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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

19 November 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Rebasing the Air
Army of a Reserve Front

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 rebasing of an air army of a reserve front in a theater of military operations simultaneously with the other forces of the front. A possible sequence for rebasing the large units and units of an air army is described in detail. A diagram of the long-distance rebasing of an air army as part of a reserve front is included. This article appeared in Issue No. 1 (86) 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. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

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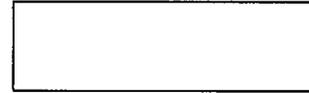
William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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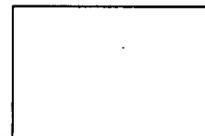
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1969

DATE 19 November 1974

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Rebasing the Air Army of a Reserve Front

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (86) for 1969 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is General-Leytenant of Aviation Yu. Rykachev. This article discusses the rebasing of an air army of a reserve front in a theater of military operations simultaneously with the other forces of the front. A possible sequence for rebasing the large units and units of an air army is described in detail. A diagram of the long-distance rebasing of an air army as part of a reserve front is included.

End of Summary

Comment:

General-Leytenant Yuriy Borisovich Rykachev authored several articles in Red Star and Soviet Aviation during the years 1951 through 1963. 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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Rebasing the Air Army of a Reserve Front

by

General-Leytenant of Aviation

Yu. Rykachev

The air army of a reserve front in a theater of military operations, depending on its composition and location, may be rebased simultaneously with the forces of the front in which it is to operate or separately when the air army has to conduct combat actions before the reserve front is committed to an engagement. This article is concerned with the first instance.

We would like to turn our attention first of all to the fact that the first priority measures, upon whose timely implementation depend both the procedure for rebasing an air army and its subsequent fulfillment of its assigned combat tasks, are to withdraw its units and large units out from under a possible enemy nuclear strike on the permanent basing airfields, and disperse them to alternate dirt airfields. In order to carry out dispersal, every permanent basing airfield must have, still in peacetime, at least two alternate dirt airfields, of which at least one must be carefully concealed from enemy reconnaissance. All the airfields on permanent operation must have prepared locations (zones) for long-range dispersal of regiments by squadrons. These dispersal areas must be 3 to 8 kilometers from the main runway (depending on the configuration of the terrain), and must have short takeoff strips and shelters for aircraft, personnel, and maintenance equipment. These airfields (zones) of dispersal must be stocked in advance with fuel, ammunition, and materiel and technical means, and dependable cover must be provided for flight control elements and means.

During rebasing, an air army will be divided into two echelons: flight and ground. The flight echelon will include large units and units of combat and auxiliary aviation and the aircraft of military transport aviation transporting ground personnel and equipment. The ground echelon comprises all the units and facilities of the rear services, communications and radiotechnical support, as well as the non-flight personnel of the air army large units and units; the ground echelon, in turn, also is divided into two echelons. The first echelon must be able to receive rebased units in the new area and support their carrying out of combat actions while preparations are being made to commit the reserve front, while it is being

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committed, and at the beginning of an offensive operation. Calculations which have been confirmed by the experience of training exercises, indicate that the first ground echelon must contain not less than 60 percent of the forces and means of the support units and the engineer-aviation service. The second echelon must support the combat actions of part of the fighter and reconnaissance aviation from the departure basing airfields. This echelon usually does not contain more than 30 percent of the forces and means of the units of the rear services, communications, radiotechnical support, and technical personnel from the air regiments.

If the number of transport aviation aircraft is limited, the main body of the ground echelon of an air army must use organic motor vehicle transport to rebase. Only the forward flight echelon of an air army is prepared for transport by air, including the operations group of the air army staff, and the air army forward command post, the operations groups and forward command posts of the divisions, and forward teams of the regiments, air-technical units, communications, and radiotechnical support. But this rebasing variant will enable an air army to begin combat actions only upon the arrival of the first ground echelon.

However, if an air army does have an adequate number of transport aircraft, all of its engineer-technical personnel with the basic equipment of the engineer-aviation service, all of the staffs and command posts of the large units and units with communications means and radiotechnical support, and the forward teams of the rear services and communications units, may be transferred by air transport. Equipment which is not transportable by air will have to be transferred by rail or under its own power, as will ground unit personnel who can be done without during the first days. In this variant of rebasing, an air army is able to begin combat actions from the new area immediately.

The plan of the air army commander for the move indicates the procedure and sequence for the transfer of the flight echelon (including airlifts), the primary and alternate variants for rebasing the ground echelon, the number and distance of the ground moves, and the areas for day-long halts. In establishing the flight sequence of the units, the commander proceeds from the requirement to establish, within the new basing area and by a certain time, an aviation grouping which would conform to the plan for the combat actions of the air army in the front operation. He must also take into account the requirement to cover the front forces and to conduct aerial reconnaissance.

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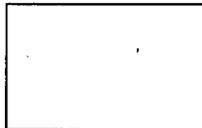
Cover from the air (against enemy aerial reconnaissance and enemy strike aviation) is required primarily by the ground forces of the reserve front who are advancing in a wide zone and by the ground echelon of the air army. In addition, fighter cover will be needed for units of reconnaissance, fighter-bomber, and bomber aviation during their transfer flights.

Therefore, the fighters of the air army must be rebased first. It is advisable to organize the flights consecutively by air regiments, using intermediate airfields on our own territory and in allied countries. During this time, cover also will be provided over the entire line of march of the reserve front in conformity with the plan for cover worked out in the air army staff, based on the orders of the front commander. The plan indicates specifically which fighter regiment will cover which forces, where and when.

Aerial reconnaissance will be required from the very beginning of the move. The march routes and the radiation situation will be reconnoitered first, in support of the front ground forces and the ground echelon of the air army. Then, as the troops approach the area of final concentration, they will need the information on the enemy which is required for planning the commitment to the engagement and subsequent actions of the front. The subunits of reconnaissance aviation therefore must make their transit flight at the same time as the fighter aviation units or immediately after them.

✓ It is advisable to concentrate fighter-bombers and bombers in the new basing area immediately before the first echelon of the reserve front troops approaches. In this way they can achieve a certain degree of secrecy and surprise in moving out; the fighter-bombers and bombers gain the time needed to prepare for participation in the nuclear strike of the front when it is committed to the engagement. Here, too, there arises a need for a certain sequence in rebasing. Fighter-bombers obviously must begin their flight sooner, since they will have to utilize the intermediate ✓ airfields. The front bombers, which are capable of reaching their destination airfields without stops, will be the last to transfer.

To receive the transferring units at the intermediate airfields, it will be necessary to send ahead on transport aircraft small teams of technical personnel from the air regiments, airfield maintenance battalions, and illumination and radiotechnical support battalions. On our own territory, the necessary means will be furnished by the units based at these airfields; on the territory of allied countries--in accordance with



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existing agreements. Depending on the situation, it may be possible that, when the first ground echelon passes through the area of the intermediate airfields on the second or third day, part of its forces will have to be left at the airfields with the minimum necessary support means.

All of the main points regarding rebasing aviation are reflected in the plan of the commander of the reserve front and in the plan of the front staff. They are worked out in detail in the appropriate air army documents. The sequence for rebasing the large units and units of an air army may be as follows.

As the danger of a start of combat actions increases, an air army is brought successively to increased and then full combat readiness. The dispersal of air units to alternate airfields is calculated so that the time spent on it is less than the approach time of the enemy aircraft and missiles. As experience shows, air units which have been well trained in the process of combat preparation, begin to fly out by regiments in 10 to 20 minutes from a state of increased readiness. In case the weather precludes flying, the aircraft are dispersed in the outlying areas of the basing airfields.

At the same time as the air regiments depart for their alternate airfields, all the control elements and posts, the engineer-technical personnel, and the rear services, communications and radiotechnical support units organize into echelons in accordance with the rebasing plan.

The forward flight echelon of the air army, comprising the forward command post and the operations group of the air army staff, and the forward command post and forward teams of the large units and units, is sent to the new basing area by transport aircraft. Another operations group of the air army staff, with a combat crew from the command post, moves out to the command post of the formation of the Air Defense Forces of the Country to control the actions of its fighter aircraft to cover the front troops.

The units of the first ground echelon, after supporting the departure of the air regiments for their alternate airfields, proceed to areas for assembling and forming into marching columns. These areas should be assigned at a distance of 8 to 15 kilometers from the air garrisons. The units will move out to the columns of the first ground echelon, in a sequence corresponding to the accepted procedure for establishing the required aviation grouping in the new area.

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The units of the second ground echelon proceed immediately to their alternate airfields to receive and support the dispersing air regiments.

The transport columns of the air army must cover at least 350 kilometers in a day. This will enable the first ground echelon, when an air army is rebased over, for example, 1000 to 1500 kilometers, to precede the ground forces columns by a march of two to three days. And this in turn ensures the air units transfer 2 to 3 days before the troops of the reserve front approach their concentration area.

To increase the mobility of an air army it is desirable to include one or two air transport regiments aboard AN-12 aircraft in its composition, and to bring the weights and dimensions of the means of the engineer-aviation service, and of communications and radiotechnical support, into line with the capabilities of these aircraft.

When the first ground echelon has arrived at the airfields in the final basing area, combat aviation completes its transfer. Units of fighter and reconnaissance aviation arrive there first, as planned, followed by units of fighter-bomber and bomber aviation. Auxiliary aircraft transport the forward teams, the control posts, and the engineer-technical personnel of combat aviation.

When the rebasing begins, the commander of the air army is located at the forward command post; he studies the situation and makes a decision on the army combat operations when the reserve front is committed to combat, organizes and directs air combat operations during the advance of the reserve front, and directs and monitors the rebasing of the army. If necessary he flies out to subordinate large units and units and personally directs their move. At the forward command post with the commander there is a group from the operations department, the chief navigator, the chief of communications and radiotechnical support, the chief engineer, the chief or deputy chief of rear services of the air army, and other officers (at his discretion). The main contingent of the air army command post, headed by the chief of staff, will be enroute at this time, at the head of the first ground echelon of the air army. At locations stipulated in the plan, it halts, deploys, clarifies the situation and reports it to the commander, receives orders from him, and forwards them to the large units and units. Upon arrival in the new basing area, the air army command post deploys near the front command post.

At the start of the rebasing, the forward command posts of the air divisions are transferred to airfields in the new area by transport

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aircraft, where they will assume control of the actions of subordinate units. Some combat crews from the command posts of the divisions and regiments may remain in their former location, from which they are transferred to the new basing area by transport aircraft after the departure of the regiments.

After all the aircraft have taken off, the second ground echelon begins its march to the new area. It is advisable that the engineer-technical personnel who have remained at the alternate airfields in the departure basing area be transferred to the new area by air.

During the rebasing of an air army, its fighter aviation covers the advancing front forces and the area ahead of the operating fronts, jointly with the Air Defense Forces of the Country and with air defense forces and means of allied countries. In organizing cooperation among these forces it is advisable to use the following procedure as a point of departure for providing cover.

During the first day the fighter aviation of the air army, jointly with a formation of the Air Defense Forces of the Country, will cover troops and old basing airfields, in accordance with the operating plan for the air defense of the military district. Its actions are controlled by a staff operations group headed by the deputy commander for air defense and located at the command post of the formation (large unit) of the Air Defense Forces of the Country.

During the second day, the fighter aviation of the air army rebases consecutively by regiments to intermediate airfields located on the territory of allied countries, from which cover is provided jointly with the air defense troops of the respective country. A control group moves to the command post of the allied air defense troops. By this time the greater part of the ground forces of the reserve front, having completed their march, will be on the territory of the allied country.

By the time of the third day, as the airfields in the concentration area become ready, part of the fighter aviation transfers to them and carries out cover missions from them, comprising the first echelon of the front air defense.

During the fourth and fifth days, all of the fighter aviation of the air army transfers to airfields in the final concentration area. The operations group of the air army deputy commander for air defense arrives at the combined front air defense command post. Cover will be implemented

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entirely through the joint efforts of fighter aviation and the air defense troops of the reserve front.

Aerial reconnaissance also will be carried out during the rebasing period, in order to support the planning and preparations for the commitment of the reserve front to the engagement. Aerial reconnaissance is particularly important in organizing a front nuclear strike. It must reveal and then confirm the strike targets of the front rocket troops and aviation.

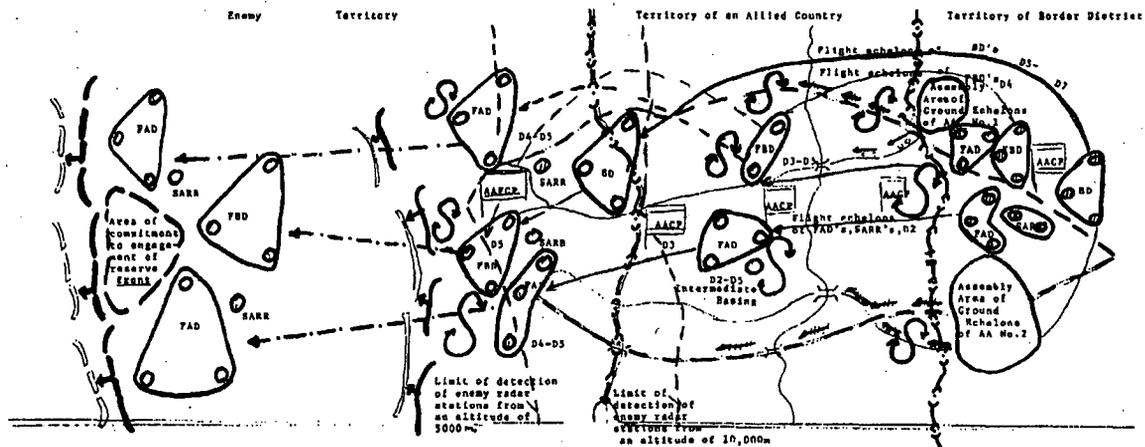
Thus, fighter and reconnaissance units, which have completed rebasing 2 to 3 days ahead of the whole air army, engage in aggressive combat actions. If the troops ahead of the operating fronts move farther forward in this period, they will be rebased immediately after these units.

When an air army has completed rebasing, having concentrated in the new area the day before the arrival of the first echelon of ground forces, it immediately enters into combat actions to support the commitment of the reserve front to the engagement, from the march. The air army covers the approaching troops and their deployment, continues to conduct aerial reconnaissance, and seeks and destroys enemy missile and airborne nuclear means, and enemy reserves in the area in which the front is about to be committed. Already in this period, preparations must begin for the subsequent rebasing of the air army, the necessity for which may arise literally on the second day of an offensive operation by a reserve front.

In conclusion, we note once more that rebasing an air army 2 to 3 days before the arrival of the ground forces of a reserve front in the final concentration area, is a necessary condition for success in its commitment to an engagement, and in subsequent combat actions.

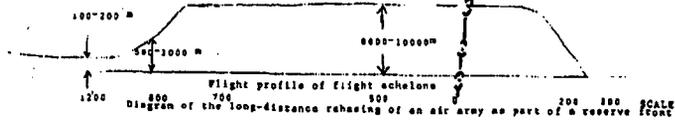
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ABBREVIATIONS USED:

- FAD : Fighter aviation division (FAD)
- SARR : Separate aerial reconnaissance regiment (SARR)
- FBD : Fighter-bomber division (FBD)
- AACP: Air army forward command post (AACP)
- BD : Bomber division (BD)
- AACP : Air army command post (AACP)



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