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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

22 September 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Modern Means and
Methods of Combat Against Airborne Landing Forces

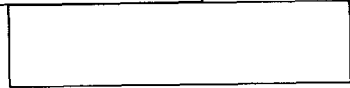
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article describes US military doctrine as holding that potential enemy airborne landings will not take place in one area but will be scattered over a number of areas, and states that the US armed forces intend to use nuclear and chemical weapons, as well as barriers and obstacles, armed helicopters, and mobile operational groups in order to counter such landings. Given the threatened use of these weapons, the article says, airborne landings must be carried out in areas of considerable size. The author finally stresses the need to utilize the qualitative superiority of Soviet helicopters by employing them to counteract the enemy, especially his helicopters. 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

JN
John N. McMahon

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COUNTRY USSR

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DATE OF INFO. Mid-1963

DATE 22 September 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Modern Means and Methods of Combat Against 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 M. Belov. This article cites US military doctrine as holding that potential enemy airborne landings will not take place in one area but will be scattered over a number of areas, and states that the US armed forces intend to use nuclear and chemical weapons, as well as barriers and obstacles, armed helicopters, and mobile operational groups in order to counter such landings. Given the threatened use of these weapons, the article says, airborne landings must be carried out in areas of considerable size. The author finally stresses the need to utilize the qualitative superiority of Soviet helicopters by employing them to counteract the enemy, especially his helicopters.

End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:

The author has also written "A Guide to the Use of Airborne Landings" in Issue No. 6 for 1961 [Redacted] and "The Development of Airborne Landing Large Units and the Creation of Airborne Shock Large Units" in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969 [Redacted]

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Modern Means and Methods of Combat Against Airborne Landing Forces

(According to American Views)

by

Colonel M. BELOV

Changes in the means of armed warfare have forced the command of the US Army to revise certain positions on the use of the forces, means, and methods of antilanding defense.

These changes are reflected in the most generalized form in a US Army secret official regulations manual on combat against airborne landing forces published in 1959.* However, some time has passed since then, and several of the means and methods used for combat against airborne landing forces have received further development.

First of all, it must be noted that the overall positions on the organization and conduct of antilanding defense have not undergone essential changes. As formerly, it is organized on a territorial principle and is regarded as an integral part of the system of measures to be implemented for the purpose of ensuring the security of troops in an area of combat actions.

It is assumed that large airborne landing forces set down by the enemy in several areas will cause much greater difficulties for the defending troops than the same landing forces set down in one area.

It is believed that a considerable number of aircraft dropping small groups over an area of several hundred or thousand square kilometers will disenable the commanders of the defending troops from properly evaluating the situation. Such a landing method may cause one commander confusion, while another will make a wrong decision and dissipate his forces on small targets instead of concentrating forces to smash the main grouping of the hostile landing force. At the same time, the dispersal of units, subunits, and control organs increases their vulnerability to airborne landing

* Combat Against Airborne Landing Forces (Antilanding Defense). US Army Headquarters T. 31-150-1. 1959 (Translated from the English), Moscow, 1961.

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forces, especially since, as a result of strikes against installations in rear areas and their inability to function for a period of time, combat actions by the troops are threatened with disruption. Therefore, it is recommended that steps be taken so that the troops and installations are prepared to repel an attack of enemy airborne landing forces with the use of both active and passive combat means.

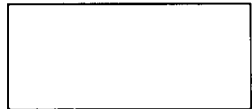
These means include, in particular, nuclear and chemical weapons, armed helicopters, and various obstacles and barriers. Placed at the disposal of the command responsible for the antilanding defense of a given area are mobile operational (tactical) groups.

Nuclear weapons are regarded as means which it is desirable to utilize for the quick destruction of a landing force that has landed, thereby reducing to a minimum the employment of combat large units and units.

Under conditions where the enemy possesses the capability of conducting offensive operations from the front, the allocation of nuclear weapons for antilanding defense will be limited. In these cases, they are intended to be used mainly against large airborne landing forces. Against an airborne landing force landing in small strength, nuclear weapons may be used when the landing force has captured important sectors of the terrain or installations.

However, the use of nuclear weapons to combat an airborne landing force is made difficult for a number of reasons. In the landing areas of the landing force, in addition to the known installations and troops located there, there may also be troops passing through and transport columns with means of supply. The troops permanently located in this locality may be occupied with various activities (guard duty, combat training) in the area of the possible landing of the hostile landing force. The troops passing through and the transport columns will be on the move, for which reason it will not be possible to establish their location quickly and precisely. Moreover, one's own aircraft will be making flights over or near the location area of the target against which nuclear weapons are used.

It is also assumed that the attacking side will usually have at least local superiority in nuclear weapons. By virtue of this, nuclear weapons will have to be used against the most important targets, and it will not always be possible to allocate them for combat against an airborne landing force. The allocation of an additional amount of nuclear attack means by the higher commander depends on the time of the precise evaluation of the



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capabilities of the airborne landing force.

Finally, until the troops of the landing force have begun to deploy in battle formation, it will be hard to get exact information about targets. Consequently, a judgment about the achievement of the desired results of nuclear strikes against the landing force can be made only when its troops have been stopped and contained in defensive positions.

It should be noted that the new tables of organization and equipment of the US Army divisions provide for each infantry battalion to have three Davy Crockett recoilless guns which are intended for the use of very low-yield nuclear warheads. There is also information about the development of other means for delivering nuclear warheads of limited yield. Thus, the French firm of Nord Aviation has developed a version of the SS-12 multipurpose tactical missile which has a nuclear warhead and can be launched from ground launchers as well as from helicopters and low-speed aircraft. The maximum range of fire of this surface-to-surface class missile with a nuclear warhead is 6.5 kilometers.

The American army is known to be purchasing missiles of this type from France. In the US, intensive work is being done to modify and develop new models of similar guided missiles. The main trend in this connection is the development of multipurpose tactical guided missiles of the surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and air-to-surface classes.

All of this increases the enemy's capabilities of using nuclear and conventional weapons against airborne landing forces, which in turn requires finding appropriate countermeasures.

Chemical means are planned for use as active and passive measures of combat against airborne landing forces. In support of counterattacks, non-persistent chemical agents can be used for the purpose of inflicting losses and harassing the personnel of the landing force. Persistent chemical agents will be used in minefields and other obstacles for the purpose of hindering the action of the landing force on the terrain.

Smokes can be used to prevent the landing forces from conducting observable fire. Smoke screening of areas suitable for the landing of a landing force can significantly hinder their actions or wholly disrupt the conduct of the operation. During combat against a landing force that has landed, smoke is planned for use in assisting one's own troops in a counterattack. It is considered advisable to lay a smoke screen directly in the sector of the enemy troops.

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Armed helicopters are planned for use as the most mobile means of delivering strikes against the enemy. In view of the high maneuverability of helicopters, their capability of carrying powerful and varied armament, and also the fact that they can quickly close in on a target, then relocate to a new axis and deliver surprise fire strikes, the American command regards them as one of the most important means for combating airborne landing forces.

It is considered that, given certain conditions, armed helicopters will be the most effective and fastest means of delivering a fire strike against a landing force.

Judging from reports in the foreign press, various helicopter armament systems have been developed in the USA. Among them are also means of delivering nuclear warheads (the 105-millimeter recoilless gun). The developed Vertol-107 helicopter armament system has a whole array of combat means. Besides having an antitank guided missile launcher, which constitutes the basis of its armament, this helicopter is additionally equipped with machine guns and launchers for smaller caliber rockets. The antitank guided missile launcher is reloaded directly on board the helicopter during flight. In this lies the essential superiority of this system over previous ones.

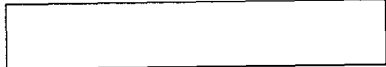
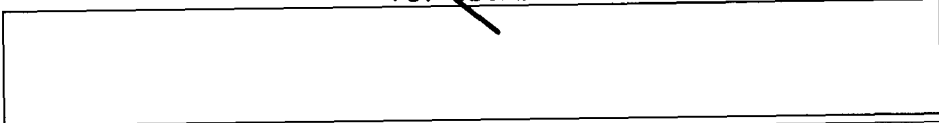
Thus, while tanks were formerly considered the most threatening enemy of a landing force at the moment of its landing and deployment for battle, at the present time armed helicopters are in first place with respect to speed and fire power. It should also be noted that the possibility of delivering fire strikes from helicopters at a considerable distance and their ability to change location quickly and under concealment makes them extremely invulnerable to the existing means of a landing force.

It is considered that armed helicopters can be used successfully to quickly disorganize the landing of a landing force. They can harass the troops of the landing force until large ground forces are committed to battle. Included among the latter with respect to speed of action should be, first of all, the mobile groups.

Mobile operational (tactical) groups are formed of troops allocated to perform a given task for the purpose of conserving forces and means and quickly carrying out measures to combat airborne landing forces. These groups include transport subunits, subunits of fire support, air defense, engineer support, communications, reconnaissance subunits, and basic combat infantry or armored subunits (units), or both.

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With the landing of an airborne landing force in the rear area of a field army and in the administrative zone of a theater of military operations, the mobile operational groups are regarded as the main contingents for destroying the landing force. It is assumed that the presence of these groups makes it possible to concentrate forces and means in the shortest possible time by transferring them over great distances. They must be stationed in a place from which they can quickly reach the area of their probable use.

The following is intended to be the standard composition of a mobile operational group:

-- an airborne division or its units (subunits) with assault transport aircraft, aircraft (helicopters) of the army aviation, and means of coverage from an enemy air attack;

-- an armored division or its units (subunits) with antiaircraft artillery subunits attached to them;

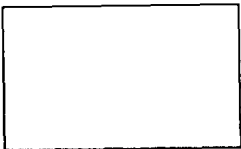
-- an armored cavalry regiment, reinforced if necessary with infantry, armor, artillery, and combat engineer subunits;

-- an infantry brigade with attached helicopters of the army aviation, reconnaissance aircraft of the army aviation, heavy mortars, and light artillery;

-- an infantry group with attached subunits of armored personnel carriers, tanks, self-propelled artillery, field antiaircraft artillery, and combat engineer subunits with the corresponding crossing-and-bridging means.

It is not hard to understand that at the present time, the mobile groups used to combat airborne landing forces are expected to have a stronger composition than was formerly provided for. In addition, the use of airborne and airmobile troops in these groups is fundamentally new. The use of the latter is connected with the search for ways to solve the general problem of increasing the mobility of troops in a modern war.

In the opinion of a number of US Army specialists, one can hardly hope for a significant increase in the speed of the off-road movement of wheeled and tracked transport means. To develop and introduce analogous vehicles that move about in the air will require some time. Therefore, to increase the mobility of troops at the current stage, extensive use of aircraft and



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helicopters is planned. It is considered that these means will provide the mobility that, to the greatest extent, corresponds to the increased fire power.

It is planned to employ airborne and airmobile troops to attack an airborne landing force during its landing. Accordingly, it is considered advisable to carry out the landing of these troops in the areas occupied by the landing force after measures have been taken to ensure the capability of preventing excessive losses of aircraft (helicopters).

The basic mission of an airmobile tactical group that is landed in an area of the actions of a landing force is to disorganize the battle formations of the troops that have landed. At the same time, airmobile tactical groups can be used to secure the flanks of the departure area of the ground mobile operational (tactical) groups.

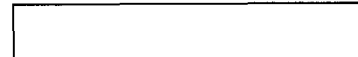
Passive defense measures include the preparation of shelters, the creation of obstacles, the taking of measures directed towards reducing the effectiveness of the use of chemical and nuclear weapons; the elimination of saboteurs, monitoring of the civilian population; camouflage, deception of the enemy, and dispersal of one's own troops. These measures do not call for the use of organic weapons or presuppose taking the initiative.

Among the obstacles and barriers which can be used in areas of the probable landing of a landing force are mines, tree barriers, canals, sharpened stakes, heaps of stones, and old vehicles. At the moment of the immediate threat of landing of a landing force, it is intended to have mobile obstacles at airfields. To hinder the flights of aviation means at low altitudes, provision is made to stretch wires and telephone cables across valleys and between trees. Also possible is the use of available reservoirs to flood the probable landing areas of the landing force and create natural water obstacles.

The importance of obstacles and barriers is evaluated in conformity with the possibilities of covering them with planned fire.

These are the most characteristic changes that have come about in the technical means and views of the US Army command on combat against airborne landing forces. The probable enemy's new means and methods of combat are objective factors. The working out of appropriate countermeasures and, consequently, the successful use of airborne landing forces in the offensive operations of our troops will depend on how early they are discovered and properly evaluated.

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As it appears to us, the landing of airborne landing forces under conditions in which there is the threat of enemy use of nuclear and chemical attack means, especially if low-yield nuclear warheads are available to him, must be carried out in areas of considerable size and in previously dispersed battle formations. It can be assumed that in this case it is more advantageous to have as a compactly operating combat unit of the landing force a highly mobile subunit that is strong in fire power and is the size of a company.

It is also necessary to utilize the qualitative superiority of the Soviet helicopters and to employ them as a combat means to counteract the enemy, especially his helicopters. Arriving in the landing areas before or simultaneously with the landing force, combat helicopters ensure advantageous conditions for the landing of troops, their deployment into battle formation, and their fulfilment of the subsequent tasks.

So that the enemy's measures are not unexpected by the troops of the landing force, the personnel should be familiarized with all the modern enemy means and methods of combat against airborne landing forces.

