

~~TOP SECRET~~

2966



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

21 September 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Preparation
and Conduct of Amphibious Landing Operations

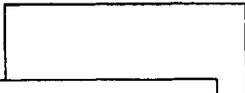
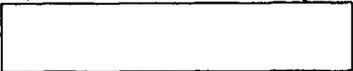
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article discusses the timing of an amphibious landing operation to exploit the results of a war's first massed nuclear strike, the relationship between amphibious landing forces and cooperating airborne and tank landing forces, the use of open beaches for loading and landing an amphibious landing force, and the coordination and centralized command of such a force when it is cooperating with a front operating on the same coastal axis. It also discusses the loading, time, and distance factors associated with the lift and landing of this force as well as the desirable features of the high-speed landing ships that are needed. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (76) for 1965, 



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

Director of Naval Intelligence
Department of the Navy

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

Director, National Security Agency

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

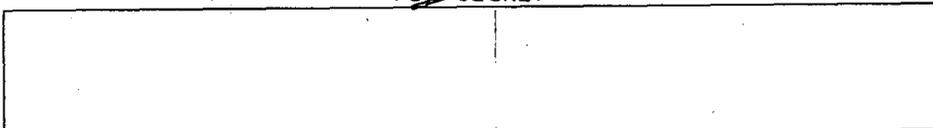
Director of the National Foreign Assessment Center

Director of Strategic Research

Director of Weapons Intelligence

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~



Intelligence Information Special Report

Page 3 of 13 Pages

COUNTRY USSR



DATE OF INFO. Late 1965

21 September 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Preparation and Conduct of Amphibious Landing Operations

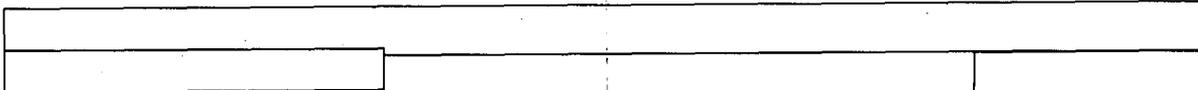
SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (76) for 1965 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This two-part article, the first part written by Generals-Leytenant L. Pern and S. Petrov and the second part by Colonel V. Prokhorov, comments on a previous article which was not received. It discusses the timing of an amphibious landing operation to exploit the results of a war's first massed nuclear strike, the relationship between amphibious landing forces and cooperating airborne and tank landing forces, the use of open beaches for loading and landing an amphibious landing force, and the coordination and centralized command of such a force when it is cooperating with a front operating on the same coastal axis. It also discusses the loading, time, and distance factors associated with the lift and landing of this force as well as the desirable features of the high-speed landing ships that are needed.

End of Summary

Comment:



~~TOP SECRET~~



~~TOP SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Page 4 of 13 Pages

The Preparation and Conduct of
Amphibious Landing Operations
by
Generals-Leytenant L. PERN and S. PETROV,
Colonel V. PROKHOROV

The matters of the preparation and conduct of amphibious landing operations under conditions of nuclear war presented in the article of Army General Ya. KREYZER* are of great interest and timely significance. However, certain important features did not receive full enough treatment in it. Some statements put forth by the author cannot be considered well founded or acceptable, which prompts us to address the topic.

Correctly asserting that in modern war the role of amphibious landing operations has grown considerably, the author bases this statement only upon the development of the means of warfare and upon the available groupings of the probable enemy on large islands and other continents. In fact, though, the growth of the role of amphibious landing operations depends primarily on the nature of a future war, which will be the decisive armed clash of two powerful coalitions. In this case the war will be conducted until the complete destruction of the enemy and will embrace perhaps all parts of the globe, including the ocean expanses. From this follows primarily the role of amphibious landing operations, which, in a general nuclear war, will inevitably be conducted by both warring sides.

In the article one notices an enthusiasm for large-scale amphibious landings. In the process, proceeding from the experience of exercises in the Far East Military District, the author speaks too categorically about the possibility of the landing of large-scale amphibious landing forces in a future war. But he does not indicate for what period of the war this is most typical.

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," No. 3
(73), 1964.

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 5 of 13 Pages

It should be taken into consideration that, with the employment of nuclear weapons on a massive scale and of the long-range means that deliver them, especially strategic missiles, the conditions of preparing and landing amphibious landing forces have changed radically. Modern means of armed conflict make it possible to capture in short periods of time with relatively small forces important objectives in naval theaters by the simultaneous landing (dropping) of airborne and amphibious and, in a number of cases, tank landing forces. Such combined landing forces have already been discussed in the pages of the Collection. They accomplish their tasks not in isolation, but in close contact with the actions of rocket troops, aviation, the Navy, and Air Defense Forces of the Country, i.e., the different branches of the armed forces. ✓

We believe that in the very beginning of a nuclear war the landing of large-scale amphibious landing forces is not very likely and, in fact, even impossible. This is due to the fact that in this period the naval bases and large ports of both sides will be subjected to the first nuclear strikes, and many of them will end up being partially or fully destroyed in a short time.

Even if one may count on part of them surviving, nevertheless, the preparation and conduct of an amphibious landing operation right away at the beginning of a war will not succeed, inasmuch as the assembly and preparation of assault transports, the loading of troops and equipment into them, and the sea crossing will take a lot of time. The experience of exercises has shown that the preparation and landing of even a small amphibious landing force requires at least several days.

The objection can be raised that the troops designated for action as part of the amphibious landing forces and a portion of the assault transports can be fully prepared in peacetime. Let us analyze, if only by way of example, this kind of capability on the part of a country as aggressive and as prepared in naval matters as the USA.

The USA, on 1 January 1964, had its Marine Corps deployed as follows: the First and Third Divisions and the First Separate Brigade, belonging to the Pacific Fleet, were based respectively on the continental USA, in Japan (the island of Okinawa), and in the Hawaiian Islands; the Second Marine Division (less one

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 6 of 13 Pages

battalion) was part of the Atlantic Fleet and located in the continental USA, and its reinforced battalion, numbering up to 2,000 men, was in the Sixth Fleet based in the Mediterranean Sea.

Consequently, to land a large amphibious landing force in Europe or Asia, all three large units (except the Third Division) will have to make a long trip by sea. And if the enemy does this in peacetime, then his intention may be discovered and surprise lost, and the landing forces placed under the threat of destruction before they have crossed the ocean and begun the immediate landing. Moreover, this may have a negative effect on his surprise use of nuclear means.

The USA, having at the present time up to 900 intercontinental missiles of the Minuteman, Atlas, and Titan types, and up to 270 Polaris missiles on nuclear submarines, will, in order to ensure surprise in using them, hardly go in for loading a large amphibious landing force on ships and crossing the sea with them in peacetime or even in a period of threat.

And it seems to us that all of this fully applies to our armed forces also.

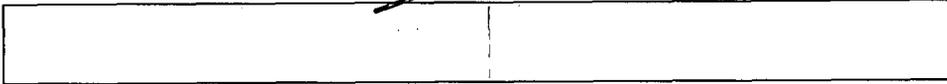
Thus, in the very beginning of a general nuclear war it is most probable that limited strength amphibious landing forces will be employed and that they will act in conjunction with airborne and tank landing forces immediately following the first nuclear strike in support of ground forces operations on coastal axes. But in the course of the war, when the bulk of the nuclear warheads of both sides will have been used up in the first strikes and the troops of a particular side have advanced to a great depth, large-scale amphibious landing forces may be employed.

The main task of such large-scale landing forces is to shift ground forces combat actions to other continents and island areas in order to complete the destruction of the enemy troop groupings left there and the remaining nuclear means.

The tasks of the amphibious landing forces will determine their strength, which can be most varied. Of course, a large-scale amphibious landing force is not a battalion or a regiment, but at least a division or even several motorized rifle

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~



Page 7 of 13 Pages

and tank large units that are to be employed as a component of combined landing forces and primarily in close cooperation with large-scale airborne landing forces.

The employment of large-scale amphibious landing forces takes the form of an amphibious landing operation, which may be either a part of a front operation or part of a strategic operation in a theater of military operations.

The landing order of combined amphibious landing forces, in our opinion, may be as follows. First are landed (dropped) the airborne landing forces, then the tank landing forces come in swimming, then comes the first echelon of the amphibious landing force in fast-moving ships, and after it the second echelon of the amphibious landing force in slower-moving ships (transports). It is desirable, of course, that the time intervals between the landing of these constituent parts of the combined landing force be as short as possible. However, it is most advantageous of all to ensure their simultaneous landing. But taking into consideration that a tank landing force aswim moves at a speed of eight to nine kilometers per hour, it is necessary to time the landing of the airborne and sometimes also of the first echelon of the amphibious landing force with the approach of the tank landing force to the shore.

The author of the article has given little attention to the matters of preparing an amphibious landing force for loading from an open beach and landing it on an open beach. He places greater hopes on the use of ports and bases that have remained, both our own and those of the enemy. But really, these ports and bases, at least a considerable number of them, will have been destroyed and demolished already by the first nuclear strikes of both sides, and it is therefore necessary to direct our attention mainly toward the open beaches.

Loading up a landing force and landing it under such conditions is a rather complicated matter. It requires considerable work in the construction of very simple moorings and of roads to them, the organization of areas to store cargo and equipment, and the preparation of sectional gangways, aerial cableways, and narrow-gauge railways. All these and other works can be carried out quickly if one prepares for them properly beforehand. And well-trained personnel are absolutely necessary.



~~TOP SECRET~~



It goes without saying that, if it is possible, maximum use must be made of all shallow ports and moorings that have been preserved.

Nor should one forego those cases where the loading of the landing force has to be done (partially or completely) in a roadstead. For loading under these conditions extensive use should be made of shallow-draft vessels and also helicopters.

* * *

General KREYZER's article bears witness to the increased interest in amphibious landing operations which generals and officers have been revealing lately. In this connection, it is being recognized ever more widely that in modern war, amphibious landing operations along with airborne operations are going to become one of the most widespread ways of rapidly exploiting the results of nuclear strikes by strategic and operational-tactical means and of completing the defeat of large enemy groupings, not only on islands, but also on the continental part of a coastal axis. In particular, it is advantageous to employ amphibious landing forces to deliver a flank attack on a coastal enemy grouping in cooperation with ground forces advancing frontally.

The best opportunities for the successful conduct of an amphibious landing operation are created by the first massed nuclear strike of strategic means -- of course, when it is delivered fairly effectively. //

Under such conditions, the amphibious landing force will be subjected in least degree to enemy nuclear strikes, even if it makes the sea crossing in a zone that can be reached by the carrier based aviation of a surviving carrier strike large unit or the missiles of surviving enemy submarines.

It should also be kept in mind that if the landing of an amphibious landing force is carried out immediately after the first massed nuclear strike with strategic means, the landing force will not encounter a significant number of minefields and antilanding obstacles on its way since under these conditions the enemy will not have succeeded in placing them.



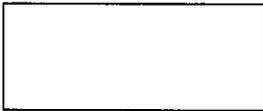


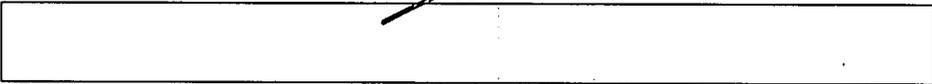
The course of exercises FALLEX-62, FALLEX-63, and FALLEX-64 bears witness to the fact that the NATO command has delivered nuclear strikes on amphibious landing forces landed in the areas of northern Norway and the Danish and Black Sea straits zones, either when these landing forces start their tactical deployment for the landing or on units already landed on the shore.

Thus, carrying out an amphibious landing operation immediately following the first massed nuclear strike by strategic means is entirely possible and should not be rejected, as some comrades still try to do. It is another matter whether a landing force will be able to load up onto ships and make the sea crossing to the landing area rapidly enough so that the results of our first massed nuclear strike will fully or at least partially assist its actions. For this there have to be enough high-speed landing ships in the make-up of the fleets. This has already been stated repeatedly in the pages of the Collection and we shall not repeat it. Let us only note that it is a generally recognized requirement which has already begun to be implemented and the faster it is fully completed, the better for our Armed Forces.

Let us examine briefly what the capabilities of modern landing ships are. It is well known that their average speed is 12 to 14 knots. With their cruising range, these ships can carry out the successful landing of a landing force to a distance 450 to 500 kilometers from the embarkation area. As applied to the Western Theater of Military Operations, these capabilities suit us fully, since the initial action objectives of operational importance for amphibious landing forces are located 250 to 300 kilometers in all away from their possible embarkation areas. According to the experience of an exercise conducted by the Red Banner Baltic Fleet in 1964, and in subsequent exercises of other fleets, loading up a naval infantry regiment in landing ships at three independent shore points which had not been prepared beforehand required one hour in all. With a sufficient number of landing ships and the requisite dispersal of the loading areas, it is possible within an hour or two to carry out without difficulty the landing of the first echelon of a motorized rifle division that is landed by the shore-to-shore method. The second echelon and division forces can be moved to the landing area on transports or even by a second trip of the landing ships, which, given a distance for the landing of approximately 250 kilometers,

V.I.



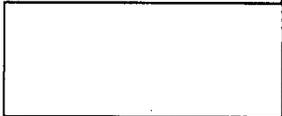


can return to the embarkation area in 20 to 22 hours and be ready to take on the units making up the second echelon.

But if the entire amphibious landing force, including its first echelon, is moved to the landing area on transports alone (loading the first echelon of a division on them takes one or two days), then, under these conditions, it goes without saying that one cannot talk of having an amphibious landing force exploit the results of the first massed nuclear strike. An amphibious landing force which, after finishing loading up, has not gotten out to the forming-up areas on the open sea one or two hours before the start of military actions, in our opinion, will not finish loading up at all and the amphibious landing operation in this case may be disrupted by the enemy at its very start.

When there is a sufficient number of high-speed landing ships, they should be brought together into specialized landing force large units which should include in necessary proportions all types of ships and helicopters essential for the successful conduct of an amphibious landing operation, and also the naval infantry units to be used as the forward detachments of the landing force.] SNI

It would be incorrect to raise the question of airborne landing forces supplanting amphibious landing forces, and vice versa. But this idea is sometimes expressed by the individual authors of articles. Both types of landing forces have to be used together, the strengths of each supplementing the weaknesses of the other. For instance, with the delivery of massed nuclear strikes at the beginning of a war, the seas will be considerably less contaminated radioactively than the land and the air. Therefore, an amphibious landing force will be less dependent on the radiation situation than, say, an airborne landing force and advancing ground forces. Nor does the destruction of various installations (ports, airfields, technical bases) in the loading and embarkation area have a substantial effect on the actions of an amphibious landing force to be landed by the shore-to-shore method. Finally, the transportation means of an amphibious landing force are considerably superior in size and carrying capacity to airborne transport means. Landing ships, as we know, make it possible to land all the T/O&E tanks of a motorized rifle division, which gives it the capability of conducting decisive



~~TOP SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Page 11 of 13 Pages

combat actions on enemy territory.

A specialized landing ship large unit must have new types of ships: a landing ship that carries simultaneously a rifle company with a tank platoon (three tanks) or a motorized rifle battalion with a tank company (ten tanks) and an artillery ship for fire support of the landing force on which are mounted several dozen rocket launchers. A landing ship adapted for moving a tank-reinforced rifle company or motorized rifle battalion can also carry all the rest of the combat subunits of a motorized rifle division without disrupting their existing organization. As support ships for the amphibious landing force, presently existing types of ships in the fleets can be used.

The basic operational requirements for the ships of a specialized landing ship large unit have to be expressed, in our opinion, in the following figures: effective operating radius -- 280 to 300 miles, average cruising speed -- 20 to 25 knots, independent cruising -- for three to five days, seaworthiness -- for sea states five to six. There should be no efforts to increase the operating radius of the ship, in our opinion, since crossing greater sea and ocean distances in any case can be done only in very seaworthy naval transports. An amphibious landing force of this type will have a completely different purpose and make-up and will require a different organization and a large number of different cover and support means. It cannot be assigned the task of quickly exploiting the results of a first massed nuclear strike.

In the work "Strategy of Nuclear War" under the general editorship of Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. MALINOVSKIY, the landing of an amphibious landing force at the strength of a motorized rifle division is put in the category of amphibious landing operations. In our opinion, this is correct. But it should be added that it is possible only within the framework of a coastal front's operation. It is unlikely that an independent operation (outside the framework of a front operation) with a landing force of this size can be carried out.

When an amphibious landing operation is carried out within the framework of a front, its command, naturally, rests with the commander of the front that is advancing on the coastal axis. However, during the period of the embarkation and sea crossing of

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 12 of 13 Pages

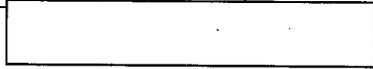
the landing force, the commander will be very busy with the accomplishment of the key tasks of directing the delivery of the first massed nuclear strike, repulsing the enemy's nuclear attack, and going over to a decisive offensive with the front's main grouping of ground forces. At the same time, the organization of the amphibious landing operation and especially the continuous maintenance of efficient cooperation among the large units and units of the different branches of the armed forces that have been allocated to carry out the operation is so complicated that it requires firm centralized control right from the start.

This is why, in our opinion, it is advisable to assign direct control of the preparation and landing of an amphibious landing force to one of the deputy commanders of the front with a small staff specially trained for this and made up of generals and officers of the front's field headquarters, the fleet's headquarters (or of the staff of one of the naval bases subordinate to it), and of the headquarters of the large unit of the Air Defense Forces of the Country operating on this axis.

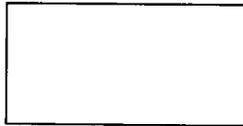
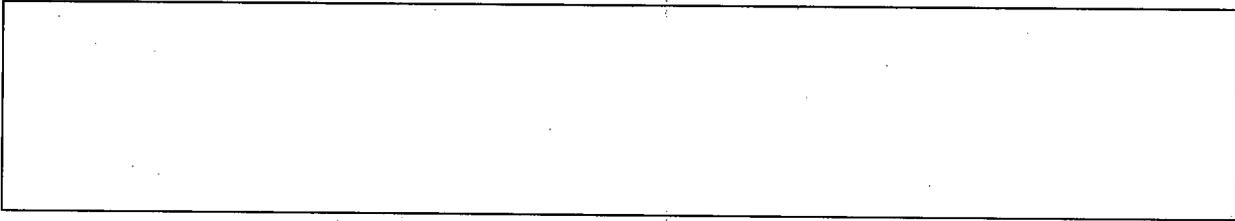
Thus, in place of the uncoordinated operations groups that have up to now been established to direct a landing force, there has to be a single command with a staff bearing full responsibility for the success of the amphibious landing operation. At decisive moments, for instance when repulsing the attack of large-scale enemy naval and aviation forces, when the landing detachments are on the sea crossing, and when the landing force units are landing on the shore, the front or fleet commander can personally direct the actions of the landing forces, additionally allocating nuclear means, large units of naval ships, aviation, and Air Defense Forces of the Country for participation in the operation. In a number of cases, as has been practiced already in some exercises, it has been advisable to resubordinate to the coastal front the element of the Air Defense Forces of the Country that is operating on the given axis. This will make it possible to organize more dependable air defense in a front offensive operation and support the landing of the amphibious landing force.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~



Page 13 of 13 Pages



~~TOP SECRET~~