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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

4860

18 October 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Soviet Views on the Conduct of Meeting Engagements

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 comments on an article on this topic which appeared in a previous issue of the journal. The authors of the present article contend that success in a meeting engagement depends on a swift preemptive strike, especially by aircraft. The importance of troop control and effective intelligence reporting are emphasized, while the role of air defense missiles is played down. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (90) 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.

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William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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AUTOMATIC DECLASSIFICATION.

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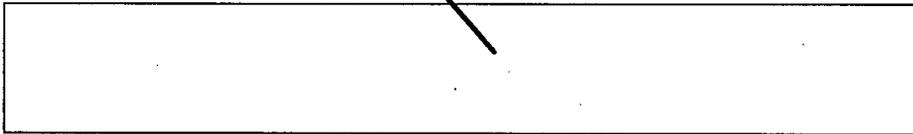
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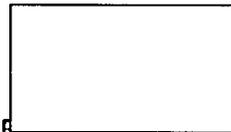
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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1970

[Redacted]
DATE 18 Oct. 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Meeting Engagements
in Current Operations

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (90) for 1970 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The authors of this article are General-Major N. Silin, Docent and Colonel F. Vyazovtsev, Docent, Candidate of Military Sciences. The article comments on an article on this topic which appeared in a previous issue of the journal. The authors of the present article contend that success in a meeting engagement depends on a swift preemptive strike, especially by aircraft. The importance of troop control and effective intelligence reporting are emphasized, while the role of air defense missiles is played down. In general, the authors agree with the previous article.

End of Summary

[Redacted] 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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Meeting Engagements in Current Operations

by

General-Major N. Silin, Docent and

Colonel F. Vyazovtsev, Docent,

Candidate of Military Sciences

The new means of armed combat, the full motorization of troops, and the automation of the basic control processes, open up vast possibilities for finding more improved methods and forms of conducting combat actions. A series of articles in military periodicals has been devoted to a study of the pressing problems of the art of war under these conditions. The article by General-Major N. Smirnov, entitled "Meeting Engagements in Current Operations"* should be included among these.

On the basis of a consolidation of the experience of several exercises and research works, the author, in our opinion, arrives at the correct conclusion that the modern means of conducting armed combat, the increasing fire and strike power, and the mobility and maneuverability of units, large units and formations, change the substance, nature and methods of conducting meeting engagements, both with and without the use of nuclear weapons. Proceeding from this thesis, he defines a meeting engagement in a nuclear war. We think this definition could be fully applied to the period of non-nuclear actions and believe a meeting engagement may be characterized as the sum total of strikes by various fire means, and troop actions under circumstances when both sides simultaneously try to accomplish their assigned missions by an offensive.

The question of the nature of a meeting engagement in a nuclear war is also worthy of attention. We have to agree that the primary and most effective method of defeating an

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", 1969 No. 3 (88).

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encounter grouping will be the delivery of preemptive nuclear and fire strikes, and the swift actions of tank, motorized rifle, and helicopter-assault troops, supported by artillery fire and air strikes.

We would like to emphasize the special role of aviation assigned to support ground forces in a meeting engagement. Regardless of whether or not nuclear weapons are used in a meeting engagement, a situation can develop wherein aviation frequently proves to be the only means capable of delivering powerful fire strikes against enemy troops while still in the approach phase. In our opinion the decisive defeat of approaching forces requires the delivery of strikes against them not only by front, but also by long-range aviation.

The experience of the use of aviation in the largest meeting engagement at Prokhorovka in July 1943 is highly instructive in this respect. Just during 11 and 12 July, units of the 4th and 5th Air Corps flew more than 600 sorties, shooting down 60 enemy aircraft in 38 aerial battles. On two successive nights before the engagement, night bombers of the 17th Air Army flew 183 sorties, the 2nd Air Army flew 126, and Long-Range Aviation flew 88 sorties.* During the meeting engagement, combined-arms large units and formations were supported by the echeloned actions of assault and bomber aircraft. Aggressive air actions contributed to a considerable degree to the success of ground forces formations, especially of the 5th Guards Tank Army.

The search for effective types of troop actions in meeting engagements using only conventional means of destruction even now is an important task of our military thinking. In solving a given problem we must not mechanically use the experience of the past war. The conditions of conducting a meeting engagement, even with the use of conventional means of destruction, are different now. The constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons by the enemy, for example, will have a serious impact on all its aspects. Hence, under modern conditions the concentration of a large number of troops in a limited area cannot be tolerated. Troops must move out to the deployment

* I.V. Timokhovich, Soviet Aviation in Defense of Kursk, Voenizdat, 1958, page 105.



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line from different axes, concentrate for the delivery of strikes, then disperse again to conduct the offensive on separate axes. This is why the author's conclusion that "meeting engagements with and without the use of nuclear weapons, by their very nature and substance, will differ from meeting engagements which took place in the past war" seems convincing.

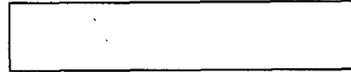
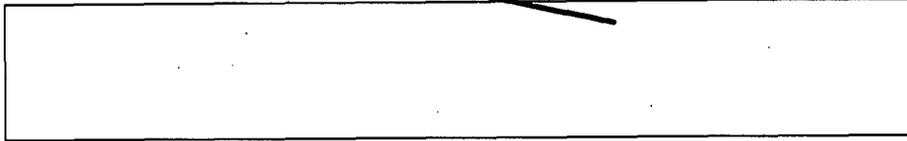
The organization of effective cover for ground forces against enemy air strikes is very important to the successful outcome of a meeting engagement.

One may encounter in individual works the hypothesis that SAM units and large units must play a major air defense role under meeting engagement conditions.* We cannot agree with such a point of view. There is no question that SAM means are of great importance to troop cover. However, this does not at all mean that they carry the primary burden of conducting combat with the air enemy in a meeting engagement. We should remember that the effective use of SAM troops under the complex conditions of a meeting engagement will definitely entail difficulties, some of which are: the exceptionally dynamic nature and the rapidity of combat actions; the actions of troops along axes; abrupt changes in the situation; intense enemy air activity; the massed jamming of SAM means of control; and others. Therefore, fighter aviation, together with SAM, is the most important air defense method. Because of its high maneuverability, it can appear on any axis where a meeting engagement is being conducted and engage enemy aircraft in battle.

Consequently, the singularly correct conclusion suggests itself: effective cover for troops participating in a meeting engagement is possible only on the basis of close coordination of SAM units with fighter aviation. It follows from the aforesaid that the problems of coordinating the various ground-based air defense means and fighter aviation always must be central to the theory and practice of troop training.

* The Meeting Engagement, Voenizdat, 1969, page 59.

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The problems of troop control in a meeting engagement deserve attention. The author believes that "the specifics of a meeting engagement are, perhaps, most of all manifested in the realm of troop control". We fully support this thesis and will add that increasing the operational efficiency of commanders and staffs is the key to improving troop control.

Furthermore, the broad incorporation in staff procedures of the newest technical means of control will sharply reduce the time spent assembling situation information, analyzing it, and reporting it to the commander for planning the meeting engagement. In this connection, we would like to express our views on improving the effectiveness of reconnaissance and, especially, the system by which troop command posts receive aerial reconnaissance data.

The experience of a number of exercises indicates that far from all reports from reconnaissance aircraft are received by combined-arms staffs. For example, in one of the exercises, of 131 reports transmitted from the aircraft by radio, 104 (80 percent) were received by the Air Army Command Post, 81 (62 percent) by the front command post, and only 40 (20 percent) by combined-arms (tank) armies and divisions. To improve the receipt of aerial reconnaissance data, in our opinion, we must first of all significantly improve the training of specialists in receiving the reports.

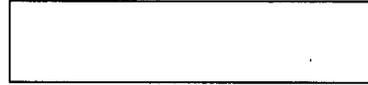
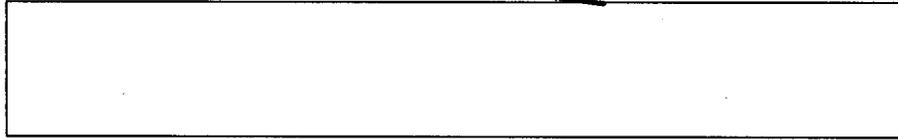
Providing rocket troops with precise target coordinates presents a complex problem. We know that the leading role in this matter belongs to aerial reconnaissance at present. The experience of combat training has shown that reconnaissance aircraft can issue the required information from the results of interpreting wet negatives in twenty to thirty minutes after landing. It is perfectly obvious that by that time the coordinates of mobile targets can change significantly. Therefore, the time it takes to pass information must be sharply reduced. One of the ways of solving this problem might be to consider transferring the photographic development process directly to the reconnaissance aircraft.

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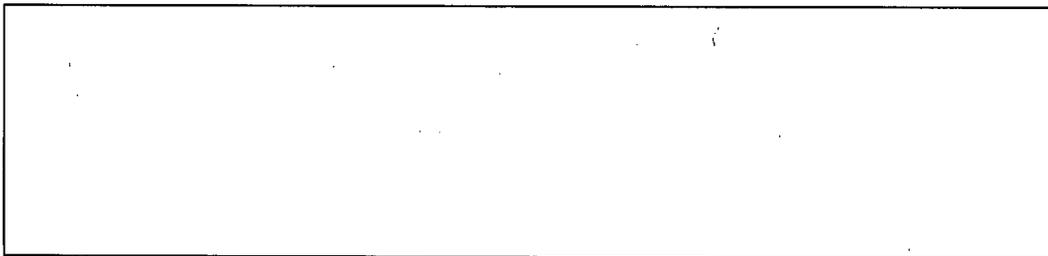


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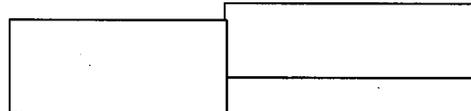
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As a whole, our additions and observations are personal in nature. They can in no measure downgrade the overall good impression of the article.



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