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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

1 September 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John H. Stein
Acting Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Against
Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces

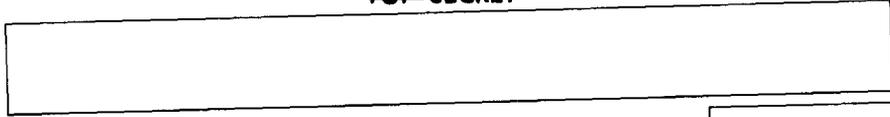
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article comments on two previous articles discussing the same topic. The author holds that it is best to initiate combat against an enemy airborne landing force and its transport aviation when these are in their concentration or departure areas and airfields, with the use of nuclear weapons being stressed; next best is to attack them when they are in the air, and third and last, to attack the landing force after it has been landed. The basic methods of combating an enemy airborne landing force under these three situations are discussed in broad terms. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963.

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

John H. Stein

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF
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DATE
1 September 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Against Enemy Operational Airborne
Landing Forces

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel L. Belousov. This article comments on two previous articles discussing the same topic. The author holds that it is best to initiate combat against an enemy airborne landing force and its transport aviation when these are in their concentration or departure areas and airfields, with the use of nuclear weapons being stressed; next best is to attack them when they are in the air, and third and last, to attack the landing force after it has been landed. The basic methods of combating an enemy airborne landing force under these three situations are discussed in broad terms. End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:

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. [Redacted]

[Redacted] the
articles referred to were disseminated in their English-language versions
as [Redacted]

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Combat Against Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces

by

Colonel L. BELOUSOV

The article by Colonel A. LAPENIN* raises extremely important questions connected with the destruction of airborne landing forces during a front operation. We share the main ideas of the author about the organization and conduct of combat against major enemy airborne landing forces. At the same time, the article features a number of positions and recommendations with which one cannot possibly agree. The reason for the error of a number of Colonel Lapenin's assertions is the fact that in his discussion, in our view, he incorrectly defines the initial propositions for the examination of the topic.

In the first place, in researching combat against operational airborne landing forces in ground forces operations it is necessary to consider, more thoroughly than is done in this article, the enemy's views on the possible employment of landing forces.

Our probable enemy holds that operational airborne landing forces can be landed not only during the conduct of an offensive, but also in a defense. In the process, to support the actions of airborne landing forces, provision is made in all cases for the delivery of nuclear strikes and for support with considerable forces of aviation. Before landing an airborne landing force, the enemy will hit with nuclear strikes primarily such targets as missiles, aviation on airfields, ground air defense means, control posts, and troops located in the intended landing areas or near them. In other words, the enemy will endeavor primarily to destroy those of our forces and means which can be used first off for combat against the landing force. Together with this, the enemy may destroy bridges and crossings on the movement routes of our troops and produce zones of radioactively contaminated terrain. Obviously, such decisive measures will complicate combat against a major enemy airborne landing force. And not everything will look as simple as it was presented in Colonel A. LAPENIN's article. An especially difficult situation for front troops may develop in those cases where we do not succeed in disrupting the landing of the

* Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought', No. 1 (62), 1962.

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airborne landing force or at least in maximally weakening a force already landed. One cannot fail to take this into consideration; therefore, the determination of the time to initiate combat against a landing force is an exceedingly crucial matter.

Second, in studying and solving the questions of combat against a landing force, we cannot base ourselves solely on the capabilities of front and army forces and means, leaving out of account the Strategic Rocket Forces and the long range aviation. The Strategic Rocket Forces and the long range aviation, as shown by actual operational training, will be sure to direct part of their efforts to the zone of actions of front troops. Therefore, the enemy's airborne troops and military transport aviation will be destroyed on the same footing as his missile/nuclear weapons, combat aviation, and groupings of ground forces. We are convinced that airborne troops and transport aviation, along with other objects, will be targets of destruction when our first nuclear strike is delivered.

As has been indicated, a very important question is that of when and with what forces is it most advisable to deliver strikes against the enemy airborne landing force in order to destroy it.

The author of the article tried to show that under modern conditions, it is best to have this time of delivery coincide with the arrival of the landing force in the landing areas. He considers this the primary method of combat against landing forces and considers as secondary the destruction of the airborne troops and transport aviation in their concentration areas and at their airfields, i.e., the disruption of the landing of an enemy airborne force at the moment it is forming up.

Nor do the comments by Lieutenant Colonel IONIN* on the article under review give an accurate answer to this question. He asserts that the methods of combating an airborne landing force will depend each time on the situational conditions that develop.

It appears to us that, on this subject, it is necessary to speak with greater explicitness. The conditions of nuclear war require that all steps be taken very quickly to disrupt above all enemy preparations for the landing of large airborne landing forces. Immediately upon detection of enemy preparations for the landing of troops, it will be necessary to deliver powerful missile and air strikes employing weapons of mass destruction, not only against the transport aviation at airfields and the airborne troops in the departure areas for the landing, but also against

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those forces and means which the enemy can use to support their landing. It will be especially advantageous to use high-yield nuclear warheads, which, besides causing substantial losses of personnel and combat equipment, will cause the formation of extensive zones of terrain with strong radioactive contamination.

Combat against enemy landing forces during the period they are located in departure areas for the landing involves difficulties. It is difficult to establish the time when airborne troops are to board the aircraft, which, to boot, will be dispersed over a large area. However, with effectively functioning reconnaissance, this task can be accomplished. In our opinion, destruction of the troops earmarked for the landing and of the transport aviation at airfields will not require a great expenditure of forces and means, as it will hardly be necessary to destroy all forces and means of the airborne landing force in order to disrupt its landing. It will evidently be enough to destroy 60 percent of the airborne troops and transport aviation.

Naturally, we are not inclined to rule out those cases where the front, during an operation, for some reason cannot deliver a decisive strike against the airborne landing force in the departure area. Therefore, the front must always be in readiness to destroy a landing force both during the period it is in the air and also directly in the landing areas. In such a situation, it is really necessary to inflict the greatest possible losses on the landing force in the air. For this it is necessary to bring in the fighter and fighter-bomber aviation of the front and of the adjacent formations, the surface-to-air missile troops of the front and armies, antiaircraft means and conventional small arms of large units and units, and, if possible, part of the means of the Air Defense of the Country.

We are not here touching on the question of what air defense means in this period are to be the main force that destroys the airborne landing force. This will depend on a number of factors, above all on the details of the air situation in the zone of actions of not only the given front, but also of the adjacent fronts, as well as on the scale and results of the nuclear strikes delivered by the enemy. We should merely like to stress that the coordinated actions of the aviation and surface-to-air missile troops and the quick maneuvering of these forces and means to the flight and landing axis of the landing force assume exceptionally great importance for the successful conduct of combat against the airborne landing force during the period it is in the air.

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It is necessary to examine in greater detail the conduct of combat against an operational airborne landing force that has landed. We agree with Colonel LAPENIN that, when organizing any kind of front operation for the purpose of successfully destroying airborne landing forces, it is advisable to establish zones of responsibility for the first-echelon combined-arms formations, areas for the second-echelon large units (combined-arms reserve), a front zone, and also to determine the probable areas and times for the enemy drop of airborne landing forces. At the same time, we think that, under modern conditions, when conducting operations, it is advisable for the front and army to have continuously in the rear combined-arms large units (units) that are ready to quickly destroy landing forces that have been landed.

These troops, not constituting an antilanding reserve in the former sense, will form a part of the combined-arms reserve and be used to accomplish combat tasks that arise suddenly in the course of the operation. Upon their commitment to the engagement as part of the first echelon, the tasks of combating an airborne landing force should be given to the large units that arrive during the operation to form part of the front (army) troops. In addition, all the rear services units of the front and armies must be constantly ready to destroy an airborne landing force.

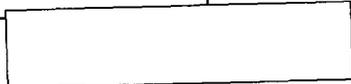
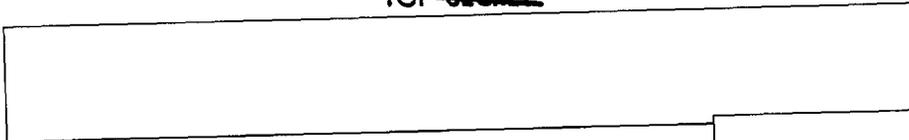
One should not be tempted into withdrawing part of the combined-arms large units from battle to use them for combating an airborne landing force. Such actions can take place only in exceptional cases, for instance, when the rear of the front does not have the requisite troops for this.

The procedure of destroying an airborne landing force that has been landed and the methods of actions of the troops will always be different. They will depend mainly on the available forces and means and their skilful employment. The method chosen for the actions of troops against the enemy's landing force must not allow the landing force to capture our rocket troop siting areas, control posts, road junctions, crossings, materiel depots, and other important installations, nor to join up with its own troops operating from the front or remaining in the rear of our formations that have moved forward. Obviously, it is necessary to destroy first of all those forces of the landing force that have shown a certain degree of success.

During combat the large airborne landing force must be split up and destroyed in detail. In so doing, the actions of the troops can be of a varied nature. Thus, if the forces of the airborne landing force have

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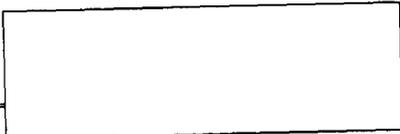
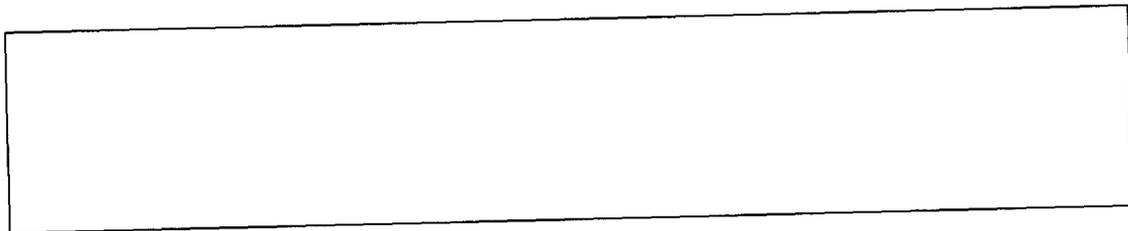


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succeeded in assembling and have begun aggressive actions before the arrival of the forces allocated to combat against them, then the combat actions may develop into a meeting battle. When the landing force goes over to the defense, our troops must conduct a decisive attack. Nor should one rule out sealing off the landing force in the landing areas until the arrival of forces from the deep rear of the front or from other axes.

When organizing the destruction of an airborne landing force, more attention should be paid to the matters of controlling the forces and means allocated to combat against it. The experience of recently conducted operational command-staff exercises shows that the special control organs set up for this purpose using part of the front (army) staff personnel headed by a deputy commander have not lived up to their function. Lacking the necessary means of communications, they could not ensure the coordinated actions of the troops. From the point of view of the combined-arms commander, the troops allocated to destroy an airborne landing force must be controlled personally by the front commander from his command post. This will make possible the timely adoption or refinement of the decision on the destruction of the airborne landing force, the allocation of the necessary forces for this, and the coordination of their actions as concerns time and place with the nuclear strikes.

Command of the actions of these troops can only occasionally be assigned to a deputy front commander. When this happens, in no case can we permit parallelism in the control of the large units and units designated to destroy the landing force. This will lead to confusion and disarray and in the end also to dragging out the destruction of the landing force.



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