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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

26 April 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : William W. Wells  
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Seizure  
of Straits Under Present Conditions

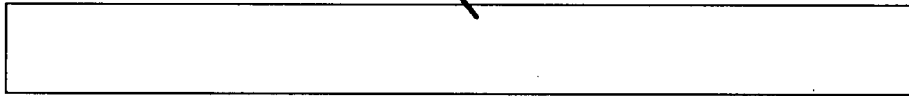
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article describes actions to seize straits zones as part of a front offensive operation in order to allow a fleet to move out into the open sea. The tasks of the ground forces, front aviation, the fleet, and air defense, as well as procedures for employing forces of a certain composition are given in general terms. Further emphasis is placed on the disruption of minelaying operations, the landing of amphibious and airborne landing forces on islands and on the shore of a strait, and the actual movement of the fleet into the sea. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (82) for 1967.

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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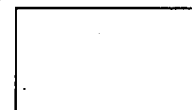
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## Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

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DATE OF INFO. Late 1967

DATE 26 April 1977

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Seizure of Straits Under Present Conditions

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (82) for 1967 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Rear Admiral A. Kruchenykh. This article describes actions to seize straits zones as part of a front offensive operation in order to allow a fleet to move out into the open sea. The tasks of the ground forces, front aviation, the fleet, and air defense, as well as procedures for employing forces of a certain composition are given in general terms. Further emphasis is placed on the disruption of minelaying operations, the landing of amphibious and airborne landing forces on islands and on the shore of a strait, and the actual movement of the fleet into the sea. End of Summary

[REDACTED] Comment:

Arkadiy Vasilyevich Kruchenykh was a lecturer in amphibious procedures and the organization and armament of marines of the General Staff Academy in 1964. He also wrote "Fleet Actions in a Front Offensive Operation on a Coastal Axis During the Initial Period of War" in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963 [REDACTED] and "Characteristics of Employing Naval Forces in a War Which Begins Without the Use of Nuclear Weapons" in Issue No. 1 (77) for 1966 [REDACTED]

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Seizure of Straits Under Present Conditions

by  
Rear Admiral A. Kruchenykh

Present-day strategic offensive operations in most theaters of military operations will require the seizure of straits zones wholly or partially held by the enemy, since such zones are, as a rule, key positions enabling him to interdict the movement of our fleets into open seas for actions against his main naval groupings.

When in control of straits zones the enemy is able to carry out landings against the flank and rear of our troops who are advancing on a coastal axis, and also to reinforce his ship groupings operating in closed seas.

Fully realizing all this, our probable enemies are instituting a number of measures designed to strengthen the defense of straits zones and are systematically testing their effectiveness in exercises.\*

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\* An analysis of the exercises conducted by the armed forces of NATO in recent years shows that for the defense, for example, of the Baltic straits zone, at various times from six to ten destroyers, 15 to 20 escort vessels, eight to ten submarines, up to 40 torpedo boats, 10 to 12 minelayers, and over 200 fighter aircraft and fighter-bombers were allocated; a Nike-Ajax or Nike-Hercules surface-to-air guided missile battalion was continually deployed on the islands, while on the seacoast a large number of coastal artillery batteries, ranging in caliber from 75 to 210 millimeters, were kept in reserve. At the outset of war or during the period of threat, it is planned to lay minefields, for which purpose about 10,000 mines of various types have already been prepared and stored in depots. On the shores of the islands a system has been established for surveilling air, underwater, and surface targets.

The defense of the Black Sea straits, for example, is planned to be carried out by naval forces, ground forces, aviation, and air defense means of Turkey and Greece, which may, if necessary, be reinforced by naval forces from the US and Great Britain. In all, one or two field armies, eight to ten destroyers, eight to ten submarines, five to eight escort vessels, up to nine minelayers, about 70 fighters, and a Nike-Ajax or Nike-Hercules surface-to-air guided missile battalion may be used for the defense of the Black Sea straits.

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Combat operations to seize straits zones will include, it appears to us, the seizure of adjacent water areas, islands, and territories. Accomplishing this task will require the allocation of formations, large units and units of various branches of the Armed Forces, and especially the ground forces, front aviation, naval forces, and on occasion large units of the air defense of the country as well.

The task of the ground forces in this instance may consist of destroying the ground means of nuclear attack and groupings of ground forces defending the straits zone, the destruction of approaching enemy reserves, the seizure of coastal territory, straits, islands containing administrative-political centers, airfields, ports, naval bases, and other targets, as well as the conduct of antilanding defense of the occupied seacoast.

The task of front aviation is to assist in the operations of the ground forces and to support the landing of amphibious and airborne landing forces, to combat enemy aviation, as well as to take part in the destruction of his ship groupings.

The fleet will perform tasks connected with landing amphibious landing forces for the purpose of seizing the islands or shores of the straits, covering ground forces large units that are advancing in the straits zone against strikes by enemy ship forces, assisting the troops in assault crossings of individual straits, interdicting the transport by sea of reserves and supplies for an enemy grouping defending a straits zone, supporting the delivery by sea of supplies for our advancing forces, and, lastly, assisting ground forces in the defense of a newly occupied shore.

Large units of the Air Defense Forces of the Country perform the task of covering all of our forces operating in a straits zone, paying particular attention in so doing to effectively repulsing enemy strikes against amphibious and airborne landing forces.

The seizure of a straits zone will in most cases be an integral part of a front offensive operation and only in individual cases may be carried out as an independent operation involving the landing of a large operational landing force.

Bearing in mind the importance and complexity of the problem of seizing straits zones, let us examine possible ways of solving it. In the first place we should note that the forces and means required to seize straits zones, as well as the nature of their actions, will depend on the

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development of a strategic operation, the size of the straits zones, their position relative to the main offensive axis of the forces of the coastal front, the relief of the adjacent terrain, the distance from the line of armed contact of the two sides, as well as the climatic and hydrometeorological conditions.

In the one instance they will have to advance in a relatively narrow strip of land (50 to 60 kilometers) to a considerable depth (up to 500 kilometers and more) and at the same time conduct combat actions for the purpose of seizing islands (some of which may be seized by them independently, others -- when carrying out large amphibious and airborne landings).

In the other case the troops will have to advance on a broad front extending up to 200 kilometers, while the straits in the zone of their offensive might be more than 150 kilometers from their departure position.

An analysis of calculations performed with reference to possible variants of combat actions to seize certain straits zones shows that the strength of the ground forces will depend first of all on the nuclear capabilities of the opposing forces. The need for nuclear warheads will be determined in turn by the number of targets subject to neutralization and destruction. In straits zones such targets might be enemy ground means of nuclear attack: one or two Honest John free-flight rocket battalions, a Pershing or Sergeant battalion, one or two nuclear artillery batteries, 40 to 50 fighter-bombers at four to five airfields, one Nike-Ajax (Nike-Hercules) surface-to-air guided missile battalion, three to four groupings of ground forces in concentration areas or on the march, 20 to 30 fighters at one or two airfields, three to four ship groupings, five to seven coastal artillery batteries, two to four command posts, one or two nuclear weapons depots, and two to three mine weapons depots. Thus the overall requirement will be between 25 and 40 nuclear warheads with a yield of 20 to 100 kilotons each. If the proper amount of warheads and delivery vehicles for them is available, and if they substantially exceed the nuclear capabilities of the enemy, then a reinforced army corps (including one or two marine regiments) may be sufficient for the accomplishment of the tasks assigned. Only with such reinforcement and, of course, with close cooperation with the fleet forces, is an army corps capable of fulfilling such a complex task -- the seizure of a straits zone.

The same analysis shows that with equal or somewhat lesser nuclear weapons resources than the enemy, the seizure of a straits zone should be assigned to a combined-arms army.

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As for fleet forces, they also depend on the nature of the tasks to be accomplished. Since the overriding one is the landing of an amphibious landing force and the support of actions on shore, the basis of a grouping of fleet forces assigned to seize straits will be a landing ship large unit capable of loading, delivering to the landing areas, and landing the main forces and means of the first echelon of the landing force. To accomplish this task this large unit must include not only landing ships, but also forces for close-in and distant escort as well as detachments of fire support ships.

Depending on the planned strength of the landing force, and also on the possibility of an assault crossing of a water obstacle by tanks under their own power, a landing ship large unit may be reinforced with several transports from the civilian fleet.

In addition to those ships for close-in and distant escort included in the landing ship large unit, fleet forces will be needed to cover the landing ship detachments during transit by sea and in the landing area, as well as troops advancing along the shore of the straits, against enemy strikes from the sea. For this purpose missile and torpedo submarines, naval missile-carrying aviation, missile and torpedo surface ships, and fleet coastal missile units may be used.

In individual cases, in order to neutralize forces conducting antilanding defense of islands, and also to destroy ground means of nuclear attack, depots of nuclear weapons, and other targets in the offensive zone of the troops of a corps or army, missile submarines with short-range missiles may be allocated.

Calculations show that for certain completely typical conditions of the seizure of straits zones, for joint operations with the ground forces the fleet will have to allocate 80 to 90 medium landing ships, eight to ten transports from the civilian fleet\*, 30 to 40 ships for close-in and distant escort (including two to three detachments of fire support ships, each of which might have four to six destroyers or one cruiser and three to four destroyers). We might note that these forces may be referred to as a landing ship large unit or an amphibious ship large unit.

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\* By this is meant transports whose tactical-technical specifications correspond roughly to a transport of the Leninist Komsomol type.

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Cover for advancing landing forces and troops against enemy strikes may be provided within the straits zone by detachments of covering ships with the allocation of fire support detachments, one or two coastal missile regiments, and one or two sorties by a naval missile-carrying aviation regiment. In addition, cover may be strengthened by using submarines deployed in advance in advantageous positions outside the straits zone.

As a rule, control of covering forces (except detachments of ships for fire support of the landing) will be exercised by the fleet commander. Not to be ruled out either is the possibility of placing the coastal missile regiments in operational subordination to the commander of the army corps or to the commander of the combined-arms army.

When it is necessary to seize a straits zone containing a large number of islands and situated on the flank of the main axis of advance of front troops, the actions of a grouping of forces of the composition just described may be as follows.

On receiving the signal for the beginning of military actions, forces and means of the fleet, of the army corps or combined-arms army, as well as allocated front aviation units, deliver the first massed nuclear strike against targets detected in the straits zone or on the approaches to it. The principle of allocating targets of nuclear strikes between ground troops and fleet forces may be as follows: all targets on the ground are struck by front means and partly by fleet forces, while ship groupings are struck by fleet forces and partly by front aviation forces. Following delivery of the nuclear strikes the troops go over to a rapid offensive, at first along the shore of the land approaches to the straits zone, and then along one of the shores of the strait, in an attempt, using a part of their forces, to seize islands lying nearby. Front rocket troops and front aviation deliver repeat nuclear strikes against newly detected targets, or those which were not hit, in the offensive zone of the troops.

At this time the fleet forces in the approaches to the straits zone and in the straits search for enemy ship groupings and destroy them. At the same time preparations are made for landing the landing force on islands located a considerable distance away from the axis of operations of the main forces of the corps or army.

At the prescribed time the landing troops embark onto ships and the sea transit is carried out so as to permit the landing to take place a short time after the airborne landing force is landed. Afterward the landing troops that have landed, with the support of the fleet forces and a

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large unit of front aviation, conduct combat actions to seize the islands, while the landing ship means regroup to land subsequent landing forces or to transport troops, equipment, and various cargoes needed by units advancing along one of the shores of the strait or conducting combat actions on the islands.

This in broad outline is a possible procedure for the seizure of straits by forces of ground troops and of a fleet. The success of an offensive operation will depend to a considerable degree...[two lines missing]...the necessity to create conditions that ensure freedom of maneuver by fleet forces.

Now let us examine the actions of fleet forces in greater detail. The geographic features of the approaches to straits zones and of straits enable the enemy in most cases to make extensive use of minefields\* in order to increase the stability of his defense and hinder the actions of our fleet. The mass use of minefields, covered by coastal fire means, ships, and aviation, can cause a considerable delay in the seizure of a straits zone, since the fleet forces will be contained and will be unable to assist the ground forces at the proper time.

Therefore, the first and most important task of the fleet at the outset of a war\*\* will be the disruption of enemy minelaying operations. In our opinion, this task can be accomplished in the following manner.

In a situation where war may possibly break out, reconnaissance efforts are concentrated on detecting changes in the system of defense of the straits zone (specifically changes, since the overall system of defense should be detected in peacetime) and, in particular, on pinpointing the disposition of enemy ships, especially minelayers and other ships capable of taking on and laying mines.

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\* Modern naval mines possess great stability (owing to the presence of [three words missing] and various other anti-minesweeper devices) and ...  
[rest of footnote missing]

\*\* Footnote missing

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It is important also to establish the time when mines are taken on board ships and when the ships leave their bases, and to identify the areas of minelaying and the system of safe channels. In view of the special procedure for the passage of warships and for flights of aircraft in straits zones, reconnaissance in peacetime and under prewar conditions will have to be conducted by combat ships passing through the straits, also making use of surveillance by merchant ships and aircraft of civilian ministries, and by agents, as well as carrying out reconnaissance by radiotechnical and space means. If it is established that ships carrying mines have left their bases, reconnaissance must conduct continuous surveillance of them, so as to ensure that hunter-killer groups are guided to them.

All actions to destroy enemy ships at their bases and to disrupt minelaying operations must be an integral part of the initial massed nuclear strike delivered by the forces of the fleet and front. Therefore, when military actions begin (at the appropriate signal), missile units of the front and of the fleet, missile submarines, and front aviation deliver nuclear strikes against those ports and bases where the presence of enemy ships has been previously established.

Surface ship strike groups first destroy those enemy ship groupings with which they maintained contact before the start of combat actions. And hunter-killer forces of the fleet that have not had contact with enemy ships proceed toward his shores, breaking through the straits, and search for and destroy enemy ships that have left their bases just prior to the start of combat operations.

Subunits and units of naval missile-carrying and front aviation, using refined reconnaissance data, destroy enemy ships that have left to lay mines in more remote areas situated outside the narrow straits.

Actions to disrupt minelaying operations should be conducted rapidly and to the greatest possible depth. In so doing aerial reconnaissance must ascertain the results of the strikes, detect any regrouping of enemy forces, and identify any new attempt on his part to establish minefields, in order to deliver repeat strikes and complete the disruption of these efforts.

Thus the disruption of enemy minelaying operations will ensure freedom of maneuver for the fleet forces and will therefore contribute greatly to success in seizing a straits zone.

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Another no less important problem, also determining to a considerable extent success in seizing a straits zone, is the correct choice of islands and landing areas for amphibious and airborne landings. In choosing the islands and landing places for the landing forces it must be borne in mind that some of them contain administrative and industrial centers, while others are rural areas.

The former, presumably, will have a stronger defense, with the disposition of the main enemy forces and means, while the latter may have no such forces and means at all.

The question arises: on which of these islands is it desirable to land amphibious and airborne landing forces first?

To give an answer we must proceed from the possible conditions under which military actions might begin.

Should war begin with the employment of nuclear weapons, landing forces should be landed on islands containing administrative-political and industrial centers, since the seizure of them following nuclear strikes will disrupt the system of defense and make it possible also to disorganize administrative control and undermine the industrial potential. In so doing, in order to contain and hinder the maneuvering of enemy units and large units from island to island, it is advisable to land, simultaneously with the landing of the main forces on the most important islands, a part of the forces on adjacent, less fortified islands.

A different approach is required in the event that war begins and continues for a time to be waged without the employment of nuclear weapons. Due to the difficulty in destroying and neutralizing forces and means of defense with conventional weapons, it is desirable to concentrate the efforts of the landing force on one axis and land it on less defended islands, in order, having built up sufficient forces on them, to carry out the successive seizure of adjacent islands that are more strongly defended.

It also is very important to choose correctly the time (day) for landing the landing force, but there are various opinions on this point.

The first and most prevalent holds that it is essential to land the landing force on the first day of the front offensive operation, immediately following the initial nuclear strike. The second, also rather prevalent, point of view holds that it is advantageous to land the landing force on the third or fourth day of the front operation. And there are

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other opinions too.

A landing on the first day of the operation (immediately after a nuclear strike) undoubtedly has many advantages; it exploits to the greatest extent possible the results of the initial nuclear strikes by the strategic nuclear forces of the fleet and the front.

The initial nuclear strikes could result in, if not complete, then at least very considerable destruction to forces and means defending the straits, the disruption of enemy minelaying operations and disorganization of the control of his forces. But in order for the landing ship detachments to be able to move out to the landing areas immediately after the initial nuclear strike, landing ships and landing troops must be concentrated at the embarkation points even before the start of war. And this could lead to the premature exposure of preparations for the landing operation before the start of combat actions. A no less serious disadvantage of landing a landing force on the first day of the operation is the fact that in such a case it would be necessary to divert considerable front forces and means to support the landing operation.

Thus to neutralize antilanding defense installations on islands and to cover landing forces against strikes from the air, at least one battalion from a front missile brigade will have to be allocated, and up to two divisional sorties by fighter-bombers and at least three divisional sorties by fighters will have to be carried out.

A very significant factor which should always be taken into consideration is the possibility of unfavorable development of an offensive on the first day on the main axis, when the troops intended for the offensive along one shore of the strait may be delayed in reaching the planned lines. Without proper consideration of this factor, the landing force which has been landed could be unsuccessful.

As for landing the landing force on the third or fourth day of a front operation, here in a number of cases the front is in a position to allocate the forces and means necessary for reliable cover of the landing forces and effective neutralization of the enemy's antilanding defense. But it should be borne in mind that with this amount of time the enemy may to a certain degree restore his defense of the straits that have been violated by the initial nuclear strike and engage the landing force with forces which, though weakened, are nevertheless organized.

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In our opinion the landing of a landing force on the first day of a front operation still has more advantages in a number of cases than one conducted on subsequent days, since the initial nuclear strike creates the most favorable conditions. Concealment of the preparations for the landing operation before the start of military actions may be accomplished under the guise of a landing exercise.

While ground forces are destroying the enemy and negotiating fortified areas lying en route to the straits, fleet forces destroy enemy ship groupings operating against the flanks of our advancing troops and disrupt the movement of supplies. In addition our fleet prevents the mining of approaches to the strait and to its two shores; in individual cases it uses nuclear strikes to destroy nuclear means and various targets in the enemy rear, and it also prepares to land the landing force.

Amphibious landing forces may in one case be landed in the rear of the enemy's defense on the approach to the straits zone in order to disorganize control, prevent the approach of reserves or an organized withdrawal of enemy troops along roads leading to the strait, and also to destroy missile launchers, airfields, and other important targets. In another instance the landing force may be landed on the opposite shore of the strait in order to destroy the enemy's defense and assist our troops in an assault crossing of the strait. Here it is felt that the landing of amphibious and airborne landing forces on the opposite shore of the strait is more advantageous, since an assault crossing of the strait in the face of a previously established defense on the opposite shore represents a significant difficulty.

The time when amphibious and airborne landing forces are to be landed must always be coordinated with the amount of time it takes the ground forces to approach the shore of the strait, so that by the beginning of the assault crossing of the strait by the troops, the landing forces, in cooperation with front missile units and with aviation, and supported by fleet forces, will have time to destroy the main enemy groupings on the opposite shore. Simultaneously with the approach of the advancing troops toward the shore of the strait and the landing of the landing force, strike groups of ships, following behind the minesweepers, make a breakthrough into the strait, destroy enemy combat ships remaining there, prevent the penetration of enemy ship groupings into the strait, and carry out control minesweeping in the strait.

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The landing ship means of the fleet, freed after landing the landing force, enter the strait and transport troops from one shore to the other. For this same purpose combat ships and boats\* may be used in addition to the landing ship means.

During subsequent actions to seize the straits, the fleet's main tasks will be to land tactical landing forces to seize islands defended by small forces, to prevent the bringing up of reserves to reinforce the defense of individual sectors of the straits zone or the evacuation of defending troops from the islands or from the shore of the straits, and to deliver supplies and reserves for one's own troops. In individual cases, by decision of the front or fleet commander, nuclear strikes may be delivered against the islands.

To destroy the enemy's transport means and the troops on board in port and at loading points, missile submarines, missile surface ships, and coastal missile units may also be used -- provided, of course, the loading points are located in a zone within their range. But should the loading be carried out from an unprotected shore in open roadsteads, torpedo and artillery ships and boats may also participate in destroying the transport means; these, operating from several directions, break through to the transport means and destroy them. Simultaneously with their breakthrough to transport means in the roadsteads, or in anticipation of the breakthrough, diversionary groups of ships divert enemy forces covering the transport means.

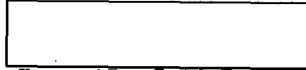
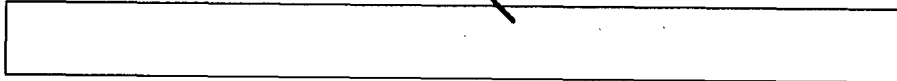
The logical end result of the seizure of straits is the movement of the fleet forces out into the open sea.

Modern requirements for the conduct of offensive actions fundamentally alter the concept of "the movement out of naval forces into the open sea". In the past the movement out of the fleet into the open sea was considered a methodically successive process which included the concentration of ships in approaches to the straits zone at the moment of seizure of the islands and the carrying out of such measures as minesweeping, clearing scuttled ships from narrows, neutralizing fire means on shore, escorting one's own submarines, and searching for and destroying enemy submarines at the outer exits from the straits zone.

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\* For example, a Project 183 torpedo boat can take 50 men with light armament, while a Project 122 bis small antisubmarine ship can take 150 men.

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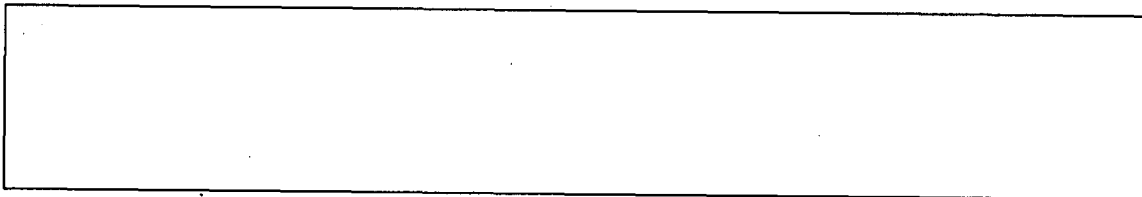
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By taking these measures the first echelon of ships could move out on the ninth or tenth day of the front operation.

Under present conditions such time periods are unacceptable, since direct help by the fleet to attacking troops is needed while they are accomplishing not only the immediate task, but also the subsequent task, when lines of transportation are stretched, and when land transport capabilities are considerably reduced as a result of nuclear strikes.

Thus the movement out of the fleet into the open sea under present conditions is actually a rapid breakthrough by various combat ships through the straits and involving a battle. In so doing the success of the breakthrough will depend on the freedom of maneuver of the ships (which is achieved, as has already been stated, by thwarting the enemy's plan for laying mines in the approaches to the straits zone).

These in broad outline are the special features of operations by various forces in seizing straits in order to enable the fleet to move out into the open sea.



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