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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

29 June 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence  
FROM : William W. Wells  
Deputy Director for Operations  
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Breakdown  
and Classification of Modern Theaters of  
Military Operations

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 reflects the view that the employment of strategic means in a modern war necessitates the designation of intercontinental theaters of military operations, in addition to the existing land-sea and ocean theaters. The author identifies the boundaries of the individual theaters and the main objectives in each, and discusses the concept and definition of a theater of war which includes land, ocean, and intercontinental theaters of military operations. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (75) for 1965.

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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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William W. Wells

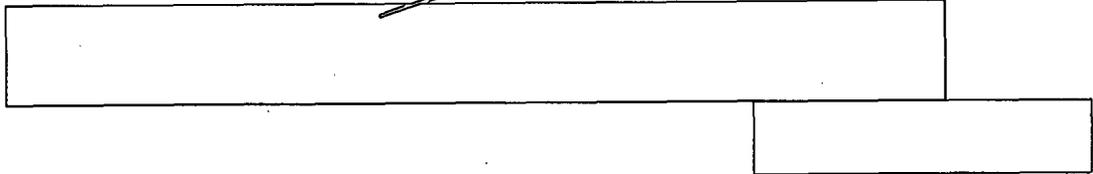
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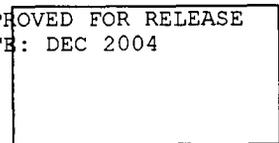


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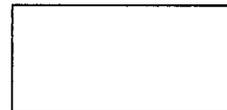
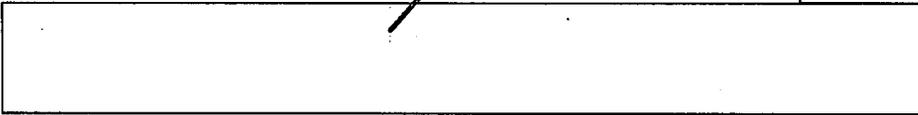
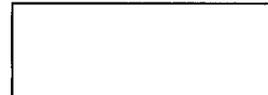
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency  
The Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Intelligence  
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The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence  
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# Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



DATE OF INFO. Mid-1965

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## SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Breakdown and Classification of Modern Theaters of Military Operations

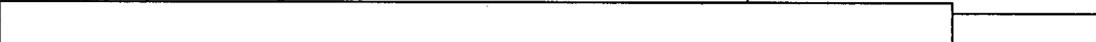
SOURCE Documentary  
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (75) for 1965 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Colonel M. Shirokov. This article proceeds from the premise that in a modern war, in addition to land-sea and ocean theaters of military operations, it is necessary to also designate intercontinental theaters, which are far distant from Soviet troop deployment areas and for whose destruction strategic combat means must be employed. The author identifies the boundaries of these individual theaters and the main objectives in each, and proceeds to discuss also the various land and ocean theaters. He concludes with a discussion of the concept and definition of a theater of war which includes land, ocean, and intercontinental theaters of military operations.

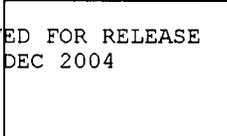
End of Summary

### Headquarters Comment:

Colonel M. Shirokov has been identified as a Candidate of Military Sciences. 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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The Breakdown and Classification of Modern  
Theaters of Military Operations

by  
Colonel M. Shirokov

The article "The Modern Concept of Theaters of Military Operations"\* sets forth with utter correctness, in our opinion, the problem of the need to revise the current classification and breakdown of the theaters of military operations. However, we cannot agree with a number of the proposals set forth by the authors on the resolution of this problem.

It seems to us, for example, that there is no need at all to change the current term "land" theaters of military operations to "land-sea" theaters, as the authors propose, because, as is well known, coastal seas were also previously included in theaters of military operations which were, however, called "land" theaters. It is obvious that at present we cannot limit ourselves to the establishment of only two types of theaters of military operations -- land-sea and ocean theaters, as was recommended in the article. It is also advisable to have intercontinental theaters. The necessity of designating such theaters is prompted by the nature of a modern missile/nuclear world war, and primarily by the fact that the warring sides will deliver against each other nuclear strikes by strategic means located on different continents separated from each other by thousands of kilometers. The accomplishment of many tasks under these conditions will differ in principle from the fulfilment of similar tasks in the theaters where the enemy's territory directly borders on the countries of the socialist camp. And this requires a special approach to the study of the distant areas and to the training and use of armed forces in them.

We designate as intercontinental theaters of military operations those vast territories and their adjacent sea and air-space expanses where the vitally important economic and military installations of the probable enemies are located and whose destruction will require strategic (including space) means of armed combat.

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\* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
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The principal features of these theaters are: their great remoteness from the strategic deployment areas of our forces (more than three to ten thousand kilometers) and their isolation from the land theaters of military operations, and the presence, on the borders of these theaters, of strategic means of combat, major economic areas, and major military installations which are of vital importance to the enemy's coalitions. Unlike land and ocean theaters of military operations, one cannot always allot the territory of one's own country for the intercontinental theaters because it is inadvisable to restrict by any conventional boundaries the areas where strategic means are positioned. These means can be positioned in any point of the Soviet Union and can launch their missiles in any direction against targets in any theater. Moreover, the territory of the USSR, except for its northern part, will form a part of the land theaters of military operations.

At the present time we can designate the following most probable intercontinental theaters: the North American, the South American, and the African. ✓

We should include in the North American theater not only Canada and the USA together with Alaska, but also the territory of Greenland and Iceland, as both of these countries are members of NATO, the main aggressive bloc of the imperialists. The USA and Canada have a definite integrity in the economic and geographic aspects as well as a unified system of antimissile defense and air defense and military bases. The territory of Greenland and Iceland is used for US air force and naval bases and for the stationing of American air defense and antisubmarine means. The US military command assumes that the main axes of employment of their strategic means of combat will pass through these states.

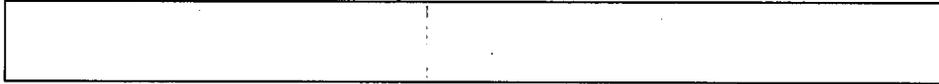
Unlike the other intercontinental theaters, we can allot to this theater that part of the Soviet territory which extends approximately down to the 65th [uncertain] parallel. This is attributable to the fact that it is inadvisable to include the northern part of the Soviet Union in the land theaters of military operations due to its special geographic situation and to the great difficulty of using combat and transport equipment in it. But, in the interests of our country's defense it is extremely necessary for us to study this territory.

We should consider this theater to be the principal one. In its vast territory are concentrated over 10 percent of the capitalist world's population, approximately 48 percent of its industrial production, and

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almost all of the strategic means of combat of our probable enemies. The USA is the key strategic area of the given theater. The United States is the world's major exploiter, the bulwark of international reaction, and the driving force of the imperialist camp. The vast economic and financial resources of American imperialism, and primarily, its absolute superiority over other capitalist countries in weapons of mass destruction, give it the capability of keeping the aggressive military-political blocs from disintegrating. That is why defeating the USA will not only drastically weaken the enemy's military and economic might and deprive him of his principal strategic combat means, but will also lead to a fundamental change in the balance of forces and military-political situation in all other theaters. Obviously, the main portion of our strategic forces and means must be aimed at targets in this theater.

The need to designate a South American theater, consisting of the countries of Central and South America, is explained by this theater's special importance to the USA. It has military bases located there. Key types of strategic raw materials (oil, tin, copper, and others) are exported from this area. That is why in case of war the key economic areas and US military bases in this theater cannot remain outside the actions of our strategic means.

Separating the African theater, consisting of the countries of Africa with their adjacent seas, including the Mediterranean, into an independent intercontinental theater, is dictated primarily by the geographic isolation and vast dimensions of the African continent (20 million square kilometers); the great distance separating its central and southern regions from the border areas of the countries of the socialist camp (six to eight thousand kilometers); the presence of a major water barrier (the Mediterranean Sea) separating Africa from Europe over a long distance that requires our ground forces to undergo additional preparations upon shifting combat actions to African territory; the arduous and unique natural conditions (the presence of enormous deserts and tropical forests which are difficult to traverse, the hot climate, etc.); and the difficulty of shifting troops and their supplies owing to the extended lines of communication, poorly developed routes of transportation, and low economic development.

This intercontinental theater is second in importance (after the North American). Its northern part directly adjoins two land theaters of military operations: the European and the South Asian. Sea and air lines of communication, which are vitally important to our probable enemies and connect these two land theaters, pass through African territory or near it.

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Several major bases, from which the imperialists can deliver strikes against troops and vitally important installations of the socialist countries, are located on African territory. Africa possesses vast deposits of key types of strategic raw materials which are exploited in the interests of the imperialist countries.

The main goals of our armed forces in the African theater might be to destroy the enemy's military bases and ports, to strike individual key military-economic installations, to destroy aircraft carrier large units, and to provide assistance to progressive forces in their struggle against the imperialists. In keeping with the indicated goals and the special features of this theater, the main burden of accomplishing the tasks of armed conflict here will obviously be borne by the strategic rocket forces, long-range aviation, and also airborne troops. Under certain conditions, ground forces might also be utilized.

In addition to these intercontinental theaters, there may arise the necessity of designating an Australian theater (Australia and New Zealand).

It seems necessary to us to refine the definition of a land theater of military operations set forth by the author collective.

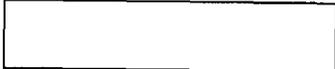
A land theater of military operations means to us an enormous territory and its adjacent sea and air expanses in which opposing groupings of ground forces are concentrated and deployed and where strategic operations are conducted in order to accomplish the key tasks of a war.

Taking into consideration the entire aggregate of factors which determine the breakdown of theaters, we consider it advisable to have three land theaters of military operations: the European, the South Asian, and the Far Eastern.

We are in accord with the proposal of the article's authors to include in the European (Western) Theater of Military Operations all of the non-Soviet part of Europe and the northern part of Africa, but we do not accept their proposal to have Soviet territory up to and including the Urals form a part of the European theater. First, in this expanse there will be an inevitable overlapping of the given territory with the rear areas of other theaters of military operations; and second, in such a case, the theater will include land lines of communication and bases which can be used to support other theaters.

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We also cannot agree with the recommendation to include in the Far Eastern theater all Asian countries bordering on the Pacific Ocean, including the huge territory of the Soviet Union. In the proposed areas, the land portion of the theater alone amounts to approximately 24 million square kilometers. The distance from north to south exceeds 14,000 kilometers, and from west to east it is more than 6,000 kilometers. These vast dimensions and the extremely varied and difficult natural conditions will severely complicate the operational cooperation of the forces operating in the various areas and impede other branches of the armed forces from supporting the ground forces. In our opinion, it is inadvisable to include in the given theater the Chukchi Peninsula, Kamchatka, and Alaska. In these areas it is impossible to employ operational formations of ground forces both because of the severe natural conditions, the inadequate economic development of the area, and the scant availability of routes of transportation, and also because of the absence of major enemy ground forces in Alaska.

The Far Eastern Theater of Military Operations should be kept within its old boundaries but expanded somewhat by including the territory of Indonesia and its adjacent islands. The inclusion of this territory as a part of this theater can be attributed to the fact that Indonesia occupies an advantageous strategic position. Its numerous islands are situated on the key sea routes connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Indonesia is one of the world's major countries in terms of population (approximately 100 million persons) and territory (4.9 million square kilometers). It possesses great reserves of strategic raw materials. The territory of Indonesia is located a comparatively short distance away from countries of the socialist camp and is separated from the Federation of Malaysia by the narrow Strait of Malacca. All of this is conducive to the shifting of the combat actions of ground troops to the boundaries of Indonesia.

We fully share the opinions of the authors concerning the fact that now there is no longer any need to have a breakdown of sea theaters, but that land theaters may be included in the water area; and that in the interests of the Navy, the water area should be broken down into ocean theaters only. At the same time, we would like to refine the definition of ocean theaters of military operations. In our opinion, an ocean theater is a vast ocean water area with its adjoining coastal territories and airspace where the naval forces of the two opposing coalitions are based and deployed and where they conduct combat for the purpose of accomplishing the strategic tasks of a war. The theaters that can be so designated are the Atlantic, Pacific, Northern, and Indian.

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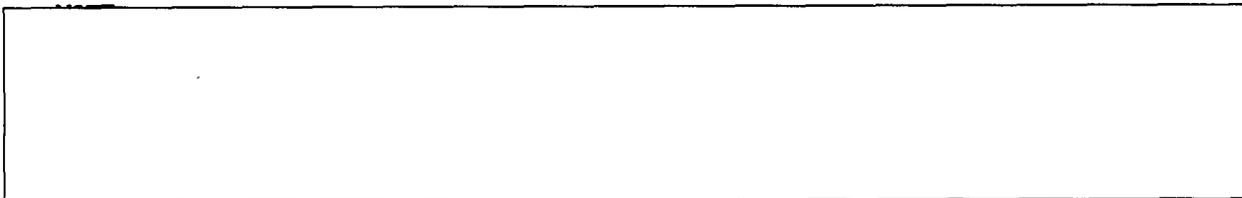
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We cannot but agree with the recommendation of the authors to retain the concept of a "theater of war". In a present-day war final victory is attained by the joint efforts of all branches of the armed forces with missile/nuclear weapons having the decisive role. But it is exceedingly difficult to coordinate their actions. To direct all armed combat from a single center is an exceedingly complex matter. In our opinion, to designate theaters of war with their respective commands will facilitate the accomplishment of these tasks.

A theater of war means to us the aggregate of the land, ocean, and intercontinental theaters of military operations on that vast territory and water area which is used by all branches of the armed forces of the opposing coalitions for the purpose of accomplishing the key military-political tasks of a war. The probable theaters of war might be: the Western -- made up of the European land theater, the Atlantic ocean theater, and the North and South American intercontinental theaters; the Eastern -- made up of the Far Eastern land theater, Pacific ocean theater, and North and South American intercontinental theaters; and the Southern -- made up of the South Asian land theater, Indian ocean theater, and African and Australian intercontinental theaters.



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