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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

22 September 1978

[Redacted]

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : The Warsaw Pact SOYUZ-78 Exercise

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is a translation of a SECRET 31 May memorandum from the Combined Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief to Warsaw Pact defense ministers reporting on SOYUZ-78, a major map exercise held in Romania in March 1978 which further exemplifies the application of the theater command concept in Warsaw Pact wartime planning. The exercise involved the Bulgarian and Romanian defense ministers as well as staff officers and Combined and Soviet Armed Forces personnel, who worked on the control and support of coalition groupings within the context of a strategic operation centrally directed by a high command in the Southwestern theater.

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.

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John N. McMahon

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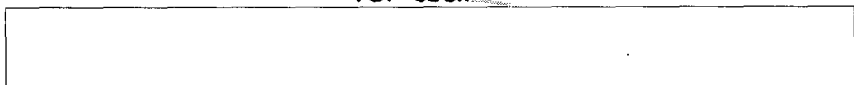
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Intelligence Information Special Report

Page 3 of 10 Pages

COUNTRY USSR/WARSAW PACT



DATE OF INFO. 31 May 1978

DATE 22 September 1978

SUBJECT

The Warsaw Pact SOYUZ-78 Exercise


SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of a SECRET memorandum from the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces to Warsaw Pact defense ministers reporting on the SOYUZ-78 operational-strategic command-staff map exercise held in Romania in March 1978. The exercise involved the Bulgarian and Romanian defense ministers as well as staff officers and Combined and Soviet Armed Forces personnel, who worked on the control and support of coalition groupings within the context of a strategic operation centrally directed by a high command in the Southwestern theater. It was learned from the exercise that improvement is needed in operational training, particularly for joint airborne-amphibious landings, the employment of nuclear weapons, and radioelectronic warfare.

End of Summary

 Comment:

The theater command concept was treated more fully in the "Draft Statute on the Warsaw Pact Combined Armed Forces and Combined Command for Wartime"  which was based in part on the results of this exercise.

TS #788321
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~~TOP SECRET~~

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FIRDB-312/02313-78

Page 4 of 10 Pages

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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
OF THE COMBINED ARMED FORCES
OF THE WARSAW PACT
MEMBER STATES
31 May 1978

Esteemed Comrade Minister!

In conformity with the plan of combined undertakings of the Combined Armed Forces, in March this year the SOYUZ-78 [ALLIANCE-78] combined operational-strategic command-staff exercise on maps was held on the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania.

The principal training objectives set for the exercise were: to enhance the practical skills of commanders and staffs in organizing the repelling of enemy aggression and in moving forward, deploying, and establishing attack groupings in the Southwestern Theater of Military Operations; to give the staffs being trained practice in planning the operations of fronts (armies) and fleets and the combat actions of air defense troops, and in organizing the control of coalition groupings of troops and naval forces.

Fifteen operations groups from the staffs of the Bulgarian People's Army, Army of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and Armed Forces of the USSR participated in the exercise.

Control organs of the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact member states played the role of the staff of the exercise directing body and at the same time that of the Staff of the High Command of the Combined Armed Forces in the theater of military operations.

TS #788321
Copy # 2

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 5 of 10 Pages

In scope of operational-strategic tasks worked out and in number of operational staffs brought in, this exercise was the first of its kind to be held in the Southwestern Theater of Military Operations and was one of the major combined undertakings in the operational training of the Combined Armed Forces.

The Minister of National Defense of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, Army General Comrade D. DZHUROV, and the Minister of National Defense of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Colonel General Comrade I. COMAN, participated in individual stages of the exercise.

The participation of the defense ministers in the exercise contributed to the high quality of work on the training problems to be solved by the coalition groupings of the allied armies.

The exercise was conducted in four stages, in the course of which these problems were worked out:

-- in the first stage, the repelling of enemy aggression and movement forward of allied troops in the theater of military operations;

-- in the second stage, the going over to the offensive by the troops of the fronts and the conduct of operations by allied navies under conditions of the employment of conventional means of destruction;

-- in the third stage, the changeover to combat actions with the employment of nuclear weapons;

-- in the fourth stage, the planning of subsequent offensive operations of the fronts and combat actions of the navies; and the organization of troop control and cooperation in developing the offensive on separated axes.

In all stages of the exercise much attention was devoted to the matters of rear services and technical support for the coalition groupings of troops and naval forces as well as to the use of large units and units equipped with modern weapons and combat equipment (T-72 tanks, S-200 VEGA surface-to-air missile systems, MIG-23 aircraft, and others).

During the exercise a complex and rapidly changing situation was established, one that required of exercise participants that they manifest superior skill and the expert utilization of troops and naval forces.

TS #788321
Copy # 2

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 6 of 10 Pages

The exercise was preceded by instructional and special training sessions with the deputy directors of the exercise and with the staff of the directing body, which enabled them to prepare themselves more purposefully to carry out their functional responsibilities, not only in the role of directing body for the exercise, but also as the Staff of the High Command of the Combined Armed Forces in the theater of military operations.

The working out of the problems of the initial nuclear strike was done on a real-time scale with a continuous buildup of the situation ('hour for hour').

The exercise director and his deputies extensively employed the method of studying the work of those being trained right at the working places, thus promoting higher quality in the working out of training problems.

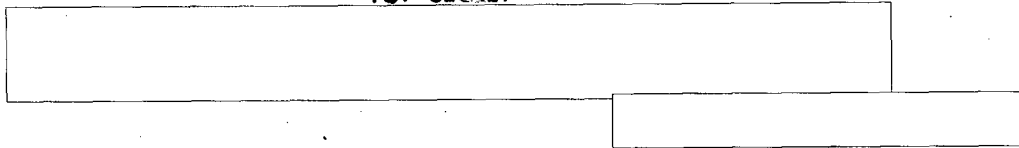
The objectives set for the exercise were achieved. The personnel in charge of the operational staffs of the allied armies deepened their knowledge and enhanced their practical skills in the planning and conduct of a strategic operation in the Southwestern Theater of Military Operations, in the organization of cooperation among formations (large units) of different national affiliation and in the organization of their rear services and technical support, and in the organization of the control of coalition troop groupings.

The exercise that was held enabled us to draw certain practical conclusions in the interests of further improving the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact member states.

1. The high level of combat readiness and the favorable operational position of the NATO armed forces make it possible for them to initiate aggression against the countries of the socialist commonwealth by means of a surprise attack with aviation, naval forces, and ground forces. Such an attack by the probable enemy constitutes a great danger and makes necessary exceptional attention to ensure superior combat readiness on the part of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact countries and to increase the skills of command personnel in organizing the repelling of aggression. Under modern conditions this task is of great political and strategic importance.

TS #788321
Copy # 2

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The experience of the exercise corroborated the fact that in the course of official activities and also in the operational training of commanders and staffs it is necessary to continue the search for more efficient methods of converting the allied armies from peacetime to wartime status, of moving troop groupings out from under enemy strikes, of rapidly and covertly deploying formations and large units to repel enemy attacks, and of organizing combat against his superior forces, which are equipped with modern equipment and weapons.

It is necessary to perseveringly introduce into troop training practice new methods of combat against enemy antitank means, to improve the air defense system, and to skilfully exploit the increased combat capabilities of conventional means of destruction.

As the exercise showed, the successful repelling of enemy aggression depends not only on the reliable covering of the state border but also on the meticulous organization and conduct of operations to gain supremacy in the air and on the sea.

2. The participation in a strategic operation of formations of ground forces, air forces, air defense forces, and naval forces of different national affiliation complicates the exercise of leadership over them during a war. Success can be achieved in such an operation only if it is conducted according to a single concept and plan, under a single leadership, and with control over the troops and naval forces organized on the principle of centralization.

In the course of the exercise the need to establish a high command with its staff in the Southwestern Theater of Military Operations was confirmed.

3. For the successful conduct of a strategic operation it is of decisive importance for the operational formations of the allied armies to move forward with timeliness to the theater of military operations and for them to be committed to the engagement in an organized manner so as to build up the efforts of the first echelon. In the exercise great attention was devoted to the study of these matters.

Special attention was devoted to the covering of troops against air strikes at the places where water obstacles were crossed and while mountain passes were being negotiated. To maintain high speeds in moving forward, powerful forward echelons and movement support detachments were established and steps were taken to construct alternate crossings over rivers and

TS #788321
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detours around mountain passes. The general (main) staffs of the allied armies [will] play a major role in accomplishing the tasks of all-round support for the movement forward of allied troops to the areas of combat actions.

4. When combat actions begin there arises the very complex task of combating the probable enemy's powerful aviation grouping. Because of this, it is necessary to master, in depth and comprehensively, the preparation and conduct of an air operation for the purpose of routing (weakening) the enemy's combined air forces in the theater of military operations.

5. In this past exercise extensive use was made of airborne and amphibious landing forces for the purpose of assisting ground forces in the seizing of a straits zone and overcoming fortified zones and areas of mountainous terrain. The conduct of joint airborne landing and naval operations, as the exercise demonstrated, is possible only when these are prepared thoroughly in advance, when troops are used skilfully, and also when the enemy's antilanding defense is reliably neutralized. This kind of operation must consist of combined attacks, coordinated with respect to place and time, against the enemy from the land, air, and sea.

The exercise once more revealed that the main organizer of such operations must be the machinery of a front.

In the practical work of commanders and staffs to organize a landing operation and to control the troops while it is being carried out there are still many questions on which careful work must be done. These include: the precise allocation of the functional duties of persons in command -- the commander of the assault transport forces and the commander of the landing force; the cooperation of the amphibious and airborne landing forces with each other and with the front troops advancing on the coastal axis; the organization of control and of all-round support in the landing operation.

6. The employment of nuclear weapons during combat actions is a qualitatively new stage in the conduct of an operation in the theater of military operations. The opposing sides will employ all measures to exploit to the maximum all available means in order to deliver a powerful initial nuclear strike and radically change the balance of forces in their favor.

TS #788321
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However, during the exercise not all commanders and staffs manifested a desire to allocate to the initial nuclear strike the maximum number of means of delivering nuclear warheads, although the opportunities to do so were present. The effectiveness of this strike was also impaired by the fact that not all of those being trained devoted proper attention to the final reconnaissance of the targets.

7. The exercise confirmed that the restoration of the combat effectiveness of troops (naval forces) after an enemy nuclear strike is an entire system of exceedingly complex measures which must be carried out based on a specially developed front plan that has been coordinated with the general (main) staffs of the allied armies.

8. Front operations that are successive with respect to depth and that are executed within the framework of a strategic operation in a theater of military operations will be a common occurrence. The preparation and conduct of such operations will have to be implemented under conditions of the sharp diminution of the combat capabilities of the troops, but their planning must be initiated before the first operations are completed. It will be impossible to prepare the troops of the fronts to carry out subsequent operations without the most active and direct participation of the general staffs of the allied armies. Towards the end of the first operations of the fronts the general staffs and front commanders must take all steps so that the troops will be maximally replenished with personnel, weapons, equipment, ammunition, and POL.

9. Great importance was attached to matters of radioelectronic warfare.

The exercise revealed that many commanders and staffs, in their practical activities, laid primary stress in radioelectronic warfare on the neutralization of the means of controlling troops and weapons by technical means exclusively and forgot the most effective method -- destruction by fire.

It is necessary to devote greater attention to the neutralization of control systems at the tactical level because they participate directly in the combat actions.

The problem of protecting our own control systems against enemy jamming also requires well thought-out resolution.

TS #788321
Copy # 2

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page 10 of 10 Pages

10. The overcoming of the language barrier has assumed great importance for improving the control of troops and naval forces of coalition composition. Under conditions of modern combat actions, as a rule there will be no time to translate operational documents and instructions from one language to another and even a small loss of time will adversely affect the fulfilment of combat tasks.

This is particularly applicable to communications personnel working in communications centers in the capacity of telegraph and radio operators.

11. The analysis of the results of the SOYUZ-78 exercise has enabled us to draw the conclusion that it is advisable to further improve the forms and methods of the operational training of commanders and staffs.

It is our firm conviction that the principal form of training of commanders and operational staffs must be command-staff exercises on terrain with means of communications and with skeleton troops as well as troop operational-tactical exercises. Of course, by this we do not reject other forms of operational training for the command personnel of the allied armies.

Esteemed Comrade Minister! In reporting to you briefly on the results of the SOYUZ-78 exercise, I express the hope that these will be taken into account in the training of the troops and naval forces allocated to the Combined Armed Forces and will be passed on to the command personnel of your army.

Very respectfully,

V. KULIKOV
Marshal of the Soviet Union

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