these, if possible, must be autonomous in all respects, at least at the time these passages are negotiated.

The limited capacities of the axes suitable for operations quite often do not allow, and in some cases completely preclude, concentrating troops on the scale of an army corps, let alone of an army, and make it necessary to form the army and front forces and means into independent groupings on each axis the size of a large unit or several units. The experience of exercises shows that under such conditions the concentration of troops on each axis before mountain masses are negotiated, is most often implemented on the scale of a division, but in individual instances -- on the scale of a regiment or even a battalion.

For example, in a war game conducted in our Red Banner Turkestan Military District in 1966, an army corps made up of three divisions was advancing on one of the operational axes. It utilized four mountain passes, each with a capacity ranging from regiment to division. In these passes the troops, prior to moving out into the negotiable area (a depth of

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50 to 150 kilometers), were operating independently because the mountain range precluded the possibility of maneuvering along the front, while the distances of 100 kilometers or more between the passes did not allow the army and the front fire means (with the exception of the aviation and the missile large units) to support the actions of the troops.

In spite of this, the groupings being formed were concentrating their efforts on the accessible sectors of the terrain and were achieving adequate superiority over the enemy: in tanks -- two to one, and in infantry, artillery and aviation -- one and one-half to one. Such superiority was being established by way of a concealed and dispersed (by individual units) movement forward of the troops toward the breakthrough sectors, and their all-round support. In so doing, special attention was given to the matters of camouflage and air defense. This ensured the successful fulfilment of the combat task.

The features of a mountainous-desert area also affect the organization of a troop concentration from the standpoint that its implementation will require a considerably longer time than under ordinary conditions. In connection with this, when planning the operation, the commander and staff must display exceptionally high efficiency in assigning tasks, organizing reliable control and precise cooperation, and the troops must possess a high degree of combat readiness, maneuverability and training to operate under adverse natural and climatic conditions. When concentrating the large number of troops that a front has, under conditions of a limited road network, it is necessary to have especially thorough planning and implementation of measures for protection of troops against weapons of mass destruction, for engineer support, camouflage, reliable air defense, and for the setting up of provost and traffic control service and road control service along the troop movement routes and in the concentration areas.

Particularly, when determining routes for moving troops forward, it is necessary to specify and prepare alternate routes in addition to the main ones, and if there is no such possibility, then the main grouping must have considerable engineer forces and means to restore sectors of road which have been destroyed.

In passing, let us point out that in providing all-round support for the concentration of efforts of front troops in a mountainous-desert theater of military operations, consideration should be given to the poor economic development of a certain part of the theater of military operations, and the lack of industrial enterprises. This increases the need for organic means for repairing armored and motor transport equipment.

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Limited local food supply resources make it necessary to have reserves of materiel with the troops and sometimes also water in excess of the prescribed norms, thus increasing the burden on the rear services and reducing the maneuverability of large units and units. Because of the unfavorable sanitary-epidemic state of certain areas of the theater of military operations which are beyond our border, it is necessary to have a number of additional specialized medical facilities.

Such are some of the general questions of the concentration of efforts of the main groupings of the front troops. Let us now examine in somewhat greater detail what in our opinion are some of the most important principles concerning the participation of the various branch arms, branches of the armed forces, and special troops in the concentration of efforts. Let us start with the rocket troops. The employment of large units and units of operational-tactical missiles should be planned in a centralized manner in the front and armies, to the same extent and just as carefully as in an operation employing means of mass destruction. It is desirable to assign siting areas in such a way that the missile large units can cooperate with each other, at least at maximum launching ranges. The rocket troops of the front and armies must remain in a state of constant readiness to deliver nuclear strikes against the enemy.

It is necessary, on the other hand, to move the missile means of the divisions and the artillery of the front and armies forward to the axes of the troop actions behind the forward units or even the covering units so that they will have time to prepare themselves and to ensure the neutralization of the enemy in the sectors of the offensive of the large units and units. In so doing, the artillery grouping, if possible, should not be changed until the mountain range or pass has been negotiated. For this it is desirable that large units of the first echelon be reinforced by front and army artillery, leaving part of it directly subordinate to the commander of the army or the commander of the army corps. This will considerably facilitate artillery support in decisive periods of an operation or battle.

Having part of the artillery subordinate to the army commander or the commander of the army corps gives him the opportunity to actively influence the course of combat actions while the troops are negotiating the mountain passes on the axis of the main attack, and also after the troops have reached negotiable terrain, and especially when supporting the commitment to battle of the second echelon or the reserve, and when repelling a counterthrust and strong counterattacks by the enemy.

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When breaking through an enemy defense to destroy installations and targets, up to 90 guns and mortars may be required per kilometer of the front. Divisions of the existing organization, particularly those designated for operations in the southern theaters of military operations, will not be able to establish such densities unless adequately reinforced. Therefore, in our opinion, it is desirable at the beginning of the operation to employ the bulk of the front artillery in support of one of the army corps (correspondingly, army artillery in support of one of the divisions operating on the main axis). This will make it possible to establish the necessary superiority in artillery on the axis where the main efforts are concentrated. To carry out fire tasks in the tactical depth of the enemy defense, the fire of direct-aiming guns, antitank guided missiles and tanks will be broadly employed.

Bomber and fighter-bomber aviation must play a prominent role in the concentration of fire efforts. The utilization of new combat means, particularly incendiary means, might have a considerable effect. Thus, to neutralize one motorized infantry company on the march or in the area of concentration requires six MIG-17 aircraft employing OKhAB-250 and OKhAB-235 bombs, or 14 SU-7B aircraft armed with S-5 (S-24) rockets, or only one or two MIG-17 aircraft if airborne incendiary canisters are used (one MIG-17 aircraft can carry two ZAB-360 incendiary bombs, which will destroy an area 350 by 250 meters).

Therefore, in the interests of increasing aviation firing capabilities, a critical need has arisen for developing and supplying to the aviation units within the shortest possible time, highly effective incendiary means and devices for employing them from high-speed aircraft, as well as the need for having flight personnel master the methods of using these means to neutralize and destroy enemy ground installations and personnel.

For quick action against the enemy through his entire depth under the conditions being examined it is necessary to more frequently land airborne landing forces made up of airborne units and subunits or motorized rifle subunits which have undergone special training, to seize large and important targets in the operational depth, to destroy enemy means of nuclear attack, and to seize and hold mountain passes and gaps.

In our opinion, in an offensive operation conducted in a mountainous-desert theater of military operations, airborne large units and units (of the type which participated in the DNEPR exercise) should be employed extensively. They will be able to carry on continuous combat

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against the ground enemy, especially against his means of nuclear attack, while at the same time enveloping the operational and tactical depth of the disposition of his troops in the combat actions; to preempt the enemy in seizing the most important areas and to ensure a rapid offensive; to deliver strikes and to attack the enemy from any direction regardless of the passability of the terrain; and to complete his destruction with bold and decisive actions. This establishes superiority in fire means and manpower on the decisive axes, and combat tasks will be accomplished in shorter periods of time.

The continuous development of an offensive at high rates of advance and most rapid achievement of the operation's ultimate objectives necessitate the constant buildup of troop efforts from the depth in the course of an operation. To accomplish this the front must possess adequate reserves and second echelons.

Considering that in mountainous-desert terrain it often will be difficult to carry out a commitment to battle of the reserves or the entire second echelon, we can permit their successive commitment after negotiating a difficult mountainous area. In so doing, in order that the buildup of the forces and means of the attacking troops forestall the buildup of efforts by the enemy and be carried out before the large units of the first echelon lose their offensive capabilities, the second echelon and the reserves must always be at readiness for commitment to battle at any moment of the operation and from any line.

For this reason the staff of the front operating in the mountainous-desert theater of military operations must work out a detailed plan in which the possible variants of the commitment of the second echelon (reserves) to battle and matters of all-round support are specified by lines and time.

In a specific situation demanding commitment of the second echelon or reserve, a command is given upon which everyone takes immediate measures to vacate the route of the advance, while the main efforts of the engineer troops, road troops, air defense troops, and others are shifted to support the timely arrival of the second echelon (reserve) at the line of commitment, especially in mountain pass sectors, ravines and other defiles.

The most favorable conditions are created for the commitment of the second echelon or the reserve when the troops reach negotiable terrain. It is desirable in such cases to commit them to battle in the gap between the flanks of the adjacent large units of the first echelon, or on an exposed

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flank.

To ensure successful actions of the second echelon and reserve, more extensive employment of airborne landing forces and flanking detachments is necessary in order to seize subsequent mountain lines, and the gaps and passes in them. Seizure of such accessible sectors in the mountains, even by insignificant forces, will make it difficult for the enemy to bring up his reserves from the depth, and will contribute to a rapid buildup of troop efforts and help them reach the flank and rear of the defending enemy.

The most complex matter during a front offensive operation in a mountainous theater of military operations will be to shift efforts to a new axis. The requirement for this might arise under the following conditions: the enemy has succeeded in bringing up large reserves from the depth and in occupying prepared lines on the axis of the main attack, after which attempts by the attacking side to use frontal attacks were unsuccessful; the combat actions on the given axis have assumed a protracted nature, while on another axis an opportunity has developed to carry out the assigned task in a short period of time; the enemy delivers a counterattack with a strong grouping, the success of which may cause the breakdown of the entire front offensive operation; and finally, the strategic situation compels the General Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to assign a new task requiring the change of the axis of the concentration of efforts of the front troops.

In connection with this, in mountainous areas the following are especially important: profound foresight as to how an operation will develop, timely preparation of the necessary forces, and above all the rocket troops and aviation, for a massed strike, the dropping of airborne landing forces on this axis, and the commitment of the second echelons and reserves to battle. Based on the experience of exercises, the regrouping of troops may take a rather long time.

Thus, in a command-staff war game conducted in our military district in 1965, the front, in the process of fulfilling the subsequent task, having its main grouping on its right wing, was subjected to a strong enemy counterattack on its left wing, where only two divisions were operating. The threat of the enemy's moving out to the flank and rear of the main front forces was created. The situation demanded shifting the main efforts to the left wing. The regrouping of troops to this axis took over four full days because of the lack of lateral roads for maneuvering, the wide zone of the offensive, and the actions along separate, unconnected

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axes. The proper placement and skilful maneuvering of the reserves and second echelons, the presence in the front of airborne troops, helicopter large units, and military transport aviation would have considerably facilitated the concentration of troop efforts on a new axis.

The second echelon of the front should be positioned in dispersed formations near a lateral road on the axis of the probable commitment to battle. This should be reflected in the decision of the commander of the front.

In ensuring the concentration of the troop efforts within the required time limits, the engineer and road troops who will be carrying out operations to prepare the routes, the siting areas of the rocket troops and control posts, will have an important role. These measures are particularly important in mountainous terrain when troops are negotiating mountain gaps, passes, and turbulent rivers, and also are important for providing water in deserts.

The most important duty of the commander and staff of the front in the course of an operation conducted with the use of conventional means of destruction will be to maintain the majority of the rocket troops and the necessary number of aircraft in readiness for immediate employment of nuclear weapons in order to preempt the enemy in delivering the initial nuclear strike. The front troops must constantly be ready to immediately go over to combat actions employing nuclear weapons.

When examining the problem of the concentration of troop efforts in a front offensive operation under conditions in which only conventional means of destruction are employed, it is necessary to consider the experience of the Great Patriotic War and introduce this into the practice of operational and combat training of troops in a creative way.

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