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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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3 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): An Argument for the
Creation of Air Mobile 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 explains the need for air mobile troops and describes their employment. The concept for such a force originated in Soviet military exercise DNEPR, which took place in 1967. Other articles from this journal indicate that such units were formed and are called airborne shock troops. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969.

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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W. E. Colby
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1969

DATE 3 August 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): A Necessary New Arm of Troops--
Air Mobile Troops

SOURCE Documentary

Summary

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The author of this article is General-Major V. Solovyev (Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent). This article explains the need for air mobile troops and describes their employment. The concept for such a force originated in Soviet military exercise DNEPR, which took place in 1967. Other articles from this journal indicate that such units were formed and are called airborne shock troops. These troops are intended for rapid deployment into enemy territory up to 700 kilometers from the front line.

End of Summary

Comment

Colonel V. Solovyev authored an article appearing in the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," Issue No. 4 (65) for 1962 titled "The Problem of Selecting the Main Strike Axis in an Operation." General-Major V. Solovyev was identified in 1970 as commander of an antiaircraft rocket regiment in Minsk. 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 three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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A Necessary New Arm of Troops--Air Mobile Troops

by General-Mayor V. Solovyev,
Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent

One of the primary methods of defeating the enemy in theaters of military operations in a nuclear war will be the simultaneous destruction of his military and economic power by nuclear weapons, followed by a swift offensive by groupings of ground forces for the purpose of pressing home the rout of the enemy, seizing the main areas of enemy territory, and denying him the capability of offering organized resistance.

Do our ground forces possess all the necessary qualities for the most rapid exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes, and are their mobility and maneuverability adequate for the conditions of the sharply changing and dynamic situation of a nuclear war? Of course, the ground forces, as the result of being equipped with modern equipment, have acquired a new qualitative status. However, as has been repeatedly noted, at the present time there is a definite gap between the capabilities of nuclear weapons to hit the various targets in the entire depth of a theater of military operations and the capabilities of ground forces to quickly exploit the results of these strikes. This applies to combat actions on both strategic and operational scales.

As a matter of fact, our fully motorized combined-arms and tank armies are capable of advancing at a rate of fifty to seventy kilometers a day while, at the same time, the depth of nuclear weapons strikes by the means of the fronts alone is already three hundred kilometers and more. It is perfectly obvious that the results of these strikes can be exploited quickest by airborne landing troops, but it must be noted that the number of such landings is quite limited and that the organization and overall support of their actions is very complex.

Thus, the need has arisen to seek fundamentally new combat means capable of eliminating the contradiction that has developed between the increase in the striking range and power of nuclear means and the inadequate mobility of the ground forces.

During the "Dnepr" exercise (1967), the preliminary steps to the resolution of this contradiction had already become apparent. Experience was acquired in the mass use of helicopters

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for transporting personnel and armament, and also for providing fire support for troops. On the agenda, and with full justification, was the question of creating air mobile troops as a new arm of the ground forces of our Armed Forces. The creation of such troops will enable us to put into practice the idea of an offensive by air; and it will allow us to make a modern combined-arms battle and operation even more maneuverable and dynamic and to attack the enemy simultaneously and decisively in the entire depth of a theater of military operations. Air mobile troops could be organized as divisions and made part of combined-arms and tank armies; and they could also be organized as armies, and separate divisions in fronts, or as armies directly subordinate to the Supreme High Command.

What kind of missions can be assigned to these troops?

An air mobile division which is part of a combined-arms (tank) army can, for example, conduct successful combat actions throughout the entire depth of the operational formation of an enemy field army to destroy means of nuclear attack. It can also complete the rout of divisions of the second echelon of a field army or army corps; and it can complete the isolation of the first echelon from the reserves approaching from the depth, i.e., begin simultaneously with motorized rifle and tank divisions to destroy in the depth of the defenses those enemy troops which survived nuclear strikes, and thus deny them the capability of building up their forces from surviving reserves. Operating in the tactical and operational depth, air mobile units can strike control points of enemy divisions and corps, and of the field army, and completely disorganize their rear areas.

While the combined-arms army is developing the offensive, the air mobile division can be used quite successfully to capture bridgeheads at water barriers, large communications centers, and other important areas in the depth of enemy territory; and to overcome zones of nuclear barriers and zones of radioactive contamination, destruction, flooding and fires. And this will undoubtedly facilitate a sharp increase in the pace of the offensive.

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One of the most important missions of an air mobile division can be to rout the reserves being moved forward, especially tank groupings, and to break up their counterstrikes.

In World War II, enemy tank troops suffered heavy losses from strikes by our assault aviation. Under modern conditions air combat vehicles (VBM) of the infantry are armed with antitank guided missiles and can be used for the same purpose much more effectively. We do not exclude the possibility that air mobile units will become one of the principal means of combat against enemy tank groupings in offensive as well as defensive actions.

There are even greater prospects for air mobile armies. After surmounting large areas of radioactive contamination, large tracts of forest, swampy areas, and flooded zones, they are capable, following nuclear strikes by the fronts and by the strategic nuclear forces, of quickly shifting combat actions into the depth of enemy territory and of operating at a considerable distance from the combined-arms and tank formations carrying out the offensive on the ground. In close coordination with large airborne landings air mobile large units can, a few hours after the delivery of nuclear strikes, capture the most important operational and operational-strategic targets located five hundred to seven hundred kilometers from the front line.

In the Near Eastern, Middle Eastern and Far Eastern Theaters of Military Operations, where there are enormous mountain, desert, and taiga areas, and arid steppes, air mobile troops will find even broader application. For example, in the Far East, with its vast expanses of thousands of kilometers and where there are no developed road networks which would allow combined-arms and tank armies to maneuver freely and widely, air mobile troops will prove to be indispensable for both offensive and defensive actions, and also for rapidly shifting their efforts from certain operational axes to other operational axes. In mountainous areas, because they are not reliant on roads, air mobile troops can successfully be used to capture mountain passes, to carry out wide envelopments of defending troops, and to deliver strikes against their flanks and rear; i.e., to carry out the missions which in the past had been assigned to mountain rifle large units and units.

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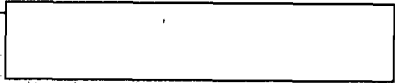
Air mobile troops operating in air combat vehicles can be used effectively in operations during the non-nuclear period of war. The methods used in these actions will obviously be different, but in any circumstances they will give ground forces operations broader scope and dynamism, and a fast-moving and maneuvering character.

However, in order for them to fulfil all the above-mentioned missions, air mobile troops must be equipped with technically reliable and well-armed troop air combat vehicles. Without going into all the requirements they must meet, let us briefly examine two of them: high serviceability, assuring the possibility of using these vehicles without fixed maintenance installations for a long period of time; and viability during combat actions.

The first requirement is very important because, in a front offensive operation the duration of which, according to modern views, will be up to two weeks, air mobile troops will be conducting constant combat actions in the enemy rear at some distance from their own rear area bases. There will be no time, place, nor appropriate conditions for their fixed installation servicing. Therefore, the equipping of air mobile troops with troop air combat vehicles capable of lengthy operation without fixed installation servicing becomes highly important.

Increasing the viability of combat vehicles is very important. It is quite clear that the comparatively low vulnerability of the transport helicopters used by the Americans in the Vietnam war cannot because of the specific characteristics of the composition of forces of the two sides involved, be convincing proof of their combat effectiveness. The final answer to this question can be given only after making an experimental model and weighing its combat characteristics against the capabilities of various means of counteraction.

Armor-plating of the vehicles (it is entirely feasible and is one of the basic requirements) provides a certain degree of invulnerability against rifle fire and large caliber machine guns. The greatest danger to troop air combat vehicles clearly will come from antiaircraft means. There is no doubt that a certain number of the air vehicles will be destroyed by antiaircraft means. However, by taking advantage of altitude maneuverability and the ability to maneuver along the front they can get close to the ground and get out of the zone of direct visibility of radar, which will make it difficult for the enemy to use his antiaircraft missiles.



We may be asked how to combat missiles of the Red Eye type. It is true that, if the personnel armed with these missiles are allowed to carry out launchings without being exposed to our fire means, the losses may prove to be heavy. But if the enemy is pinned to the ground by massive fire from combat vehicles, the effectiveness of these antiaircraft means will be sharply reduced. The crew of the troop air vehicle, protected by armor, will be in a more favorable position in comparison to that of the enemy in the open.

Troop air combat vehicle actions will be most effective when used massively. Having powerful armament capable of striking ground targets at great distances and possessing high speeds and maneuverability, they are able to conduct aggressive combat with enemy antiaircraft means.

Of considerable importance to increasing viability is the adoption of different methods of actions by troop air combat vehicles. For example, while over their own territory or over terrain not occupied by the enemy (areas with high levels of radiation, large tracts of forest, marshy areas, etc.), they can deliver fire against ground targets, including antiaircraft means. In this case the amount of the opposing means will be sharply reduced while they, in turn, flying over these areas, will be able to deliver strikes against the flanks and rear of the enemy grouping.

The creation of air mobile troops which operate in troop air combat vehicles is one of the practicable ways of sharply improving the mobility of ground forces.

