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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

21 June 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Destruction
of Enemy Nuclear Weapons and the Cooperation
of the Ground Forces with Aviation in an
Offensive Operation

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 conveys comments on two previous articles in this publication concerning air support and cooperation with ground forces. The authors argue that both nuclear and conventional weapons, as well as fighter-bombers, should be employed against enemy nuclear targets for the desired effect, and that the designation of zones of responsibility for combating these targets should be extended to the division level. They also take issue with centralizing the control of fighter-bomber aviation at the front level, preferring a more flexible allocation of aviation resources to the armies. Air support is defined here as a form of operational and tactical cooperation. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963.

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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 W. Wells

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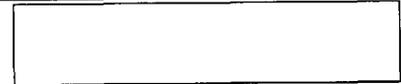
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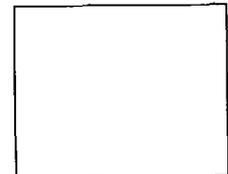
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Destruction of Enemy Nuclear Weapons and the Cooperation of the Ground Forces with Aviation in an Offensive Operation

SOURCE Documentary Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The authors of this article are General-Major N. Silin and Colonel V. Vyazovtsev. This article conveys their comments on two previous articles in this publication concerning air support and cooperation with ground forces. In reference to one of these, the authors argue that both nuclear and conventional weapons, as well as fighter-bombers, should be employed against enemy nuclear targets for the desired effect, and that the designation of zones of responsibility for combating these targets should be extended to the division level. They also take issue with centralizing the control of fighter-bomber aviation at the front level, as presented in the second article under review, preferring a more flexible allocation of aviation resources to the combined-arms and tank armies which would eliminate the system of requesting air support and simplify the control process. Air support is defined here as a form of operational and tactical cooperation.

End of Summary

[Redacted] Comment:
General-Major N. Silin was identified as chief of a department of the Military Air Academy about 1960.

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The Destruction of Enemy Nuclear Weapons and the Cooperation
of the Ground Forces with Aviation in an Offensive Operation

by

General-Major N. Silin

Colonel V. Vyazovtsev

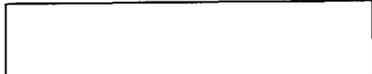
Questions of the cooperation of the various branches of the armed forces and the branch arms in the operation and the battle are currently being discussed widely in military publications. This is completely understandable. The new conditions of conducting armed combat require that the most efficient ways be found to exploit the capabilities of all the modern means of destruction, and primarily those of the rocket troops, aviation, and artillery. Articles devoted to resolving this question have been written by General-Major of Artillery V. Kuznetsov, General-Leytenant of Aviation I. Pstygo, General-Major of Aviation N. Ganichev, and Lieutenant Colonel N. Reshetnikov.*

In their articles, the authors present a number of interesting and very important theses regarding the organization of combat against enemy nuclear means in an offensive operation, the cooperation of rocket troops, aviation, and artillery, and the underlying bases for air support of troops under conditions in which means of mass destruction are employed. Many recommendations regarding these problems deserve approval and should be introduced into troop training. However, we believe that some of the proposals made by the authors require elaboration and a greater degree of clarification.

General-Major of Artillery V. Kuznetsov** concludes from the analysis which he has made that in a front, conventional means of destruction play the main role in combat against enemy nuclear means and that nuclear warheads should be employed only in those instances when an assigned task cannot be carried out with conventional means of destruction.

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," No. 5 (66), 1962.

** The Role and Cooperation of the Aviation, Rocket Troops and Artillery of a Front in Combating Enemy Nuclear Weapons in an Offensive Operation"

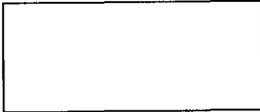


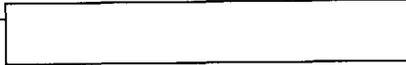
However, it must be noted that with the conventional means of destruction employed by the array of forces recommended by General-Major of Artillery V. Kuznetsov in his article, a target can be reliably neutralized, but by no means always destroyed. In a good number of instances, we may find unsatisfactory a level of destruction which puts nuclear means out of action for only a brief period of time. In combat against enemy nuclear weapons, we must in all instances pursue a decisive goal -- the destruction of the targets.

There is greater assurance of achieving this goal when aviation and the rocket troops employ nuclear means of destruction. We are also firmly convinced that even many individual targets of operational-tactical importance, though they may be small in size, must in the course of an operation be destroyed with nuclear weapons. Of course, the enemy may happen to have a considerable number of targets that occupy a large area of terrain (for example, nuclear weapons depots and assembly workshops). Against these targets, it is more advisable to employ nuclear means of destruction no matter what the circumstances. It goes without saying that in combat against enemy nuclear weapons, the employment of conventional weapons as well is by no means ruled out. They can prove very effective in destroying, for example, launchers and missiles when they are changing siting areas, moving to launching sites, or moving out from under a nuclear strike; that is, in all those instances when the employment of nuclear warheads is inadvisable.

On the basis of this, in our view, only one correct conclusion can be drawn: in combat against enemy nuclear weapons, all modern means of destruction, both nuclear and conventional, will be widely employed. Therefore, without consideration of the nature of the target, it is not possible to give preference (as does General-Major of Artillery V. Kuznetsov) to any one means alone. The efficient employment of all the capabilities of aviation, rocket troops and artillery, as well as of airborne landing forces and special detachments formed among the troops, will make it possible to carry out successfully the task of timely detection and destruction of the means of mass destruction.

We also consider it necessary to broaden the concept of zones of responsibility for combat against enemy nuclear means.





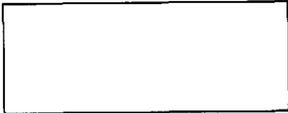
General-Major of Artillery V. Kuznetsov proposes that they be defined only for the army and front. After a study of this matter, we have concluded that it is advisable to designate the indicated zones of responsibility not only for the army and front, but also for the division. The depth of the division zone of responsibility for combat against enemy nuclear means must not exceed 20 to 25 kilometers. Included in this zone will be enemy first-echelon divisions in whose battle formations there may be Davy Crockett launchers, atomic artillery, Honest John free-flight rocket launchers, and Lacrosse guided missile launchers.

Tactical missiles, artillery, tanks, and airborne landing forces can successfully combat these means. Moreover, by exploiting gaps and breaches in the disposition of the enemy troops, detachments formed from tank and motorized rifle subunits are able to quickly penetrate to the locations of his nuclear means and destroy them.

Lying outside the division zone will be the army zone, then the front zone. We agree that it is advisable for the depth of the army zone of responsibility to be 200 to 250 kilometers. However, it is important here that the army have at its disposal the forces needed to destroy the enemy nuclear weapons.

Of course, it will always be possible to employ operational-tactical missiles in order to accomplish this task in the army. However, it must be kept in mind that results will not be high when they are employed to deliver strikes against separate, relatively small, and, what is more, often mobile targets, which nuclear attack means usually are. It is true that with a large expenditure of powerful nuclear warheads it is possible to obtain a considerable effect. However, this can result in the inefficient employment of the nuclear means issued to the army.

In our opinion, in order to combat enemy nuclear weapons successfully, an army must employ another means of destruction -- supporting fighter-bombers. Fighter-bomber aviation, with its relatively high degree of accuracy in delivering strikes, is able to hit small-size targets. Furthermore, fighter-bombers are able to deliver successful strikes against mobile targets, which is extremely important in combat against enemy nuclear weapons.



Thus, fighter-bombers will be able to make up for the deficiencies of missile means.

Fighter-bomber aviation must bear the main burden in combat against enemy operational-tactical nuclear means, which, as a rule, will be located in the army zone. Therefore, in order to support an army, it is always necessary to allocate considerable resources of fighter-bombers. Calculations based on an analysis of the conditions of the operational-tactical situation in which an offensive operation in the initial period of a war may take place indicate that aviation will have to make 120 to 150 aircraft sorties each day of the operation in order to support an army. This can be done by the main complement of one fighter-bomber division.

In view of the great requirement for fighter-bomber aviation, it is advisable to increase its relative proportion in the air army. We support the view of General-Leytenant of Aviation I. Pstygo, General-Major of Aviation N. Ganichev, and Lieutenant Colonel N. Reshetnikov that the number of fighter-bomber divisions in an air army must correspond to the number of armies operating in the first echelon of the front.

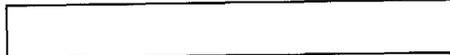
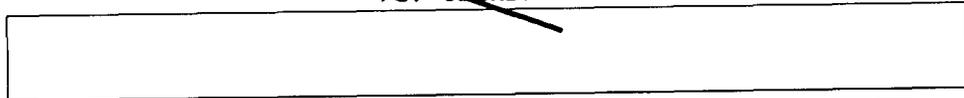
Let us also make an observation with regard to the control of aviation. The above authors hold persistently to the idea of rigid centralization of fighter-bomber aviation at the front level. "Air support of combined-arms (tank) armies," they say, "will now be carried out not by allocating a definite quantity of nuclear warheads, and flight resources of fighter-bombers and cruise missile launches to them in advance, but predominantly on the basis of the requests of the commanders of the combined-arms armies submitted to the front and the air army through the operations groups."* We can still agree with this procedure for control of aviation when an air army has only one fighter-bomber division. In such a case, of course, it is not advisable to dissipate the already limited capabilities of the fighter-bombers. Under these conditions, they can most advantageously be employed according to the decision of the commander of the front.

* "Air Support of Ground Forces and Control of Combat Actions of Front Aviation"

However, the authors also advocate such a procedure for employing aviation even when it is possible to allocate from the air army one fighter-bomber division apiece for each combined-arms (tank) army of the first echelon. Under these conditions, it is most advisable to employ the main resources of fighter-bombers in accordance with the decision of the commanders of the combined-arms and tank armies, who, as has already been pointed out, bear the immediate responsibility for organizing combat against nuclear means located at a depth of 200 to 250 kilometers from the forward edge. It is advisable to leave at the disposal of the commander of the front only a part of the forces of fighter-bomber aviation, which should be assigned to carry out tasks in accordance with the front plan. With this kind of arrangement, it becomes possible during combat against missile/nuclear weapons to best implement cooperation of fighter-bombers, operational-tactical missiles, tactical missiles, and artillery also in a zone where other very important enemy targets are to be destroyed. Furthermore, this procedure for control of aviation will always allow the commander of the front at the critical moment to concentrate the main efforts of the fighter-bombers on carrying out tasks in support of the front operation as a whole.

When considerable fighter-bomber resources are placed at the disposal of the commander of the combined-arms (tank) army, there is no longer the need for a system of so-called requests to the front. We believe that this system is completely unsuited to the nature of cooperation between the ground forces and aviation. Even in the last war, this system caused an increase in the time needed to call out the fighter-bombers. It now will undoubtedly have a negative effect on the timely carrying out of even such tasks as the immediate destruction of selected enemy means of mass destruction.

In addition, there are still other arguments against the request system. It must be kept in mind that front troops in a zone of 500 to 600 kilometers can carry out an offensive on several axes. As a rule, one army will be operating on each of these axes, so that in the front zone there will usually be several distinct large groupings of troops. It is natural that under these conditions centralized control of fighter-bomber aviation at the front level will produce serious difficulties.



Control of these forces can be exercised in a considerably simpler manner if they are placed at the disposal (in the sense of assigning tasks to them) of the commander of the combined-arms (tank) army. We think that with this kind of arrangement the matters of supporting the ground forces will be accomplished much more efficiently than under the request system.

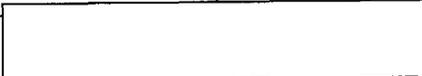
Now about the support itself. We agree with Generals Pstygo and Ganichev and Lieutenant Colonel Reshetnikov that as yet we do not have a unanimity of views regarding the essence itself of air support. However, we do not share the ideas they express on this subject in the article.

It is the opinion of the authors that air support should be understood as actions of aviation for continuous search and immediate destruction of enemy missile/nuclear means and his corps and immediate army reserves, as well as to isolate the field of engagement from the approach of fresh forces at the most crucial periods of an offensive operation. Still another interpretation of the essence of air support can frequently be found in the literature. This is, as some comrades are known to believe, that air support means all the tasks carried out by front aviation.

It is our opinion that an explanation of the concept of air support must be approached from somewhat different positions. First of all, there must be an answer to the question of whether or not all of the front aviation can be called supporting aviation. If this question is answered in the affirmative, then of course all differences of opinion fall by the wayside. But the problem is that supporting aviation at any particular period of an operation includes only those air large units and units which, though remaining subordinate to the commander of the air army, carry out firetasks assigned to them by the commander of the combined-arms (tank) army. Therefore, air units of fighter-bombers and cruise missiles can be employed as supporting units.

The combat employment of other forces and means of an air army during an operation must be by direct order of the commander of the front. Fighters, bombers, and some of the fighter-bombers will be employed in strict accordance with the front plan. These forces of the air army operate in support of the overall front





operation.

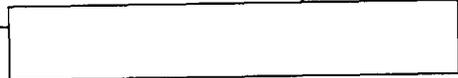
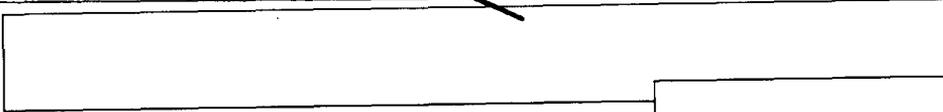
On the basis of what has been said, the conclusion can be drawn that air support is first of all one of the most important ways in which front aviation cooperates with the combined-arms armies and tank army comprising the front.

Cooperation can also take place when separate air units and large units are made operationally subordinate to the combined-arms (tank) armies. We believe that in this case cooperation exceeds the confines of air support. It is known that this method of cooperation was employed in the past war. For example, during the offensive operation conducted in December 1942 by the troops of the Southwestern Front, large units of the 2nd Air Army were operationally subordinated to the combined-arms armies. Thus, the 205th Fighter Division and the 227th Ground-Attack Air Division were subordinated to the 6th Army; the 3rd Composite Air Corps -- to the 10th Guards Army; the 1st Composite Air Corps -- to the 3rd Guards Army; and the 228th Fighter Air Division and two regiments of night bombers -- to the 5th Tank Army. Furthermore, the commander of the front made provision for the possibility of switching all aviation efforts to one axis were the need to arise. Of course, with this kind of subordination, aviation actions were regarded as having a broader scope than air support.

Most characteristic of present-day conditions will be, of course, not operational subordination but air support, which we associate primarily with whomever has aviation in his hands and whoever assigns it tasks.

Finally, the last item concerns the concept of tactical and operational cooperation of the ground forces and aviation under conditions in which new means of combat are employed. In the not too distant past, each of these types of cooperation had its own completely defined content. Thus, tactical cooperation was understood to be those aviation actions carried out simultaneously or almost simultaneously with the ground forces within the confines of a very limited area. These aviation actions had an immediate effect on the success of the combined-arms units and large units. As for operational cooperation, it took place when aviation operated relatively independently and hit enemy targets which were located at a





considerable distance from the forward units of the ground forces. In that situation air strikes ensured the achievement of operational results. They had an effect on the actions of the ground forces, not immediately, but only after a certain time.

Currently, the sphere of actions of front aviation has broadened a great deal. From this point of view, the operational nature of cooperation between the ground forces and aviation has been strengthened. However, even within operational cooperation it is now possible to find elements of tactical cooperation if one approaches the assessment of a given situation taking into account the effect of air strikes on the actions of the ground forces. Thus, a hit by aviation against enemy targets located 50 to 100 kilometers and more from the advancing troops will, as a rule, have an immediate effect on the actions of the combined-arms large units and formations. The destruction of such means as Corporal, Sergeant, or Redstone guided missiles will deprive the enemy of the capability of delivering nuclear strikes against our troops. This will immediately create an exceptionally favorable situation for the rapid movement forward of the front troops.

In a good number of instances, aviation can be employed also for delivering strikes against targets in the immediate depth. Thus, during an offensive, fighter-bombers can carry out tasks to destroy missile launchers and nuclear artillery batteries; this will undoubtedly connote tactical cooperation. Nevertheless, there will also be elements of operational cooperation here, since the execution by aviation of this kind of task will have an important effect on the operational success of the ground forces.

Thus, under present-day conditions, it is in practice very difficult to establish a borderline between tactical and operational cooperation. Now, perhaps, there is no special need to make this division. In our opinion, it would now be more correct to speak of operational-tactical cooperation as the single form of cooperation between aviation and ground forces in front operations.

