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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

15 April 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations

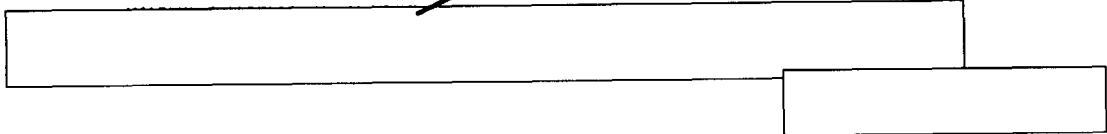
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Preparation and
Conduct of a Front Offensive Operation on a
Coastal Axis in the Initial Period of a War

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 reviews the main topics discussed at a military science conference of the Baltic Military District on the special features of preparing and conducting a front offensive operation on a coastal axis. Among the areas of discussion were the bringing of the troops to a state of increased or full combat readiness, the scope of the first front offensive operation, various methods of destroying the enemy, the role of the navy and the organization of cooperation between the fleet and front troops, and the need for means of automation and mechanization in troop control and the procedure for deploying and relocating control posts. Also, variants for allocating nuclear weapons, antinuclear protection, reconnaissance, and engineer support were touched upon. This article appeared in Issue No. 1 (62) for 1962.

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

William W. Wells

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1962

DATE 15 April 1977

SUBJECT

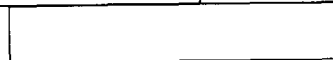
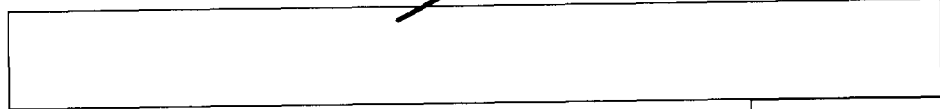
MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Preparation and Conduct of a Front Offensive Operation on a Coastal Axis in the Initial Period of a War

SOURCE Documentary Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (62) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The authors of this article are Colonel N. Smirnov and Colonel M. Skovorodkin. This article reviews the main topics discussed at a military science conference of the Baltic Military District on the special features of preparing and conducting a front offensive operation on a coastal axis. Among the areas of discussion were the bringing of the troops to a state of increased or full combat readiness, the scope of the first front offensive operation, various methods of destroying the enemy, the role of the navy and the organization of cooperation between the fleet and front troops, and the need for means of automation and mechanization in troop control and the procedure for deploying and relocating control posts. Also, variants for allocating nuclear weapons, antinuclear protection, reconnaissance, and engineer support were touched upon. End of Summary

Comment:

Colonel N. Smirnov also wrote 'Meeting Engagements in Modern Operations' in Issue No. 3 (88) for 1969. After 1962 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.



Preparation and Conduct of a Front Offensive Operation
on a Coastal Axis in the Initial Period of a War

(Based on materials of the Baltic Military District
military science conference)

by
Colonel N. Smirnov
Colonel M. Skovorodkin

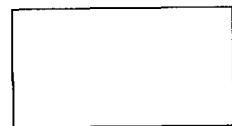
The chief of staff of the military district, General-Leytenant Semenov, presented the main report at the conference. Supplementary reports concerning the bringing of the forces and means of a border military district to combat readiness, the employment of missile/nuclear means, actions of naval forces, and rear services support of an operation also were heard.

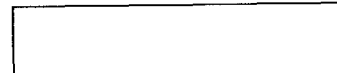
In the main report, supplementary report, and in the speeches of the conference participants the greatest attention was devoted to an examination of the following matters.

The combat readiness of the troops. General Semenov emphasized that when there is an immediate threat of enemy attack, the troops of the military district can be brought to a state of increased or full combat readiness.

Increased combat readiness -- this is the state of the troops, from which they can within a minimally short time after the signal is received move forward to carry out the combat task or move to areas of concentration (dispersal) and completion of mobilization. This level of readiness is introduced for the purpose of preparing units and large units for a more rapid and organized departure from points of permanent deployment and includes the conduct of a series of measures, the switching of officers to barracks status, and the establishing of alert status for the command personnel, the loading of equipment onto transport, and so on.

Full combat readiness -- this is the readiness of all forces and means not only for immediate departure from points of permanent deployment, but also for the fulfilment of the combat task.





For departure from points of permanent deployment, at least four routes must be assigned to each division (one per regiment), along which they can either be moved to concentration areas or immediately to the lines of deployment.

For the purpose of protecting the troops from destruction by nuclear weapons, concentration areas must be assigned not for the division as a whole, but for each regiment, at distances of 10 to 15 kilometers from one another.

The organization of warning, which can be carried out in succession or by the collective-call method, is of great importance when bringing troops to combat readiness. Colonel Prokhorov noted that successive warning, which is being used now, takes considerable time. Thus, at the military district-regiment level, 25 to 30 minutes are spent in passing the signal. Collective-call warning ensures a saving of time, but requires a large number of radio receivers.

The combat readiness of the rocket troops under present-day conditions has exceptionally great importance. General-Leytenant of Artillery Zhigarev discussed three levels of combat readiness of missiles (30-minute, 15-minute, and two-minute), which they successively adopt after deploying in siting areas under the immediate threat of enemy attack. At the conference attention was turned to the need for very careful consideration of the situation before making the decision to shift the missiles to one level of combat readiness or another. For example, missiles should be shifted to 15-minute readiness only when it is almost completely certain that they will be employed. Otherwise, after a day, that is, when the front troops will have moved into the operational depth and the necessity for delivering missile/nuclear strikes will have become most critical, these missiles will have lost their combat effectiveness.

To ensure the timely readiness of missiles, the missile technical units must be brought to full combat readiness two to three days earlier than the missile units. In connection with this, the missile technical support service must be maintained at full T/O&E even in peacetime.

When bringing the troops to combat readiness, getting the mobile reserves underway is the most labor-consuming thing. This measure can be speeded up by organizing it ahead of time and by improving the technical support of loading operations.



Special requirements with respect to combat readiness are levied on the forces and means of air defense. They must be in a state in peacetime such that they would not have to undergo substantial reorganization at the beginning of a war.

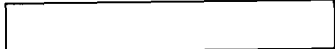
In the report and the speeches it was noted that immediately before the enemy attack or at its onset, the front can regroup part of its forces over a great distance. When directing such a regrouping and its support the most important tasks will be to shorten the time required for movement as much as possible and to maintain the combat effectiveness of the troops. Therefore, it is considered that a day's march must cover 250 to 300 kilometers, and that each large unit must move along at least two routes.

The participants in the conference said that missile units and large units already can complete a march by organic means over a distance of 1,200 to 1,400 kilometers without losing combat effectiveness. However, there was expressed a desire for further work on the part of design engineers to increase the range of transport of dismantled missiles to 2,000 kilometers, and of those assembled and prepared for launching (those on transport trailers and on launchers) -- to 500 kilometers and 200 kilometers, respectively.

The most important task which the front must carry out at the very beginning of a war is to participate in disrupting and repelling the enemy attack.

- o It is known that the disruption of an enemy attack is carried out according to the General Headquarters plan, and primarily with its means -- the strategic rocket forces and long range aviation. The General Headquarters also specifies the moment for the delivery of the initial missile/nuclear strike. The forces and means of the front and fleet can participate only partially in the initial missile/nuclear strike. Their targets will be enemy missiles in launching positions, border groupings of troops, guidance and control posts, naval bases and ports, and industrial and administrative centers. The disruption and repelling of an enemy
- o nuclear attack from the sea is particularly important for a coastal front. This task will be carried out primarily by the forces of the fleet and of the General Headquarters, by the delivery of strikes against aircraft carrier strike large units and missile submarines.

The scope of the first front offensive operation. In the main report it was noted that the strategic importance of the coastal axis, as well as the extensive employment of missile/nuclear weapons and the participation



in the operation of large-scale forces and means of all branches of the armed forces will attach a decisive nature and great spatial scope to the first offensive operation.

A possible objective of such an operation might be the destruction of an enemy coastal grouping, seizure of the straits zone and the seacoast, and the rendering, thereby, of assistance to the troop offensive on the main axis of the theater of military operations.

In order to achieve this objective, the front has to conduct the operation to a depth of 600 to 800 kilometers or more, and in the offensive zone -- up to 200 kilometers. In the process of achieving the objective of the operation the front troops will have to carry out two tasks: the immediate task (having a depth of 300 to 400 kilometers), which will be to destroy the opposing enemy grouping in the border area and, in cooperation with the fleet, to seize the straits zone; and the subsequent task -- to develop a rapid offensive into the depth, complete the destruction of the enemy's deep reserves, seize areas of the shore beyond the straits zone, and create the conditions for the conduct of subsequent operations.

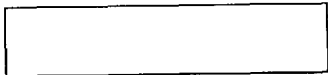
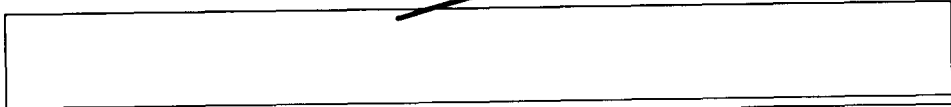
The successful fulfilment of these tasks requires the conduct of combat actions with an average daily rate of advance of 80 to 100 kilometers or more, which the conference participants recognize as fully possible under conditions of wide employment of weapons of mass destruction and increased mobility and maneuverability of troops. The total duration of the front operation will be eight to ten days.

This conclusion as to the possible scope of the operation aroused no objections. However, we should note that neither the person delivering the report, nor those who made speeches, made any attempt to provide thorough substantiation for the indices given for the scope of the operation, nor did they examine the possible ways and means of achieving such high rates of advance under the conditions of a coastal axis.

The methods for routing the enemy. Although recommendations concerning possible methods for routing the enemy were not formulated at the conference, the essence of this matter was treated to a certain extent in the main report and in the speeches.

In the opinion of the participants in the conference the methods for carrying out the tasks of the front will be determined to a considerable degree by the scale and concept for the employment of nuclear weapons on the coastal axis by the means of the Supreme High Command, by the situation





at sea, and above all by the strength of the naval forces of the belligerents and the possible nature of their actions, by the presence of important installations in the coastal zone, as well as by the nature of this zone.

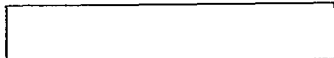
Such a method as splitting up (fragmenting) the main enemy groupings and destroying them in detail, which is achieved by inflicting decisive destruction on the enemy with nuclear strikes immediately followed by a rapid and deep advance of combined-arms, primarily tank, large units in combination with a landing of airborne and amphibious landing forces in the enemy rear, might be the most widely employed. Accordingly, the offensive of the front troops will not be aligned along lines. Large units and units will have to penetrate into gaps not occupied by the enemy in his operational disposition and boldly rush into the deep rear along roads and cross-country routes, and even when there are no roads, in order to move more rapidly into the areas assigned them. Tank divisions in this case, as Colonel Bashuk noted, must separate more boldly from the remaining large units at the very beginning of the operation, so that this separation will already reach 50 to 70 kilometers on the second day, and even more on subsequent days.

Depending on the situation at sea and the presence of installations in the coastal zone, the main attack can be delivered both in the center of the offensive zone and on its flanks. When our naval forces have supremacy on the sea it is more advantageous to deliver the main attack with an enveloping flank in order to split up the enemy and press him to the sea, and, in cooperation with the forces of the fleet, to destroy him. When the enemy naval forces have supremacy on the sea, as well as when there are major ports, naval bases and other important installations in the coastal zone of the front, it might be desirable to deliver the main attack along the seacoast so as to cut the enemy troops off from the sea, the supply bases, and ports. An offensive of the main forces of the front might also be conducted along the shore for the purpose of seizing straits zones in cooperation with the fleet, and seizing naval bases, ports and other installations.

For the purpose of splitting up the enemy groupings, aside from the main attack, the front can deliver two or three secondary attacks, utilizing breaches and poorly covered axes leading out to the flanks and rear of the main enemy groupings.

In the opinion of the conference participants, the seizure of the straits zone will be extremely important in achieving the objective of the





first offensive operation of the front, since the seizure of straits will provide the fleet, and above all its submarine forces, with an outlet into the open sea and into the expanses of the ocean for the delivery of strikes against enemy targets at sea and in coastal zones beyond the limits of the straits.

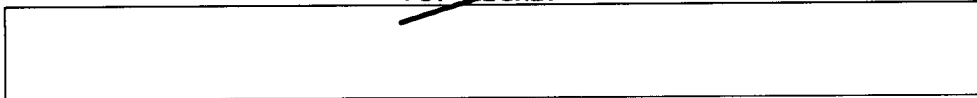
However, at the conference the possible methods of combat actions of the front troops and the fleet forces cooperating with us in seizing the straits zone were not revealed. It was noted only that this task will be carried out in the course of the front operation by conducting one or several landing operations for the purpose of the successive seizure of sectors of the shore of the straits and the islands adjacent to them.

In our opinion, the capabilities of the front troops in negotiating the relatively narrow straits from the march in their own amphibious means (amphibious tanks, armored personnel carriers, motor vehicles, self-propelled ferries, and so on), should have been examined more thoroughly, especially since in the speeches instructive examples were cited from the experience of exercises, when entire tank subunits successfully completed a maneuver on the water in the organic amphibious means of the division.

The stating of the question concerning the essentially new allocation of nuclear weapons according to the tasks of the operation merits attention. As is known, until recently in exercises and war games most of the nuclear warheads issued to the front for the operation were planned and expended for the fulfilment of the immediate task, and in particular, for the initial nuclear strike, in spite of the fact that many fire tasks in the front zone were carried out by the means of the Supreme High Command and in part by those of the fleet, especially in the period in which they delivered the initial nuclear strike. As a result, frequently a considerable portion of the nuclear warheads of the front were employed either in conjunction with the means of the Supreme High Command, or against empty areas, and, as a rule, there was almost nothing left to carry out the subsequent task of the front.

Therefore, considering what has been said, and above all that the initial missile/nuclear strike delivered by the means of the Supreme High Command on an important coastal axis will create favorable conditions for the going over of the front troops to the offensive and will allow them in the course of the first days of the operation to advance against a considerably weakened enemy, the conference participants supported the opinion that most of the nuclear warheads should be planned for the





accomplishment of not the immediate, but rather the subsequent task, that is, for the conduct of the operation in the depth when the effect of the results of the initial nuclear strike against the enemy will gradually diminish, while the help of the strategic means will not be adequate, making it necessary for the front troops to rely on their own forces and means. The following allocation of nuclear warheads has been proposed as one of the possible variants: for the fulfilment of the immediate task (including participation in the initial strike) -- approximately 30 percent, for the subsequent task -- 55 percent, and in the reserve of the front commander -- 15 percent.

It is impossible not to agree with this principle for the allocation of nuclear warheads, although one should take care that the principle (they also discussed this at the conference) does not turn into a stereotype which does not allow for consideration of the situation actually developing. However, the validity of some of the data as to the possible total number of nuclear warheads which can be employed in the zone of the front offensive is questionable. Thus, it was mentioned in the report that 150 to 200 nuclear warheads might be issued to the front for an operation. In addition, in its offensive zone the means of the Supreme High Command can employ 40 to 50, and the means of the fleet 10 to 15, nuclear warheads in the initial strike. It seems to us that the possibility that such a number of nuclear weapons would be allocated to the front requires serious substantiation.

The comments on matters of support of the coastal flank of the advancing front troops are of interest. In the operation being examined, as a result of the high rates of advance, inadequate forces and means, and the special features of the conditions of the naval theater, there will be no need to set up an antilanding defense according to the usual principle. The tasks of security and defense of the seacoast in the course of a rapid offensive must be carried out primarily by maneuvering the necessary forces and means, first of all missile/nuclear weapons, to the threatened axes, as well as by setting up engineer obstacles on these axes. Based on the experience of exercises, we think that one division will be adequate for the security (defense) of every 150 to 200 kilometers of shore.

It is recommended that the allocated forces and means not be stretched out along the entire shore, but positioned a certain distance from it in such a way that a maneuver to the threatened axes could be carried out in a timely manner.





Troop control. All the generals and officers who spoke on this matter commented unanimously that under conditions of the threat of a surprise attack by the aggressor with the wide-scale employment of weapons of mass destruction, and also when swift offensive actions are being conducted or high-speed marches are being carried out, command of the troops cannot be fully ensured without the widespread introduction of means of mechanization and automation of control processes. The existing means have failed to keep pace with the demands made upon them and do not ensure that well-founded decisions will be made in a timely manner, or transmitted to the executors. In spite of this, as General-Mayor Shutsyrin stated, the work of researching and introducing means of mechanization into the troop control processes will be conducted extremely slowly.

General-Mayor Lavrinovich thinks that the existing system of control of air defense forces and means also is inappropriate to present-day conditions for combating the air enemy. The effective and coordinated employment of all the air defense forces and means available in the front to repel massed enemy air strikes is not possible without centralized control of them. Therefore, he proposes to subordinate all the air defense forces and means of the front to one chief who would be completely responsible for the organization and conduct of the air defense of the troops and other installations of the front.

In the main report and in a number of the speeches the desirability of deploying forward command posts, command posts, and rear control posts in the front and armies at the beginning of an operation, was confirmed. In the course of an operation troop control is carried out primarily from the main command post, while the forward command post headed by the deputy commander is moved forward so that it can prepare a new place to which to relocate the command post or from which to carry out specific tasks in one of the sectors of the front. The commander can move to the forward command post only when he has made all the decisions, and the situation dictates that he must be closer to the troops. The chief of staff has to stay at the command post until full control is organized from the forward command post. After this, the main command post takes the place of the forward command post, and the latter again moves ahead.

Comrades (Retired General-Leytenant Shtromberg, Colonel Bashuk, and others) who made speeches on the given matter, supported the proposed system of control posts and the procedure for relocating them. In so doing, it was noted that troop control must be implemented primarily from the main command post, where in addition to the commander must be his main assistant -- the chief of staff. The desirability of this placement of the





commander and chief of staff is confirmed by the experience of troop control in the last war. At the same time, apprehension was expressed at the conference that the location of the commander and chief of staff at one command post might lead to their being put out of action simultaneously.

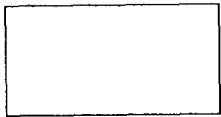
In connection with the high rates of advance and the mobile nature of troop combat actions it is necessary that the control posts have a small T/O and high mobility, and that they be capable of rapidly closing down and deploying. The military district has experience in setting up a mobile army forward command post, which requires no more than five to seven minutes to deploy and to close down. Work also is being conducted on setting up a mobile army command post.

To provide stable troop control it is proposed that each of the three control posts be able at any moment to become the main post and assume all troop control. However, to accomplish such a task the troops and staffs need not only the introduction of means of mechanization and automation into the control processes, but also reinforcement with conventional communications means, especially at the forward command post and the rear control post.

The role of the navy. One of the special features of an offensive operation conducted on a coastal axis is the participation in it of naval forces and the need for efficient cooperation with them.

As was noted at the conference, the main task of the fleet in the course of an operation will be to combat aircraft carrier strike large units. The main means of this combat are missile-carrying aircraft and a unit of atomic submarines. Assistance to the front in seizing the straits zone will be no less important a task. The fleet can be of great help to the front troops when they are making an assault crossing of wide rivers (at the mouth), when bypassing radiation barriers by sea, or when negotiating vast flooded areas. Thus, the forces of the fleet can cover subunits of amphibious tanks capable of completing a 40 to 50-mile (up to 100-kilometer) crossing by water, against the strikes of the naval enemy. Finally, the delivery of cargoes to the front troops by sea will be very important.

In turn, the front can assist the fleet in carrying out its tasks by neutralizing the enemy air defense on the flight routes of missile-carrying aircraft, by covering the forces of the fleet from the air with front means, by destroying and seizing enemy naval bases and ports, etc.





The idea expressed in one of the speeches concerning the autonomous carrying out of tasks by the fleet and front in an offensive operation and the organization of their cooperation solely by dividing the spheres of actions, provoked decided objections. It was noted that the present-day combat means of the fleet and front considerably expand possibilities for very close cooperation between them, and that the mutual penetration of the spheres of actions of these two branches of the armed forces are an objective law. Therefore, at the present time we should be concerned not with isolated actions of the fleet and front but with really joint carrying out of the tasks of the operation being conducted on the coastal axis.

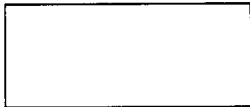
To ensure closer cooperation with the front troops, the portion of the fleet forces which is designated for joint actions can be subordinated to the front commander and, vice-versa, some of the front troops can be subordinated to the fleet commander (for example, when the fleet is carrying out the task of seizing straits zones and islands).

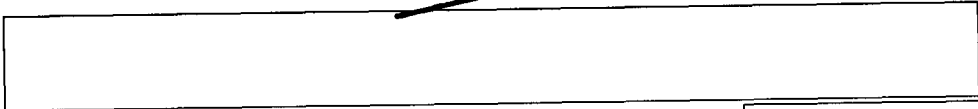
At the conference matters of combating enemy nuclear weapons, air defense, reconnaissance, radioelectronic countermeasures, protection against means of mass destruction, engineer support, rear services support, especially missile technical support, and others also were discussed.

Some of the speakers noted that nuclear means should be employed to destroy enemy nuclear installations only when it is impossible to do this with conventional warheads. Along with artillery, aviation should be more broadly allocated to combat missiles in launching positions where they are located for a very short time. Using the method of free hunting in pairs, the fighter-bombers and fighters can themselves find the target and destroy it with conventional warheads.

The main efforts of the air defense must be concentrated on covering the installations without which it would be impossible to go over to the offensive. In so doing, the tasks of air defense in an operation on a coastal axis are complicated by the presence of an open flank stretched out along the shore, especially when the troops are moving into the depth. At the conference the need for carefully organized cooperation between the field air defense and the air defense of the country was pointed out, as well as the assignment of areas of responsibility for this purpose.

Reconnaissance in a border military district has to be conducted with all available means and methods already in peacetime. In the very first hours of a war the conditions for conducting reconnaissance will worsen, since reconnaissance means will be one of the priority targets of enemy





action. The role of air reconnaissance is growing rapidly -- it is faced with the tasks of accelerating the processing of photographs considerably and mastering methods for conducting radar reconnaissance from aircraft. The participants in the conference emphasized the need for training all subunits to conduct reconnaissance, as well as more extensive training for all staffs and commanders in regard to reconnaissance. A proposal to set up a single system of meteorological support for the troops at the front (army) level was introduced.

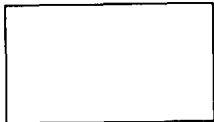
For the purpose of improving the organization of radioelectronic countermeasures an opinion was expressed as to the desirability of subordinating radioelectronic countermeasures subunits, which are now subordinate to the chief of communications, to the operations directorate of the staff of the front, which is concerned with this matter.

The extremely complex nature of organizing protection of the troops against weapons of mass destruction was noted. This protection includes many measures, and a great number of departments, services, and individual executors are concerned with it, but in the staff of the front (army) there is practically no one responsible for organizing it. In connection with this, it was proposed to introduce the positions of assistant commander of the front and army for protection of the troops against weapons of mass destruction.

Special emphasis among the antinuclear protection measures was placed upon the importance of engineer support, particularly for the quickest possible entrenching of troops who are in zones of radioactive contamination. Of interest is the analysis of the case where an advancing large unit suddenly moves under a powerful radioactive cloud and finds itself in a zone having a high level of radiation. It has been shown by appropriate calculations that it will be most desirable in such a situation to rapidly set up very simple shelters for the personnel and to leave the personnel in place until the level of radiation drops. Departure from the area of contamination as the radiation level drops might cause the personnel to receive considerably larger doses of radiation.

At the conference shortcomings in the organization of radiation reconnaissance were noted and it was proposed to include a flight of helicopters in the T/O&E of each division for this purpose.

Engineer support plays a highly important role in an offensive operation on a coastal axis. This is explained in the first place by the necessity for the assault crossing of a great number of rivers at their





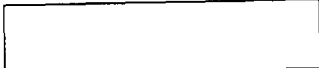
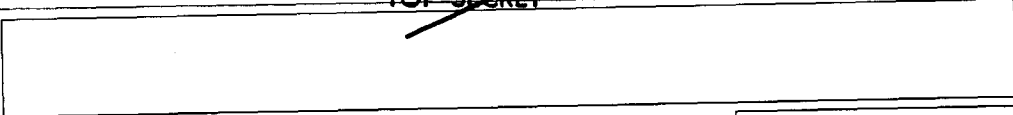
lower reaches. Meanwhile the great variety of existing water-crossing means makes it difficult to carry out an assault crossing at high speed. The participants in the conference proposed developing a single all-purpose water-crossing vehicle which also could be used in assembling ferries and bridges. In addition, an opinion was expressed as to further increasing the independence of large units and formations from the engineer standpoint. They should have the T/O forces and means necessary for an offensive, not for a defense as is now the case. It is especially necessary to have engineer subunits in the missile brigades and in the missile battalions of large units. Those who made speeches proposed reorganizing the engineer troops -- and suggested that an army have separate battalions (road, control post preparation, etc.) instead of a brigade.

For the purpose of improving missile technical support, a view was expressed for transferring some of the mobile missile technical bases to the armies, leaving bases in the front only to support the front units and reserve large units. The need for the quickest possible accomplishment of a matter having to do with the transporting of missiles -- the replacement of all-road transporters with helicopters -- was noted.

In conclusion it should be emphasized that on the whole the conference was in the nature of a creative, active discussion of matters pertaining to the theme, it was of definite benefit in broadening the operational-tactical outlook of the generals and officers, and also contributed to the working out of a unified opinion on a number of matters concerning an offensive operation on a coastal axis.

There were, however, certain shortcomings in the organization and conduct of the conference. The first of them -- the great number of matters slated for discussion. It was not possible, of course, to cover them in the main report even in a general statement. Therefore, a significant number of the speeches were in the nature of short reports supplementing the main report, rather than a discussion of the main thematic matters, especially operational ones. The speeches of some of the specialists -- officers of the branch arms and services -- at times had no direct relation whatever to the theme of the conference. We consider the poor coverage of the specific characteristics of the accomplishment of the thematic matters determined by the special features of the theater of military operations to be another shortcoming. In our opinion, the





identification and research into the special features of troop actions on a coastal axis is one of the main tasks of military science conferences not only of the Baltic Military District but of other coastal military districts as well.

