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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

6 July 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Arriving at
a Decision to Employ Nuclear Means

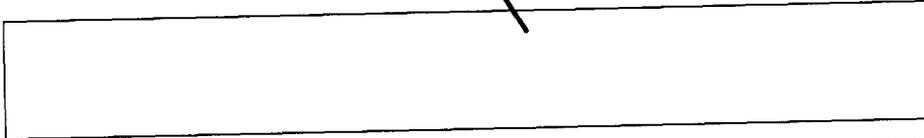
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article examines changes needed in the content of the decision for an operation and in the method of working it out to reflect the role played by nuclear weapons in the conduct of modern warfare. Among the matters discussed are the selection of targets to be destroyed by nuclear weapons, the delivery means for these weapons, and the time and sequence of the nuclear strikes. The specific work carried out by different staffs when planning the employment of nuclear weapons is briefly mentioned, as well as the system of control of these means. Regarding control, it is carried out on the basis of the individual missile units' organizational affiliation and is usually organized from two control posts utilizing secure communications channels. 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

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1962

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DATE

6 July 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Arriving at a Decision
to Employ Nuclear Means

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 General-Major of Artillery V. Kritskiy and Lieutenant Colonel V. Kreia. This article examines changes needed in the content of the decision for an operation and in the method of working it out to reflect the role played by nuclear weapons in the conduct of modern warfare. Among the matters discussed are the selection of targets to be destroyed by nuclear weapons, the delivery means for these weapons, and the time and sequence of the nuclear strikes. The specific work carried out by different staffs when planning the employment of nuclear weapons is briefly mentioned, as well as the system of control of these means. Regarding control, it is carried out on the basis of the individual missile units' organizational affiliation and is usually organized from two control posts utilizing secure communications channels.

End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:

[Redacted] 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.

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Arriving at a Decision to Employ Nuclear Means

by

General-Mayor of Artillery V. KRITSKIY
Lieutenant Colonel V. KRELA

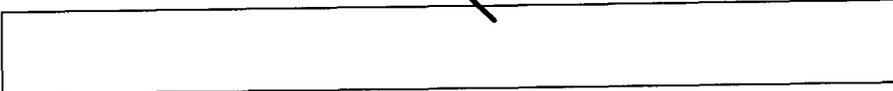
At present, problems concerning the combat employment of nuclear weapons are being discussed extensively in the military press, undoubtedly contributing to the development of common views in this field. In this article we want to touch upon some, in our opinion, urgent problems concerning the combat employment of nuclear weapons which were prompted by the practice of operational training and by the experience of exercises.

Now the common opinion has already been confirmed that nuclear weapons when massively employed are the main means of destruction, decisively influencing the course and outcome of an operation. Consequently, the primary purpose of these weapons is not to protect and support tanks and infantry, but to conduct aggressive combat actions, to carry out the bulk of the tasks of destruction, to bring about an abrupt change in the balance of forces in the zone of troop actions, and to achieve the goals of the operation in conjunction with the other forces and means participating in it.

The employment of nuclear weapons has become the main substance of troop combat actions. However, many military commanders still view the purpose of nuclear weapons as support for the actions of combined-arms or tank formations (large units). Often, for example, one may hear the assignment of tasks worded like this: "Deliver nuclear strikes against the targets to support the breakthrough of the enemy's defense..." or: "Deliver so many nuclear strikes to support the commitment of the reserve to the engagement."

Such wordings are indicative of the erroneous view of the combat capabilities of nuclear weapons and the belittling of their role in armed combat.

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Since the massed employment of nuclear weapons in an operation has become the main substance of combat actions, then, naturally, problems concerning the combat employment of these weapons must also be primary in the decision of the troop commander for an operation.

As the experience of exercises shows, in many instances the decision for an operation was worked out in the old way by methods employed as far back as the Great Patriotic War, with some modernization, of course. In the course of many exercises when preparing and making a decision for an operation, first problems concerning actions of combined-arms and tank formations (large units) were resolved but then nuclear strikes had already been "tied in" with these actions. This led to the fact that the primary decisive means for achieving success in an operation were not purposefully employed; the efforts of the nuclear means were scattered over the entire battlefield. As a result, the combat effect which might have been expected considering the enormous yield and actual combat capabilities of nuclear weapons was not achieved.

The employment of nuclear weapons requires a radical change in the content of the decision for an operation and in the method of working it out.

The making of a decision and the planning of any modern operation must begin in the first place with the determination of the purpose for employing nuclear weapons; that is, with the determination of what the formation commander wants to achieve by the massed employment of nuclear weapons which he has at his disposal. Proceeding from the purpose for employing nuclear weapons in an operation, their tasks as well as the targets for destruction are determined. The latter are allocated among the different means of delivery of nuclear weapons in accordance with their combat capabilities and purposefulness.

The missile/nuclear strikes, tasks, and axes for the actions of the tanks and infantry must be closely coordinated. It is desirable to plan the combat actions of the combined-arms and tank formations and large units so that with the greatest effect they can exploit the results of massed nuclear strikes to rapidly complete the destruction of the enemy and to achieve the ultimate goal of the operation. Single nuclear strikes can be designated



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to destroy targets which impede the rapid advance and exploitation by tanks and infantry of the results of massed nuclear strikes.

The nature and scope of the tasks being carried out by nuclear weapons will be determined primarily by the concept of the operation, by the number of nuclear warheads allocated, by the availability of means for the delivery of nuclear weapons, and by the nature of the opposing enemy grouping.

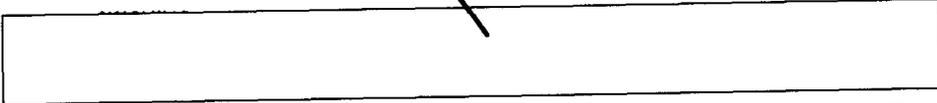
The method for working out a decision for an operation may vary and will depend on many conditions. Without trying to give any stereotype, we would like to suggest one of the possible methods for preparing a decision for an operation.

Naturally, the clarification of the task and the assessment of the situation must precede the making of any decision. Depending on the availability of time and on other factors, either the staff of the front with a subsequent report to the troop commander, or the commander himself, enlisting the necessary officials, can carry out preparation of the data and fundamental proposals for making the decision.

In the first instance the front chief of staff, jointly with the chief of rocket troops and artillery, the commander of the air army, and the chiefs of the operations and intelligence directorates of the staff of the front prepare data concerning the most important targets against which it is advisable to deliver nuclear strikes, the availability and combat capabilities of the means of delivery of nuclear weapons, and the availability, arrival and degree of readiness of the nuclear warheads; they work out proposals concerning the goal for employing nuclear weapons and the tasks of nuclear weapons, the possible allocation of the targets to be destroyed among the means of delivery of nuclear weapons, the allocation of nuclear warheads by tasks and formations (large units), the time and sequence of nuclear strikes, the tasks of formations (large units), the grouping of forces, including also missile/nuclear means, and also on measures for combat support of missile units and troops of the front as a whole.

Since the selection of targets subject to destruction by nuclear weapons, the determination of the time and sequence of

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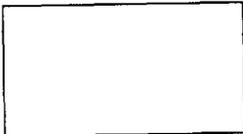
their destruction, and also some problems of the combat support of missile/nuclear means are the most important components of the decision for an operation, we will dwell on these problems in greater detail.

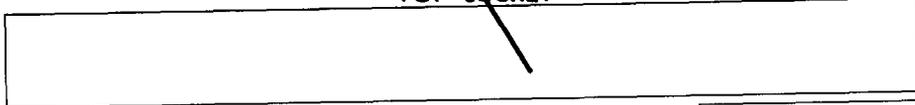
The selection of targets to be destroyed must adhere strictly to the concept of the operation in order to promote the most effective employment of the nuclear warheads allocated for the operation, and to prevent the efforts of the nuclear weapons from being dissipated.

The enemy means of nuclear attack, the troops of the main grouping of ground forces, the main grouping of aviation and air defense troops, major command posts, control and guidance centers, important rear installations and transportation centers will be the main targets subject to destruction by nuclear weapons in an operation.

The number of targets to be destroyed will depend on the concept of the operation and on the specific situational conditions. As the experience of exercises shows, the number of nuclear warheads allocated is not always enough to destroy all the targets. Therefore, when solving the problem of employing nuclear weapons in an operation, it becomes necessary to select from the large number of targets which can be destroyed by these weapons only the most important ones, whose destruction will result in the disruption of massed employment of nuclear weapons by the enemy and an abrupt change in the balance of forces, and will promote to the greatest extent the rapid attainment of the goals of the operation.

Since gaining fire superiority over the enemy and retaining it during the entire operation is the main problem in a modern operation, then, naturally, the enemy means of nuclear attack, as the basis of the enemy's fire power, will be targets of paramount importance. However, the different means of nuclear attack are of unequal value. The installations, shops, bases, and depots where nuclear warheads are produced, assembled and stored are the most advantageous and important targets for destruction. The destruction of these targets can bring immediate destruction to a considerable number of enemy nuclear warheads.





The destruction of the strategic, operational, and operational-tactical nuclear means which have considerable capabilities for maneuvering nuclear strikes both along the front and into the depth is very important.

When assessing the tactical means for delivering weapons as targets for destruction by nuclear weapons, one must take into consideration the effect attained by this. It is desirable to deliver nuclear strikes against subunits of tube artillery which employ nuclear warheads, only in those instances when this task cannot be carried out by other means.

As is known, not only nuclear strikes but also artillery strikes and air strikes employing conventional and chemical warheads, the actions of airborne and amphibious landing forces, sabotage groups, etc., are employed to destroy the enemy means of nuclear attack. One must take this into consideration when determining the targets to be destroyed by nuclear weapons. //

The troops of the enemy's main grouping are important targets for nuclear action. When the capabilities for destroying this grouping are limited, it is advisable to select its most important part, above all, the armored large units and units.

The troops of the main grouping of enemy forces are destroyed, first, on the axis of the main attack of the front troops which, as is known, is selected taking into account the concept and goals of the operation, the possibilities for massing the efforts of the nuclear weapons, and the actions of the main grouping of one's own troops.

When carrying out the task of destroying the main grouping of enemy troops one must remember that it is better to act against a limited number of targets, but it is more effective than destroying all or a large part of them and not obtaining the required result. Separate, uncoordinated nuclear strikes against the combined-arms and tank large units, as the experience of the exercises shows, do not produce a great effect, since although these large units sustain known losses, they preserve their combat effectiveness and prevent the troops of the front from attaining the goals of the operation. //



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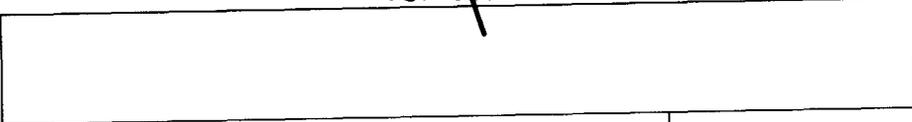
The large operational enemy reserves can be destroyed both in concentration areas as well as during their movement forward and deployment. When destroying the reserves in concentration areas it is desirable to employ high-yield nuclear warheads and to widely practice the delivery of ground nuclear strikes, taking into consideration the meteorological conditions, striving to cover a large part of the area where radioactive fallout is concentrated with high levels of radiation.

The major command posts and control and guidance centers of unmanned means and aircraft are advantageous targets of destruction. Their destruction leads to a disruption in the control of enemy missile/nuclear means, troops, and aircraft which, naturally, introduces an element of disorganization and affects the combat effectiveness of enemy troops and, consequently, promotes the successful carrying out of tasks by the troops of the front. Of course, different control posts have varying levels of importance. The operational command posts are the most important.

The destruction of rear installations and transportation centers leads to disruption of the work of the rear services, to partial or complete disruption of the supplying of troops with the primary means for conducting armed combat, and also makes it extremely difficult to maneuver reserves and materiel. However, one should note that the destruction of the majority of these targets cannot affect the combat effectiveness of the enemy missile/nuclear means and the main grouping of enemy troops immediately after nuclear strikes are delivered against them. Therefore, when assessing this group of targets, one must be especially careful in determining the expediency of destroying one target or another with a nuclear strike. During the exercises there were instances when the destruction of some transportation centers created difficulties for the combat actions of not only enemy troops, but also our own troops.

In our opinion, all or a majority of the targets to be destroyed by nuclear weapons in an operation will usually not be shown specifically in the decision of the front commander. It is important that the goal and the overall tasks for the employment of nuclear weapons in a given operation be clearly determined by the decision, that the primary groups of targets or the most important individual targets for destruction on the axis of the

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main efforts of the front troops be selected, and that instructions be given on the planning of nuclear strikes, proceeding from the specific features of the operation being conducted.

Selected targets can be destroyed by nuclear warheads delivered to the target by ballistic missiles, by cruise missiles, and by aircraft. In selecting the means of delivery for destroying one or another target with nuclear strikes the following basic factors are usually taken into consideration:

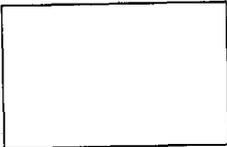
- the capability for carrying out in a timely manner the task for destruction with one or another means of delivery;
- the reliability of carrying out the task for destruction, based on the conditions of the situation which has developed, and the combat capabilities of the means of delivery;
- the availability of nuclear warheads with an appropriate yield for one or another means of delivery;
- the economy of carrying out the task for destruction, i.e., the achievement of the necessary result while employing a nuclear warhead with the lowest possible yield.

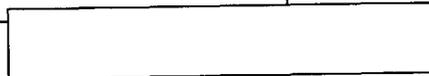
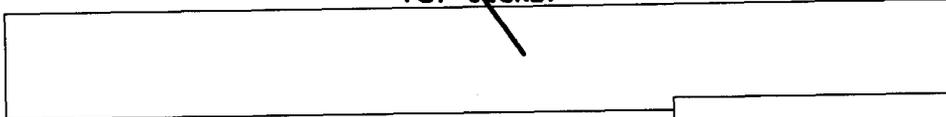
The experience of exercises confirms the position that it is usually desirable to destroy targets reliably covered by air defense means with ballistic missiles; small targets with cruise missiles; and moving targets (moving columns, large ships, etc.) with aircraft.

The fundamental question regarding the allocation of targets to be destroyed among missile/nuclear weapons, aircraft, and, on a coastal axis, the Navy, must be reflected in the commander's decision.

The determination of the time and sequence for the destruction of targets by nuclear weapons is an important problem which must be reflected in the front commander's decision for an operation.

In all cases, the greatest combat effect is attained when all the designated targets are simultaneously destroyed by a massed nuclear strike. Such a strike, besides destroying the designated targets, allows us simultaneously to paralyze the enemy throughout his entire operational depth, and to create





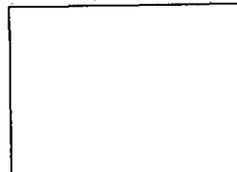
centers of destruction over a large area, and requires great efforts to eliminate its aftereffects and restore the disrupted combat effectiveness of the troops.

However, it is not always possible nor desirable to destroy in one massed nuclear strike all of the most important enemy targets. The following principal reasons account for this:

- the limited number of nuclear warheads ready for employment, and the limited means for delivering these warheads to target;
- the lack of necessary and sufficiently reliable reconnaissance data on all the targets;
- the inexpediency of destroying one target or another, or a group of targets at a given moment, based on the concept of the decision and the nature of the troop actions (thus, for example, it is desirable to time the nuclear strikes against the landing area of the operational landing forces to the time of their landing and not to deliver any nuclear strikes several days before the landing).

Therefore, the successive destruction of targets will also be widely employed in an operation. In so doing, the sequence of destruction can vary greatly. First of all, the most important targets must be destroyed, those whose destruction will decisively affect the fulfilment of the tasks of the operation. This will be above all the enemy means of nuclear attack, the primary part of the main grouping of enemy troops, and the most important control posts. The stationary rear installations and transportation centers will most often be destroyed successively. If the targets for destruction are equal in importance, then preference is usually given to those which have been more thoroughly reconnoitered.

Proceeding from a fundamental solution to the problems of employing nuclear weapons in an operation, the front commander allocates nuclear warheads in accordance with the tasks of the operation among the formations and large units subordinate to the front, leaving a necessary reserve, and he also allocates missile large units and units of the front and determines their grouping, siting areas, time of deployment and readiness, and the procedure for relocating them during the operation.



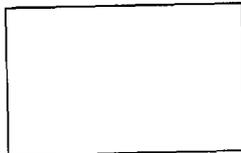


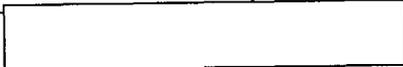
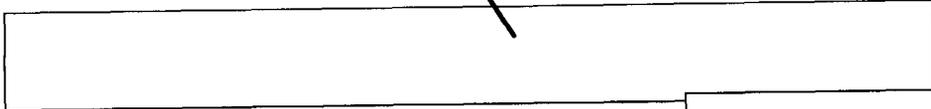
In our opinion, some fundamental problems concerning combat support of missile/nuclear weapons which will be manifested mainly in the allocation of the necessary forces and means for protection, cover, and engineer support of the missile units must also be reflected in the front commander's decision for an operation.

On the basis of the decision for an operation made by the commander of the front troops, the staff of the front plans the operation in detail and organizes the necessary measures for operational support. The planning of the employment of nuclear weapons is the main content of the overall planning of the operation. What sort of work is carried out by different staffs when planning the employment of nuclear weapons?

As is known, the planning of the combat employment of nuclear weapons is carried out under the direction of the chief of staff of the front. Besides the staff of the front, the chief of the rocket troops and artillery of the front and the commander of the air army with their staffs are assigned for the planning. In our opinion, the following basic problems must be solved during the planning: the detailed working out of the tasks of nuclear weapons in an operation, a thorough analysis of all reconnaissance data, the selection and determination of the targets for destruction, the specific allocation of targets among the means of delivery of nuclear weapons, the determination of the yield and type of nuclear burst for each target, the setting of the time and sequence of strikes against specific targets, the detailed allocation of nuclear warheads by operational task to formations and large units subordinate to the front, and the determination of the composition, location, and degree of readiness of the reserve of nuclear warheads. In addition, the procedure for moving the missile units into the siting areas, the basic measures for operational support, including measures for operational camouflage, and for covering the large units and units which employ nuclear weapons with the air defense means, problems of their engineer support, security, and other things are outlined.

It is desirable to reflect in the plan of the operation all the results of the overall planning of the employment of nuclear weapons in the operation as the main part of the plan's content.





The chief and staff of the rocket troops and artillery of the front, and the commander and staff of the air army are entrusted with directing all the combat activities of the large units and units which employ nuclear weapons, performing fire planning for the employment of nuclear weapons by these large units and units, informing them of combat tasks in a timely manner, controlling their fire and maneuvering, and also with handling problems concerning their combat, materiel, and technical support.

Questions concerning the fire planning for the employment of missile/nuclear weapons are reflected in the plan for the combat employment of the rocket troops and artillery of the front.

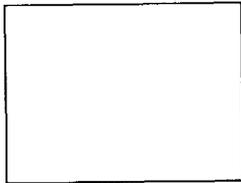
Such large-scale planning for the employment of nuclear weapons takes place mainly when the operation is being prepared. This planning becomes more clearly defined during the operation. At separate stages of the operation, especially when there are abrupt changes in the situation, it may become necessary to plan again, fully or partially, the employment of nuclear weapons.

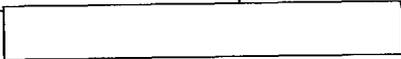
In our opinion, during an operation the front commander and his staff usually plan the combat employment of the nuclear means subordinate to the front and supervise the utilization of the means attached to the formations and large units. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of centralized utilization during the operation of most of the large units and units, which employ nuclear weapons, in support of the front to deliver a massed nuclear strike upon the decision of the front commander.

Let us say a few words about the control of the means of nuclear attack.

The front commander usually carries out control of the missile/nuclear means through the chief of the rocket troops and artillery and control of the aviation means through the commander of the air army.

As the experience of exercises shows, it is inadvisable to form the missile large units and units into any sort of special groups. The control of them and their fire is organized on the basis of their organizational affiliation. The chief of the





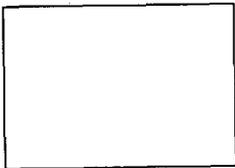
rocket troops and artillery of the front controls the fire and maneuvering of the missile large units and units subordinate to the front directly, while the missile large units and units subordinate to the army are controlled through the respective chiefs of the rocket troops and artillery of the armies.

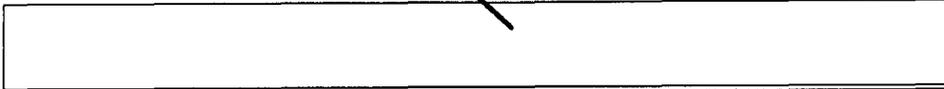
For reliability, control of the large units and units employing nuclear weapons is usually organized from two control posts utilizing radio, radio-relay, and multichannel wire communications. The experience of exercises shows that in order to simplify control matters and to accelerate the process of transmitting commands and instructions for the delivery of nuclear strikes, for communications with the large units and units employing nuclear weapons it is desirable to utilize secure channels. Communications on open channels require the coding and subsequent decoding of all commands and instructions, on which a great amount of time is spent; furthermore, delays in the delivery of nuclear strikes often occur as a result of errors which this type of communications allows.

As the experience of exercises shows, the chief of the rocket troops and artillery of the front controls the fire and maneuvering of the missile large units and units utilizing control groups made up of specially trained officer-specialists of the staff of rocket troops and artillery of the front. The composition of these groups must ensure that the entire complex of control matters is decided quickly at each control post.

It is desirable to place the control groups at specially equipped mobile control posts which have been furnished with the necessary instruments, equipment and gear, the main ones of which are special tables with a control map, plotting boards, computers, charts and tables for estimates on the employment of missile/nuclear weapons, log books and a display board for recording the arrival, availability and expenditure of missile/nuclear warheads, missile firing tables, measuring instruments, secure troop control documents, and communications equipment.

Two methods for preparing massed nuclear strikes and for controlling them were usually employed during exercises.





The first one stipulates detailed fire planning of nuclear strikes for all the delivery means in the front allocated for a massed strike, with the subsequent assignment of specific fire tasks to the large units and units which employ nuclear weapons, and with direct control of the nuclear strikes. This method was usually employed when the first massed nuclear strike was being prepared and carried out.

The second method stipulates detailed fire planning of nuclear strikes in the front only for the large units and units subordinate to the front, and for the missile large units and units subordinate to the army -- overall operational planning with the determination of the tasks, the time of the nuclear strikes, and the expenditure of nuclear warheads. Detailed fire planning of nuclear strikes for the army means is carried out in a corresponding manner in the armies. This method for preparing and carrying out massed nuclear strikes was more acceptable during the operation, especially when the efforts of the troops of the front were being built up, since it allowed the troops to prepare a massed nuclear strike in a shorter time and, in addition, ensured more effective utilization of army and tactical missiles.

