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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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20 July 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Criticism of a
Previous Article on Airborne Landings

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 consists of criticisms of an article on airborne landings which appeared in an earlier issue. The authors of the present article characterize the earlier article as superficial, stating that the author provides no calculations to support his statements. He also is said to have ignored or glossed over aspects of the neutralization of air defenses and of dropping troops at night. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969.

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.


W. E. Colby
Deputy Director for Operations

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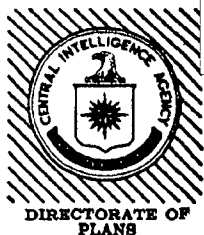
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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1969

DATE 20 July 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Airborne Landings in Operations During a Non-Nuclear Period

SOURCE Documentary

Summary

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The authors of this article are Lieutenant Colonel N. Noskov (Candidate of Military Sciences, Senior Scientific Worker) and Colonel (Retired) M. Orkin (Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent). This article consists of criticisms of an article on airborne landings which appeared in an earlier issue [FIRDB-312/03053-73, TS #204252]. The authors of the present article characterize the earlier article as superficial, stating that the author provides no calculations to support his statements. He also is said to have ignored or glossed over aspects of the neutralization of air defenses and of dropping troops at night.

End of Summary

Comment

There is no information in available reference materials which can be firmly associated with the authors. Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past--TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

Airborne Landings in Operations During a Non-Nuclear Period

by

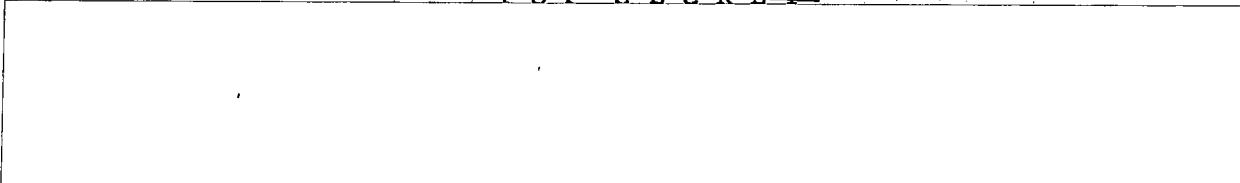
Lieutenant Colonel N. Noskov
Candidate of Military Sciences, Senior Scientific Worker
M. Orkin, Colonel (Retired)
Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent

In his article, Colonel Ye. Grebich raises urgent questions concerning the use of airborne landings.* The reason it is important that these questions be raised is that, first of all, there are varying opinions concerning the possibilities of using airborne landings. Also, there has been a definite underestimation of the quantitative and, especially, the qualitative changes in the development of air defense means in the postwar period. Quite often the conclusions on the possibility of neutralizing these means are not substantiated by sufficiently valid reasons and calculations. As a result, a sense of complacency becomes evident when this very complicated problem is being worked on.

In his evaluation of the grouping of air defense means in the Central Air Defense Zone of NATO armed forces in Europe, and of the capability of our front means which are used to support military-transport aviation flights to the landing area, the author has, in principle, correctly determined the depth of the drop (landing) of operational airborne landings (up to 150 kilometers). He is also correct when he states that one of the indispensable conditions for their successful employment is the reliable neutralization of the air defense means within the drop zone. He was also quite persuasive in his recommendations for the areas and time selected for the drop (landing), depending on the beginning of the operation and with due consideration to the particular nature of the combat actions of our own ground troops.

At the same time, one cannot but notice that some of the judgments and conclusions are sketchy in nature and seem to be superficial. This is particularly noticeable in the substantiation of the possibilities of overcoming enemy air defense.

*Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought"
No. 3 (85), 1968.



For example, according to the data given in the article, there will be a large number of SAM (up to twelve battalions) and many antiaircraft weapons deployed within the boundaries of the depth of the drop (150 kilometers). At the same time, a conclusion is made that the neutralization of these air defense means "can be considered a feasible task." Naturally, the reader has the right to expect some convincing calculations to substantiate such an important conclusion. But there really are none in the article, since one cannot be satisfied with the assertion that from six to thirteen squadrons of bomber and fighter-bomber aviation can be used to neutralize from six to thirteen SAM battalions. And it also remains unknown how many SAM battalions and other air defense installations will have to be neutralized in the entire flight zone, which, as the author assumes, will be 120 to 150 kilometers wide.

Using the comparative ratio of forces (one bomber, or fighter-bomber squadron, to one SAM battalion), the author forgets about his recommendation that the landings be carried out during the nighttime hours. But it is known that at night the possibilities of finding and destroying air defense targets, especially by fighter-bombers, are considerably reduced. In addition to this, it must be added that even during the daylight hours, using the comparative ratio of forces of one squadron to one SAM battalion, enemy fire can be neutralized only for a short period of time, which is several times less than the flight time through the fire zone of a given SAM battalion by the military-transport aviation battle formations transporting the operational airborne landing force.

X The article lightly disposes of the problem of combat with field air defense means, which, as is known, present a serious danger to military-transport aircraft. The author limits himself to stating that the neutralization of these means "must be accomplished by the forces of rocket troops and of front artillery." Yet, it is known that the range of artillery fire is inadequate for fulfilling this task, while the use of rockets with non-nuclear charges against air defense targets would result in an enormous expenditure of rockets with very little effect.

The question of the possibilities for neutralizing enemy fighter aviation has actually been glossed over. The statement to the effect that this task "will apparently be handled as part of the larger strategic mission of gaining air supremacy" does



not provide a specific answer to the question of the extent to which military-transport aircraft and the airborne landing force will be protected against enemy fighters. It is difficult to agree with the author when he speaks out against the possible execution of an operational airborne landing on the third or fourth day of the operation. It is known, for example, that in order to gain air supremacy it is necessary to conduct an operation by air forces for the destruction of the enemy aviation grouping. This will require the participation of all the main forces of front and long-range aviation. As shown by research and by the results of exercises, the fulfilment of this mission will require at least two or three days at the beginning of the strategic operation in the theater of military operations. Apparently, only after this is done will favorable prerequisites be achieved for the comprehensive combat support by front and long-range aviation of the flight and execution of operational airborne landings.

These noted shortcomings, unfortunately, reduce the value of the article. We hope that, as this problem is worked on in the future, the questions of overcoming the air defense system when landing airborne troops in the enemy rear will find a proper interpretation, will be more convincingly treated, and will be supported by the necessary calculations.