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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

25 August 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Operational
Cover of the State Border

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 explores the use of special covering forces in a border area to buy time for the deployment of front attack groupings in the event of a surprise enemy attack. The author discusses pertinent aspects of training and planning the employment of these forces, various methods of operational cover, which include combating sabotage and airborne landing forces, combat readiness requirements, and troop control. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) 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

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JN McMahon
John N. McMahon

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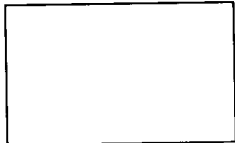
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Operational Cover of the State Border

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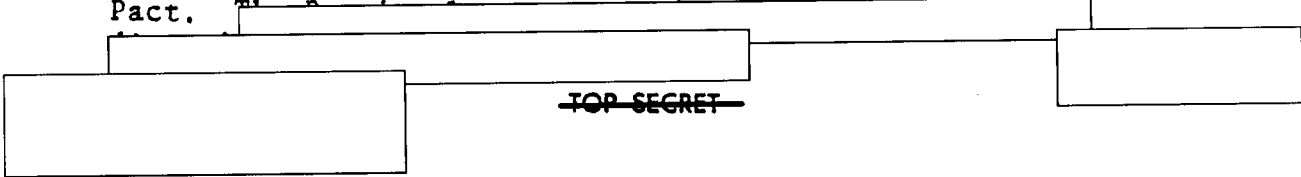
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is General of the Army I. Yakubovskiy. This article explores the use of special covering forces in a border area to buy time for the deployment of front attack groupings in the event of a surprise enemy attack. The author discusses pertinent aspects of training and planning the employment of these forces, various methods of operational cover, which include combating sabotage and airborne landing forces, combat readiness requirements, and troop control. He also touches briefly on the necessary reconnaissance, demolition work, and logistical support.

End of Summary

Comment:

Ivan Ignatyevich Yakubovskiy attained the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1967. Before his death in November 1976 he held the positions of First Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR and Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact.





Operational Cover of the State Border

by

General of the Army I. YAKUBOVSKIY

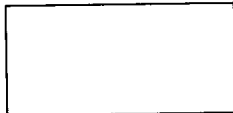
The proper organization and implementation of operational cover of the state border is an important problem of modern military art. The change in conditions and means of conducting armed combat did not remove this problem, but, rather, gave it still greater weight and significance, and ultimately, at the same time, it complicated the entire system of operational cover.

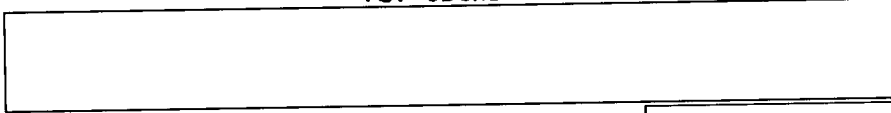
In the last war, as is known, it was exceptionally difficult to successfully carry out a surprise attack. It was necessary to mobilize, concentrate and deploy massive armies on the chosen axes, draw a large amount of combat equipment and weapons up to the border zone, and transport and concentrate large reserves of materiel and equipment. Only after all this could aggressive combat actions be begun.

Of course, it was almost impossible to hide all these measures. The side against whom the attack was being prepared had a certain amount of time to prepare for repulsing the enemy attack and, consequently, it was capable of implementing cover of its state border.

Under modern conditions the presence of strategic means of attack, which are both in constant combat readiness and essentially deployed -- strategic missiles, strategic aviation, the nuclear submarine fleet, and also the necessary minimum of ground forces in the theater of military operations -- allows the accomplishment of a surprise attack or the shortening of the period of threat to a minimum and makes possible the immediate attempt to achieve the immediate strategic objectives of war without carrying out major auxiliary measures.

Thus, new means of combat maximally limit, if not eliminate altogether, the time necessary for implementing cover of the state border, they radically change the very nature of





operational cover, and require a resolute reexamination of its fundamental workings.

The purpose of this article is to examine certain aspects of the theory and practice of operational cover of the state border, promoting further study and development of this matter, based on the experience of major operational exercises and on the practice of combat training of troops.

* * *

The main purpose of operational cover of the state border is to provide favorable conditions for the operational deployment of the attack groupings of a front (army) and their organized commitment to battle. It must have a place in any possible variations of the unleashing of war.

Operational cover is implemented directly by the forces and means designated to conduct a forthcoming offensive operation, and it is a temporary measure, ceasing when the main forces of the front reach their axes. After fulfilling their tasks, the covering troops are included within the first operational echelon of the armies.

The experience of the exercises shows that the conditions for implementing operational cover can be very diverse and depend mainly on the extent to which enemy preparation for attack has been discovered, on the availability of time for moving forces and means out from under his strike, and on the amount of preparation for decisive actions to rout the enemy attack groupings.

Naturally, the conditions which are most advantageous are those where covering troops, even if they have only a minimum of time, can occupy designated areas right at the state border or in the depth of our territory on the main axes of possible enemy attack and can organize cover of the border in a strictly set time limit.

The most complex conditions for organizing operational cover will be those when the enemy will succeed in delivering a forceful surprise nuclear strike, following which his ground forces attack groupings will go over to the offensive, and, on a





number of axes, will penetrate deep into our territory. In this instance, covering troops will not be able to occupy the designated areas in advance. Their task will consist of aggressive, daring and decisive actions to contain the advance of the enemy attack groupings, to deny him a deep incursion, to inflict the maximum losses upon him, to force him to conduct actions under disadvantageous conditions, and to gain time for moving our own attack groupings forward and to support their deployment and organized going over to the offensive.

In a similarly complex situation on certain secondary axes under conditions where the enemy has considerable superiority in forces and means, individual covering units and large units can go over to a temporary defense on advantageous lines in order, through stubborn resistance, to defeat the enemy grouping which has penetrated, bleed it white, and prepare conditions for subsequently going over to a general offensive.

Considering the difficulty of having the covering troops fulfil their tasks with the initiation of combat actions under conditions of an enemy nuclear attack, obviously possibilities should be sought in advance and the necessary measures should be taken secretly, which will ensure the tasks of cover are carried out in time. Obviously we cannot depend on carrying out measures to strengthen cover of the state border in the period of threat, since there may not even be such a period, or it could be very short. Nor can we permit premature disclosure of the entire system of operational cover of the state border. Therefore all activity in this direction must be carefully thought out, planned in detail and kept in strictest secrecy.

Cover of the state border must be implemented in accordance with the concept of the forthcoming operation as an integral part of it. The planning of measures for cover of the state border is a component element of the planning of the initial operations of a future war.

Based on the peculiar features of the theater of military operations, the concept and objectives of the first operations of the initial period of war, the disposition of our troops in the theater, the strength of the enemy, his intentions and possible nature of actions, and also based on the special features of the terrain within the bounds of the zone of the state border, the





commander of the military district determines the composition of forces and means necessary for cover of the operational deployment of troops, and also the tasks and methods of fulfilling them.

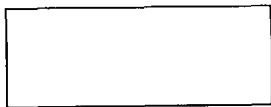
The experience of operational exercises shows that, for cover of the state border, it is suitable to detail a limited number of forces and means capable of supporting the operational deployment of troops of the front under any possible situation of the initial period of war. For this purpose, in the exercises the forces and means usually were detailed from each army of the first echelon of the front to a motorized rifle or tank division, which were reinforced with engineer means.

To accomplish the task of operational cover of the state border, we feel it is advisable to also allocate operational-tactical missile troops, aviation and air defense troops of the front.

[Along with this, under modern conditions, for cover of the state border in border military districts, in our opinion, it is also necessary to have special covering troops, the main body of which should consist of tank troops and antitank guided missile units.] These troops must be highly mobile, positioned near the state border, and must act as a kind of armored shield.

The following should form the basis of the combat training of special covering troops: instruction in rapid withdrawal to their own areas of cover, in employing effective methods of combat against attacking masses of enemy tanks, in implementing rapid and economical maneuvering to threatened axes, in delivering brief forceful attacks against invading enemy groupings, and also in conducting determined combat actions against his superior forces.

The training of special covering troops should be carried out on appropriately equipped training grounds. In conducting division tactical exercises, especially with tank divisions, it is advantageous to employ special covering troops on the opposing side, which, during the course of the exercise, must work on their specific tasks of covering troop deployment.





Special covering troops to a certain extent free tank and combined-arms formations from the tasks of covering the state border, and give them the opportunity to fully concentrate their efforts on achieving the objectives of the forthcoming operation. But they of course do not relieve the commanders of the first-echelon armies of the responsibility for reliable cover of the state border.

The methods of operational cover of the state border for the various theaters of military operations will be diverse. It is completely obvious that under modern conditions it makes no sense to erect permanent, massive and expensive concrete defenses along the state border, wasting the energies of the troops in the process. The experience of the Second World War showed that, when the armies of the aggressor had large masses of tanks and aviation available to be employed in surprise attacks, fortified areas were enveloped by the invading troops, and covering troops, which were not adapted to aggressive and mobile actions, were not capable under these conditions of fulfilling the tasks assigned to them.

In those theaters where the conduct of offensive operations is assumed, cover of the operational deployment of troops will have a clearly expressed active offensive nature, issuing from the basic idea -- that the covering troops together with the attack groupings of the front will subsequently go over to the offensive. This nature of covering actions also determines the battle disposition of the covering troops.

In our opinion, modern operational cover of the state border cannot take the form of a continuous zone of defense, nor be based generally on the principles of multi-zone defense. This would not correspond to modern views on the nature of a future war; it would entail an unwarranted expenditure of forces and means, resulting in the weakening of the attack groupings of the front and complicating troop control.

The experience of exercises shows that it is advantageous to set up operational cover in the following manner. In designated areas of the state border usually at distances of three to five kilometers from it, it is advisable to position only a part (no more than one-third) of the forces allocated from the armies for cover. The main forces should be concentrated in the depth of





the cover zone in readiness to deliver powerful attacks against the invading enemy, or to go over to the offensive together with the first echelons of the armies.

This method of actions affords broad freedom of maneuver and makes it possible to concentrate the efforts of the covering troops on the necessary axis in a short time. At the same time, it has, even from the very outset, an inherent idea of the offensive, which is important, not only from the purely practical standpoint, but also from the psychological standpoint, since it orients the troops in advance to the necessity of preparing themselves for aggressive offensive actions.

Special covering troops will fulfil their tasks through a determined and aggressive defense of the areas assigned to them. After fulfilling these tasks they will be taken into the reserve of the front (army) and be employed subsequently to consolidate captured areas or to fulfil other tasks, just like regular units and large units.

In a surprise enemy attack, the operational deployment of the front can also be carried out under the cover of strong forward detachments.

Troops designated to cover the state border must always be in increased combat readiness. Large units which are in constant combat readiness do not encounter special difficulties in meeting this requirement. However, as for other troops detailed for cover, obviously one must resort to keeping them in increased combat readiness.

In organizing operational cover, proper evaluation of the terrain in the border zone and specification of sectors in which it is necessary to concentrate the main efforts of the covering troops are of considerable importance. These sectors must be solidly covered by the troops, primarily by the tank troops. Also, it is necessary to determine the presence of inaccessible or difficult sections of the terrain, on which aggressive enemy actions are unlikely, to densely cover such sections with engineer-demolition obstacles, and to provide for their fire cover and the maneuvering of reserves.





As soon as the covering troops arrive in their areas, they must, while observing the strictest camouflage measures, immediately begin engineer preparation of the areas. The degree of preparation will depend on the nature of the forthcoming combat actions of the covering troops and the relief of the terrain. In the period of threat or with the start of a surprise enemy attack, it is necessary to increase the obstacles, and for this it is necessary in peacetime to set up reserves of the necessary engineer means and to efficiently position them in the theater in accordance with the operations plan.

The preparation of obstacles and demolition works in the border zone must be carried out so that they do not restrict the maneuvering of our own troops and at the same time are a serious obstacle to the enemy. A large part of the mines and demolitions should be kept in reserve so they can be maneuvered on the apparent axis of enemy actions. It is necessary to determine which installations are subject to demolition in case the enemy begins an invasion (bridges, railway junctions, crossings and others), by making a reconnaissance during peacetime.

In organizing and implementing cover, special attention should be given to conducting reconnaissance. At this time reconnaissance must determine the disposition and primarily the nature of actions of enemy groupings: whether enemy troops are located in permanent deployment areas, in concentration areas, or are deployed in the departure areas for an attack. First and foremost it is necessary to discover the missile/nuclear grouping of the enemy and to determine early his preparation for a nuclear attack.

Reconnaissance must be conducted actively and continuously, not only with the beginning of a threatening situation, but also in peacetime, so that, on the basis of the reconnaissance data, the necessary changes in the plans for cover can be made in a timely manner.

It is completely evident that the enemy will undertake active measures to prevent or disrupt the timely movement of our covering troops into their areas. In particular, he may employ sabotage groups for this. The training of these groups in countries of the West is conducted through a wide network of sabotage centers and schools. In the official guidance





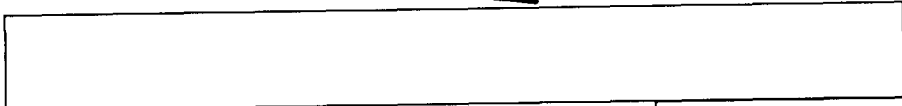
literature of our probable enemies the use of sabotage groups has been elevated to the rank of one of the important principles of conducting modern warfare. Regulations provide for the equipping of sabotage groups with nuclear devices so that they can destroy important targets in the rear, especially those such as railroad and highway bridges over major water obstacles, airfields, railway junctions, depots for nuclear weapons, etc. In his exercises, the enemy devotes much attention to the employment of such groups and detachments. The experience of the exercises is thoroughly studied and relayed to the troops in the form of specific recommendations. It would be improper to ignore all these preparations of the enemy. It is necessary to persistently and skilfully prepare to take the necessary measures to counteract every possible type of sabotage action of the enemy.

During the deployment of the troops of the front, the enemy will make extensive use of airborne landing forces, which may be assigned the tasks of seizing and destroying important targets, positions of missile means and major control posts, depots with nuclear weapons and airfields, attacking columns of moving troops, and isolating the covering troops from the main forces of the front by seizing advantageous natural lines and major water obstacles. Airborne landing forces, cooperating with sabotage groups, can create serious difficulties in the operational deployment of the troops of the front.

Combat against airborne landing forces and sabotage groups must be planned in advance; the possible landing zones of the airborne forces and areas of the greatest activity of sabotage groups, and the forces and means for their destruction, should be determined, and the maneuvering of reserves of all types should be provided for.

Control of covering troops must be firm and continuous. For this, it is advisable in advance to prepare, and when necessary to deploy, the appropriate control posts. In the exercises, especially in instances when several units or large units were detailed to cover the state border, the forward command post was deployed in the area of their forthcoming actions and headed by the deputy commander of the first-echelon army, who was made responsible for the actions of the covering troops within the zone of the army. A small operations group with communications means was detailed to help him.





At the same time, experience shows that in certain conditions of the situation, control over the covering troops can be implemented directly by the army commander simultaneously with the control of the main grouping. Obviously, this will occur most frequently during a surprise enemy attack, and also when going over to the offensive directly from permanent deployment areas.

In organizing control, especially on the eve of combat actions, it is extremely undesirable to transfer responsibility for cover of the state border from one army commander to another who was not directly involved in this matter previously, since because of this involvement he will have to resolve problems connected with the forthcoming offensive operation and simultaneously cover the state border.

When special covering troops are present in a border military district, control of them in peacetime must be exercised by the commanders of the first-echelon armies. With the initiation of combat actions, and also with the movement of armies to their axes, the control of the covering troops must be transferred to the front staff. For this, it is necessary during peacetime to think out in detail and carefully organize reliable communications of the staff of the military district with the covering units, to make sure that the movement of the armies to their axes will not adversely affect the control of these units.

The matter of materiel-technical support of covering troops has considerable importance. Obviously, it is necessary to set up increased reserves for them, especially of ammunition and fuel, positioning them in areas of forthcoming combat actions and carefully camouflaging them.

In organizing operational cover of the state border, a number of matters should be settled for the purpose of achieving cooperation between the large units and units designated to cover the border, and the border guards. With the initiation of combat actions, both the border guard units and subunits operating in a designated cover zone, and the special units located in a given sector, should be made subordinate to the army commander.

The practice of exercises convinces us that, for detailed working out of all matters connected with cover of the state





border, it is necessary to draw up a special plan for cover of the state border, which must be periodically refined, added to, or modified to correspond to the developing situation.

It appears advisable to develop the plan for cover of the border under the direction of the commander of the district with the involvement of the appropriate chiefs and staff officers. This plan can have a written and a graphic part and can include a directive on the organization of cover for each army, which indicates the combat tasks, areas of cover, the nature of actions of the covering troops, cooperation with aviation, with border guard detachments, and with the covering troops of friendly armies, and it can also include individual plans: an air defense plan for the period of the cover and a plan for combat against airborne landing forces and sabotage groups. Besides this, the plan can treat the matters of organizing reconnaissance, communications, radioelectronic countermeasures, and materiel-technical and other types of support.

In conclusion we should say that troops and staffs must be thoroughly prepared in advance to fulfil the tasks of operational cover of the state border, and, for this, they must have substantiated theoretical propositions and recommendations at their disposal.

