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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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29 October 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Coordination of Soviet Nuclear Strikes with Commitment of Troops to Battle

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 states briefly the principles of coordination of nuclear missile and air strikes to support effective and safe commitment of troops to combat. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (24) 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.

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WILLIAM E. NELSON
Deputy Director for Operations

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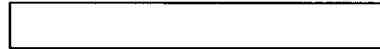
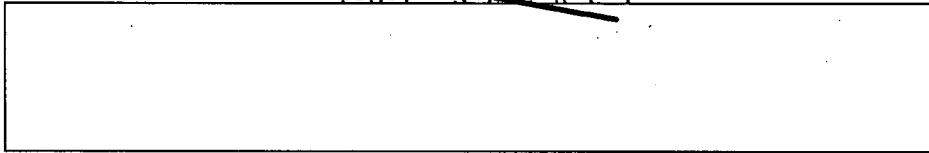
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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

[Redacted]

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1968

DATE 29 October 73

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Use of Nuclear Weapons During the Commitment of Operational Formations to an Engagement

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (84) for 1968 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article states briefly the principles of coordination of nuclear missile and air strikes to support effective and safe commitment of troops to combat. Some distances and times are given to demonstrate coordination procedures learned from exercises.

End of Summary

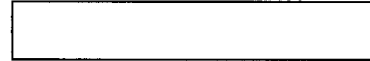
[Redacted] Comment:

There is no information in available reference materials which can be firmly associated with the author. 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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The Use of Nuclear Weapons During the Commitment
of Operational Formations to an Engagement

by

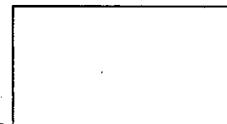
Colonel P. Polonskiy

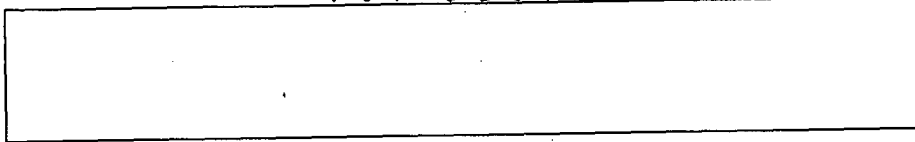
Judging from the experience of exercises, when moving front and army troops from the interior of the country, operational-tactical rocket units and large units usually moved at the head of the columns of main forces along specially designated routes (if the situation permitted), in order to arrive at their deployment areas at the same time the main forces left for their departure areas for commitment to an engagement. Tactical rocket units moved ahead of their large units only at the beginning of their departure to the lines of commitment to an engagement, and occupied deployment areas from the march.

First-echelon large units occupied departure areas sixty to a hundred kilometers from the line of combat engagement, and were located there for six to eighteen hours. Operational-tactical rocket units and large units occupied deployment areas forty to sixty kilometers from the front line at this time.

Immediately before the front and army troops were committed to an engagement, a massed nuclear strike was delivered against the opposing enemy grouping no later than an hour before the troops arrived at the area (on the line) of commitment to engagement, and in some cases, at the moment they deployed from regiment to battalion columns, i.e., thirty to forty minutes before the beginning of the attack.

With the exception of those on duty, all nuclear weapons delivery means participated in the strike, including the tactical rocket units of large units of the first echelon of troops committed to the engagement. Depending on the enemy grouping and our capabilities, this strike was planned as simultaneous missile launches (one or two) and air strikes. The second operational-tactical missile launch was carried out, depending on technical capabilities, an average of two to two and one-half hours later.





The targets of these strikes, according to the experience of exercises, were nuclear weapons delivery means, nuclear munitions assembly bases and depots, delivery aircraft at their airfields, control and guidance posts, the main grouping of enemy armored and mechanized forces, radiotechnical reconnaissance means, and others in the zone of commitment of the front or army. Such use of nuclear means permitted the delivery of strikes against the most important enemy targets immediately before committing the troops to the engagement. But we must remember that as large units and units approach the area of combat actions, there is an increasing probability of enemy strikes by the successive use of tactical aviation and operational-tactical and tactical missiles according to their range of action.

It is quite obvious that under these conditions the most important enemy targets and groupings must be destroyed in the most dangerous period, when our forces are in departure areas and leaving them for areas of commitment to engagement. Of course, the move forward and commitment to engagement of large operational formations is supported by the means of the Supreme High Command. In our view, however, the principal front and army nuclear means must be located in deployment areas and perform combat tasks even before the troops leave for departure areas for commitment to the engagement.

These means primarily include operational-tactical rocket units and large units, and bomber and fighter-bomber aviation. Their missions are the destruction and neutralization of enemy groupings and targets which directly or indirectly constitute an immediate threat to front forces.

Rocket troops and aviation can carry out these missions by single, grouped, and massed nuclear strikes. The latter will take place for the destruction of enemy strike groupings in the zone of impending actions of a front and armies, as well as before committing them to the engagement.

Combat actions must be planned so that, before the front troops begin moving out from departure areas to areas of commitment to engagement, the designated enemy targets have been destroyed or neutralized, and most of the rocket launchers and delivery aircraft are poised to deliver the next massed nuclear strike. This strike should be made



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close enough to the moment front troops are deployed to the area of commitment to engagement to enable them to take maximum advantage of its results. The safety of our troops must be ensured at this time.

Proceeding from these requirements, a massed nuclear strike may be delivered even two to three hours before our troops depart for the area of commitment to engagement (when they are forty to sixty kilometers from that area). In this variant the neutralizing rocket launchers and delivery aircraft can be poised for the next strike just before the troops approach the area of commitment to engagement.

If a nuclear strike is carried out along the entire depth of the enemy operational disposition, including his principal means of nuclear attack and his corps and army reserves, then surely he cannot bring them to combat readiness and offer resistance in two to three hours.

If the nuclear strike is delivered too close to the moment the front strike groupings are committed to the engagement (twenty to thirty minutes before their commitment), this can create unfavorable conditions for the actions of our troops. Thus, repeated operational-tactical rocket launches are possible two to two and one-half hours after the previous ones. One should also take into consideration the nature of the terrain in the area of combat actions and the possibility of heavy dust clouds, fires, smoke, obstacles, and radioactive contamination.

The situations expressed above also require that we set up a march pattern for operational formations moving out of the interior, designate departure areas and the sequence of troop deployment, and make more effective use of nuclear weapons when committing operational formations to an engagement.

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