

~~TOP SECRET~~

3604

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

25 January 1978

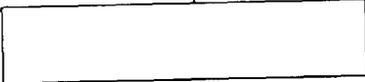
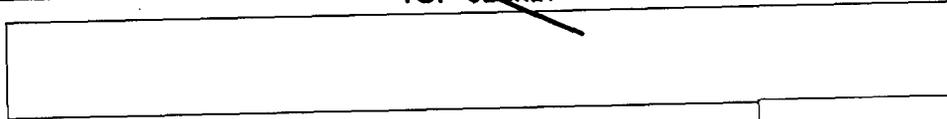
MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Against
Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces

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 generally critical article disputes assertions made in an earlier article to the effect that enemy airborne landing forces are best destroyed in the air and that fighter aviation is the best means for this. The author here would allow more flexibility of method to meet the situation, and considers surface-to-air missiles less vulnerable than aircraft as a means of combat. He also takes issue with the use of combined-arms forces in ground action and treats antilanding combat within the context of a defensive operation. This article appeared in Issue No. 5 (66) 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

JOHN N. MCMAHON

~~TOP SECRET~~



Distribution:

The Director of Central Intelligence

The Director of Intelligence and Research
Department of State

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Intelligence
Department of the Army

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence
U. S. Air Force

Director, National Security Agency

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Director of the National Foreign Assessment Center

Director of Strategic Research



[Redacted]



Intelligence Information Special Report

Page 3 of 12 Pages

COUNTRY USSR

[Redacted]

DATE OF INFO. Late 1962

DATE 25 January 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Against Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 5 (66) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Lieutenant Colonel G. Ionin. This generally critical article disputes assertions made in an earlier article to the effect that enemy airborne landing forces are best destroyed in the air and that fighter aviation is the best means for this. The author here would allow more flexibility of method to meet the situation, and considers surface-to-air missiles less vulnerable than aircraft as a means of combat. He also takes issue with the use of combined-arms forces in ground action and treats antilanding combat within the context of a defensive operation.

End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:

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.

[Redacted] the article to which it refers was [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

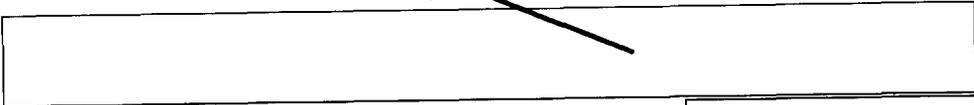
Combat Against Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces
by
Lieutenant Colonel G. IONIN

The need to work out the problems of combat against enemy airborne landing forces is forcefully presented in the guidance documents on operational and combat training. The operational training of formations of troops has tended to underestimate the importance of this type of combat. It does not always receive the attention it deserves, apparently the result of a lack at present of the relevant fully developed views being reflected in the regulations, manuals, and training texts. In this connection the article by Colonel A. LAPENIN entitled "Combat Against Enemy Operational Airborne Landing Forces",* is highly useful.

The author has not only raised a number of important questions, but has also succeeded in presenting the basic principles which may be employed during exercises when organizing and conducting combat against large airborne landing forces. His estimates of the capabilities of fighter aviation and of surface-to-air missile units in opposing an airborne landing operation by enemy troops are quite convincing. Many of Colonel A. LAPENIN's recommendations could serve as a basis for further discussion of this subject.

At the same time certain principles stated in the article are open to challenge. For example, when discussing the sequence and methods of combat against airborne landings, Colonel A. LAPENIN gives preference to destroying them in the air. He indicates that at present the destruction of an airborne landing force while it is being delivered to the areas of a landing operation must be considered the primary method of combat against large enemy airborne landings by the forces and means of a front. The destruction of transport aviation and troops in the departure areas for a landing operation, as well as the destruction of a landing force after it has landed (or been dropped) are, in his opinion, of less importance. This, of course, is doubtful.

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," No. 1 (62), 1962.

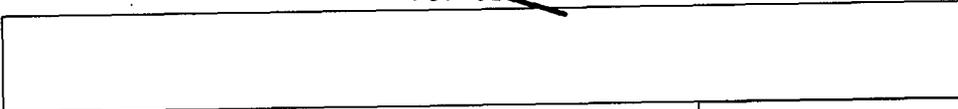


It is very difficult and even undesirable to determine in advance and to categorically contend that for all cases there is one single method of antilanding combat, elevating it to the rank of being the principal method for any situation. Each time the methods of combat are determined by the situation. And the basic method will be the one which under the specific conditions of the operational situation inflicts the greatest amount of damage on the enemy. In some cases the destruction in the concentration areas and on the departure airfields of the military transport aircraft and troops allocated for the landing operation will be the main method of combat against an operational airborne landing; in other cases destroying them during the landing operation will be the main method; in a third case it may be destroying them during combat actions after a landing in the rear of a front. Therefore, the author's contention that under modern conditions the destruction of military transport aviation and of the airborne troops in their areas of concentration and on the departure airfields cannot be the basic method of combat against large airborne landings is unconvincing. To take this position is to deny the possibility of thwarting an enemy airborne landing operation before it begins.

Through calculations Colonel A. LAPENIN determined that eight to ten nuclear warheads are required to thwart a landing operation by an airborne division. Proceeding on the assumption that a front will be unable to allocate such a quantity of nuclear weapons to carry out this task, the author points out the need at that time to conduct antilanding combat with limited goals. Moreover, he considers conventional and chemical weapons and the means of delivering them -- front bomber aviation -- to be the principal means of destroying an airborne landing force in the departure area for the landing operation. The latter is suggested on the one hand by the considerable distance from the forward edge (400 to 600 kilometers) of the departure areas for landing operations by operational airborne landing forces, and on the other hand, by the presence in a front of a limited quantity of long-range missiles.

Naturally when applied to such conditions the author's statements are entirely correct. But in another situation, where enough nuclear weapons are on hand and they can be allocated for combat against an airborne landing, we should hardly reject this alternative. It seems to us that even the necessity of expending



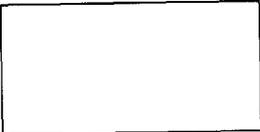


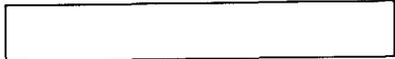
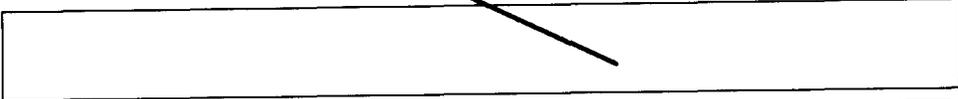
a comparatively large quantity of nuclear warheads must not under any circumstances be a reason to reject the idea of disrupting a landing operation while it is in preparation. Often it will be much more advantageous to expend eight to ten nuclear warheads and disrupt a landing operation by a large airborne landing force, than to permit the movement into the rear of a front of the main forces of an enemy airborne division, which has up to 34 launchers capable of employing nuclear weapons. If, after all, the American command allocates six to nine units of nuclear warheads at exercises to support the combat actions of an airborne division, then why should a front command not use eight or ten nuclear warheads to thwart a landing operation by enemy troops?

A landing by a large landing force, as the author correctly believes, can, in general, adversely affect the development of a front operation. Therefore, a front commander will often be greatly interested in thwarting an airborne landing by enemy troops before it begins, and given the availability of appropriate means, he always attempts to do so. Furthermore, front missiles will most often be the means of delivering nuclear warheads to target. Because of their launch range they may prove capable of inflicting destruction on military transport aviation on departure airfields and on landing troops in the departure areas for the landing operation. Both the former and the latter may be situated not 400 to 600 kilometers from the line of contact of the two sides, but only 150 to 350 kilometers, especially when the enemy is preparing a frontal counterattack (with the employment of an airborne landing force in support of it) against the grouping of front troops that has penetrated the farthest. In such a situation the rocket troops will, of course, be the principal means of delivering nuclear, and also chemical, weapons to target.

Thus we can confirm the advisability and the possibility under certain conditions of disrupting an airborne landing operation before it begins, and that converting this possibility into a reality by delivering nuclear strikes against the landing forces and means in the departure areas may become one of the most important methods of combat against enemy airborne landings.

We cannot agree with the author's assertion that fighter aviation is the principal means of destroying a landing force in

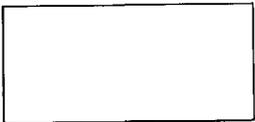


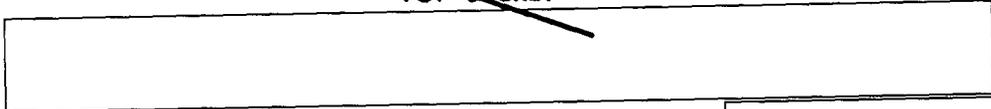


the air. The author reached this conclusion by the simple calculation that 180 aircraft allocated for combat against an operational airborne landing force in flight will be able to destroy up to 220 to 250 enemy transport aircraft, while surface-to-air missile units can destroy up to 100 to 110. In making this calculation, the author chose one of the most favorable possible situations, in which, in addition to surface-to-air missile units and a front air army, a considerable portion of the forces of adjacent fronts and of an army of the air defense of the country is allocated to destroy in the air the enemy troop-carrying and tactical aviation supporting the landing operation. It is true that in such a situation the destruction of the airborne landing force during the landing operation may be the basic method of combat against a large enemy airborne landing force in a front operation. However, in less favorable circumstances, when the fighter aviation of adjacent fronts will be unable to provide assistance in combat against a landing force while it is being transported by air, the estimates will look somewhat different. And if we also take into account the fact that the US Army intends to carry out airborne landing operations as a rule only after gaining air superiority, then in such a situation we can hardly count on decisively destroying a large landing force in the air using fighter aviation.

Surface-to-air missile units and antiaircraft artillery are less vulnerable than aviation to the means of air cover of an airborne landing force, and in a whole series of cases may prove more effective in destroying military transport aviation in flight and during the landing (drop) of a landing force.

The experience of World War II showed that the side employing airborne landing forces as a rule was able to deliver landing troops to the drop areas (landing areas) without suffering substantial losses, especially from enemy aviation. However, after the war great changes occurred in the character of antilanding combat. These stemmed mainly from the appearance of nuclear weapons and long-range means for their delivery, and subsequently of surface-to-air missile units and the improvement in the qualities of aviation and of means of reconnaissance against an air enemy. The new factors in combat against airborne landing forces are reflected first of all in the opportunities which have opened up for carrying out preemptive actions; i.e., disrupting airborne landing operations being prepared by the

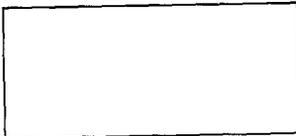


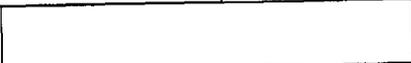
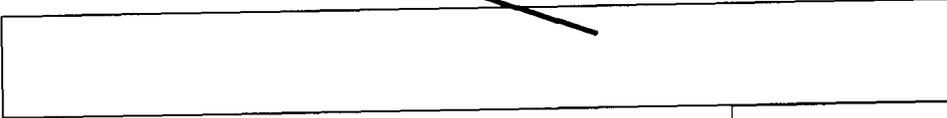


enemy, or inflicting tangible losses on the forces and means designated to take part in them. In other words, objective conditions presently exist which make it possible to thwart, weaken, or considerably delay the carrying out of an enemy airborne landing operation by delivering preemptive strikes. Admittedly, the measures designed to thwart the employment of enemy airborne landings are far from certain to produce the desired results. Therefore, we should not give up studying the problems of destroying airborne landing forces in the air or after they have landed or been dropped. We may assume that these methods will occur with great frequency in combat practice.

We agree with Colonel A. LAPENIN's statement to the effect that to coordinate the actions of various forces when destroying a landing force on territory occupied by front troops, we must establish zones of responsibility for troops of the armies of the first and second echelons, as well as a front zone. The latter is divided into areas of responsibility of large units in the front reserve and those withdrawn for rest and for bringing up to full strength, and units and large units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as large units of the Reserve of the Supreme High Command concentrated in the front zone. There can be no doubt that the designation of zones of responsibility contributes to a more purposeful and specific organization in combat against enemy airborne landing forces and also helps to solve the problem of allocating forces and means for antilanding combat. Urgent recommendations on the need to designate such zones may also be found in certain training texts.

When discussing the forces and means of combat against an operational airborne landing force which has already landed, the author supports the accepted principle that the troops located near the landing area (drop area) of the landing force are the ones primarily called upon to destroy the enemy. He further points out that to accomplish this goal it is most advantageous to employ combined-arms large units which are executing a march from the depth, and are located at the approach to the drop areas of the landing force. For this, in his opinion, it is sufficient to change their route and direct them to the landing area, and from the march they will go into action against the landing force and destroy it. In our opinion it is impossible to agree with this unreservedly. We shall try to demonstrate this.



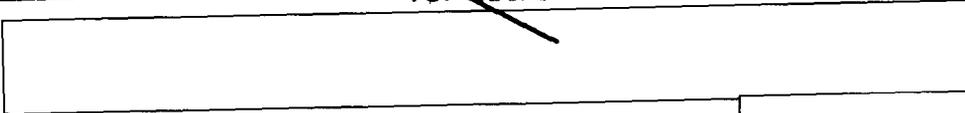


X Our probable enemies plan to make extensive use of airborne landings during an offensive. The employment of landing forces in defense is a rare phenomenon; it occurs mainly when carrying out counterattacks; i.e. the accomplishment of tasks of defense through offensive actions. In the process it is planned to carry out counterattacks at least to the depth of the airborne landing drop. In other words, combat against an enemy airborne landing is most typical of defense, and we shall therefore discuss these questions as they apply to a defensive operation by part of the forces of a front.

From the standpoint of antilanding combat, the calling in of units and subunits from second echelons and reserves to destroy airborne landing forces, especially those which are closer than the others to the drop areas (landing areas), is preferable. But this solution to the problems may not always contribute to the success of the defense as a whole. We would recall that one of the most important tasks assigned by the enemy to his airborne landing forces is to contain the reserves of the defense and establish conditions for defeating the defending troops in detail. If we call in for combat against an airborne landing second-echelon (reserve) forces which are designated to carry out counterattacks and are located near the landing area, then we may be certain that our counterattack will fail. An enemy landing force which has landed will draw off part of the forces, let us say, of the second echelon, and as a result the efforts of the defense will be split up. Favorable conditions will be created for the successive destruction by the enemy first of the first echelon and then of the second echelon of the operational disposition of our troops. Therefore, the existing proposition that to destroy enemy forces that have landed, forces and means in all cases must be allocated from the second echelon or reserve, in our opinion, is not entirely correct.

When solving the problem of allocating forces and means for combat against airborne forces which have landed, we must proceed mainly from the concept of a defensive operation, from the question of how we plan to wage combat against superior enemy forces with decisive actions involving either the destruction of the enemy with nuclear weapons and counterattacks, or by stubborn resistance on advantageous lines. Obviously, in the former case it would be better to have in the operational disposition of front troops an independent element, composed of troops

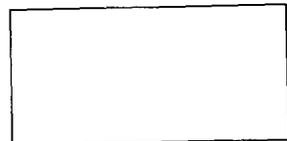


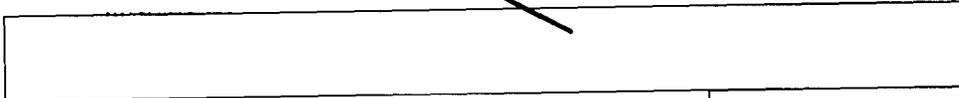


especially designated for combat against landing forces that have landed, so that the latter will be unable to prevent active mobile actions by second echelons, while in the second instance the destruction of the enemy landing force would best be assigned to second echelons (reserves). The allocation in advance of troops whose primary function is to wage combat against an enemy airborne force that has landed -- under modern conditions an objective necessity -- is gaining favor.

Nor can we agree entirely with the author's assertion that for combat against an enemy force that has landed it is advantageous to use combined-arms large units which are executing a march from the depth and are approaching the drop areas of the landing force. The author's recommendations on this matter are applicable only under conditions where the troops are executing a regrouping; i.e. movements not connected with the carrying out of specific combat tasks, but whose goal is the redeployment of large units from one area to another. However, such conditions will more likely be the exception rather than the rule, especially during the initial period of a war. In the event of a surprise enemy attack during this period of a war, combined-arms large units in a majority of cases will begin to move into areas where they, having been deployed from the march, are to enter combat or act as cover. The enemy at the same time will make every effort to thwart the movement of our troops. His airborne landing forces landed or dropped on the paths of movement of our troops may be a serious obstacle to the completion of the tasks assigned to the advancing large units.

It would appear that troops which are executing a maneuver (movement forward) even when they encounter an enemy airborne landing force should avoid committing their main forces to battle and instead continue to perform the tasks before them, covering themselves with part of the forces from possible strong actions on the part of the enemy that has landed. The destruction of the landing forces in such a situation will be carried out by units specially assigned for this purpose. Only with absolute superiority of the advancing troops, which ensures the quick destruction of an enemy that has landed, or when it is impossible to avoid combat actions against the landing force should our troops attempt to destroy it on their routes of movement as quickly as possible by fire and by attacking it from the march. But even here combat against a landing force is not a goal in





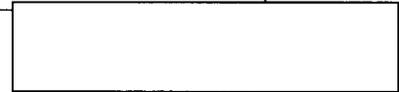
itself, but merely a condition which ensures the fulfilment of the primary task. Commanders of large units, when deciding on the destruction of an enemy airborne landing force, must proceed from this premise.

Under other situational conditions, however, the allocation of even part of the forces of advancing large units for combat against a landing force may not always be correct. For example, when combined-arms large units are moving up from the depth to participate in a counterattack, develop an offensive, or conduct defensive actions in a certain zone, they must not enter combat against a landing force. If combined-arms large units advancing from the depth and allocated for combat against an enemy attacking from the front become involved in combat against his airborne landing forces, they will not fulfil their main tasks. The practice of operational training of the troops convinces us of this. For example, at the army exercises of the Carpathian Military District, two divisions moved up from the depth of the operational formation of the defending troops and were designated to carry out a counterattack. During the march they became involved in combat against an "enemy" operational airborne landing force. The landing force by its actions succeeded in delaying the advance of these two divisions for a whole day, and in the end they did not fulfil their main task.

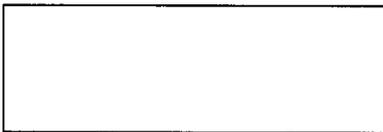
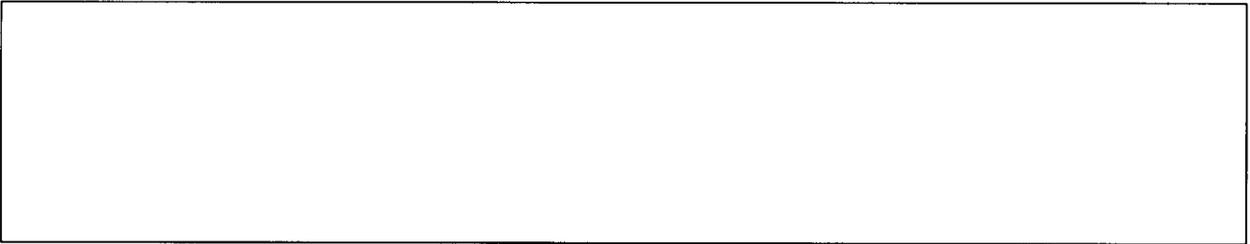
When accomplishing the tasks of combat against large enemy airborne landing forces, the commanders at all levels must carefully consider the specific conditions of the situation and in the process display creativity and initiative. These qualities in officer personnel will depend to a large extent on their training in the matters of organizing and conducting antilanding combat. But for a number of reasons the training of troops in this field as of now leaves much to be desired. Training in the organization and conduct of combat against enemy airborne landing forces must, in our opinion, be conducted at all levels of command, including rear services units and facilities. In the system of commander training, at command-staff exercises, and at exercises with troops, we must thoroughly study the views of probable enemies on the employment of airborne landing forces, as well as master in practice the questions of organizing and conducting antilanding combat under conditions of extensive use by the enemy of the airborne landing of troops.



~~TOP SECRET~~



Page 12 of 12 Pages



~~TOP SECRET~~

