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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

10 January 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John H. Stein  
Acting Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Exploitation of the Success of an Offensive Operation by a US Field Army in the Initial Period of a War

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". The author, based on US training exercises and academic training materials, sets forth his interpretation of US Army views on the composition, strength, mission, objectives, and actions of the attack groupings established by US field armies to exploit successes achieved at a war's beginning. The text makes the tactics and actions employed by these attack groupings apparently mirror those used by the Soviets. The article has no information on Soviet armed forces and since there is almost no analysis, evaluation, or criticism of US forces and actions, it affords no insights into the Soviet appreciation of US armed forces. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963.

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

John H. Stein

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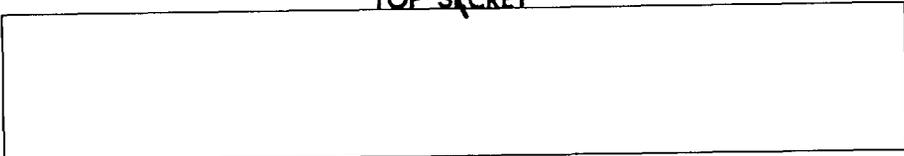
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

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# Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



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SUBJECT

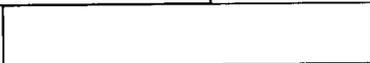
**MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR):** The Exploitation of the Success of an Offensive Operation by a US Field Army in the Initial Period of a War

SOURCE Documentary Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (70) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author, Colonel P. Simonok, basing himself on US training exercises and academic training materials, sets forth his interpretation of US Army views on the composition, strength, mission, objectives, and actions of the attack groupings established by US field armies for the purpose of exploiting successes achieved at a war's beginning. Judging by the author's narrative, the tactics and actions employed by these attack groupings apparently mirror those used by the Soviets. The article has no information on Soviet armed forces and since there is almost no analysis, evaluation, or criticism of US forces and actions, it affords no insights into the Soviet appreciation of US armed forces. End of Summary

Comment:  
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.





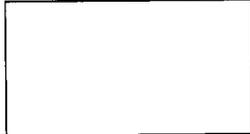
The Exploitation of the Success of an Offensive  
Operation by a US Field Army in the  
Initial Period of a War  
by  
Colonel P. SIMONOK

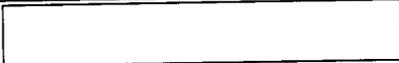
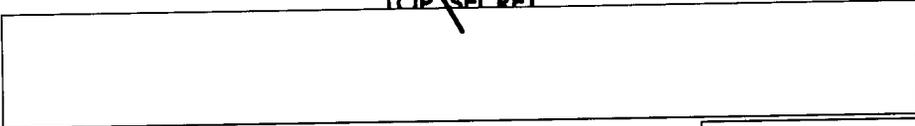
The exploitation of success in an offensive operation, in the opinion of the command of the US Army, is one of the forms of an offensive which can ensure the maximum utilization of the advantages gained as a result of defeating the enemy in the first phase of an operation. It is characterized by the swift movement forward of troops for the purpose of seizing objectives in the deep rear of the enemy, by the bypassing of those enemy areas whose capture is not of great importance for the fulfilment of the assigned task, and by meeting engagements and battles with the enemy's approaching reserves which are trying to delay the movement forward of the attacking troops.

It is most advantageous to have the development of an offensive carried out by highly mobile attack groupings operating by axes on a broad front.

A field army, as a rule, exploits success with one, and in individual instances with two or three attack groupings, each made up of a reinforced army corps. The attack grouping can be assigned a task to the entire depth of the army operation or it can be limited to the capture of an important objective at a lesser depth.

The attack grouping is assigned one of the following tasks: to seize rocket troop sites and bases and to capture areas which support the accomplishment of the task of the given operation; to pursue the retreating enemy and destroy his reserves advancing from the depth; to establish an external front of encirclement by swiftly moving forward into the enemy's rear; and to repulse enemy counterthrusts (as an exception). If airborne troops are employed in the operation, then one of the tasks of an attack grouping might be to move out swiftly to the site where the landing force is being dropped to seize or hold an important area.





The question arises, with which forces, when, and with what complement does the field army provide for the establishment of these attack groupings? According to the experience of exercises conducted between 1955 and 1962, the field army usually has one or two divisions in its reserve in the first operations of the initial period of a war. In individual instances, the field army allocates to its reserve an army corps made up of two or three divisions or three independent divisions. For example, in exercise BLUE LION (1958), three separate divisions were allocated to the army's reserve (21st Armored Division, 10th Tank Division, and 22nd Airborne Division), and the concept of exercise WINTER SHIELD-2 (1961) provided for an army corps made up of two divisions and an armored cavalry regiment (24th Infantry Division, 4th Armored Division, and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment), and one separate division (3rd Armored Division).

It is quite clear that the existing forces in an army's reserve will be insufficient to form even one strong attack grouping. The assumption that the field army will receive several additional divisions after carrying out the tasks of the first phase of the offensive operation is unlikely. More than likely, attack groupings of the field army for the exploitation of success will be formed from its first echelon and army reserve, as is being done in command-staff exercises and in exercises with troops, as well as during the training of command cadres in military educational institutions.

According to the experience of exercises and training materials, attack groupings of field armies for the development of an offensive are formed not when preparing for the offensive, but in the course of the operation, usually when completing the accomplishment of its first phase by using the army's reserve and the most combat-effective large units of its first echelon. In so doing, the procedure for forming such groupings depends above all on the composition of the army reserve.

If there is an army corps in the field army's reserve, then it will be the nucleus of the field army's attack grouping for the exploitation of success. When being committed to battle, as a rule, one or two divisions from the army corps of the first echelon will be subordinated to it.





As a result of this, after being committed to battle, the corps might be made up of three to four divisions and sometimes even more. Thus, according to training materials, in offensive operation TORNADO, the 30th Field Army formed an attack grouping (army corps) for the exploitation of success made up of two armored and two infantry divisions, but in operation UNDERTOW, it was made up of three armored (23rd, 26th, and 29th Armored Divisions) and two infantry (20th and 55th Infantry Divisions) divisions.

The army reserve, consisting of a corps, advances to the line of commitment to battle dispersed and on a broad front. The width of the corps' zone of advance depends on the nature of the terrain, the road network, the distance of the enemy from the area, and the enemy's ability to rapidly deploy for a decisive attack. In those instances when the road network enables forces and means to be rapidly concentrated in the requisite area, as well as when it is certain that an encounter with major enemy forces is unlikely before arriving at the line of commitment to battle, it is recommended that the movement be carried out on a broad front. However, as the corps approaches the line of commitment to battle, the width of its zone of movement decreases. Thus, an army corps made up of two or three divisions under these conditions can carry out an approach march in a zone of 100 to 130 kilometers or more. As it approaches the line of commitment to battle, the width of the zone of movement can be cut back to 60 to 80 kilometers.

It is thought that in carrying out an approach march it is most advantageous if each first-echelon division proceeds on two or three routes. Based on the aforementioned requirements and taking into account the road network in the European Theater of Military Operations (the presence of parallel roads every 5 to 10 to 20 kilometers), we can conclude that divisions, as a rule, will carry out an approach march in zones 20 to 30 kilometers wide, and an army corps, in zones 60 to 80 kilometers wide or more.

The line of commitment to battle, depending on the composition of the army corps, can have a length of 60 to 80 kilometers. The battle formation of a corps usually consists of two echelons. Accordingly, at the time that the corps is committed to the battle, its second echelon (reserve) can be on





the march 30 to 50 kilometers or more away from the line of commitment.

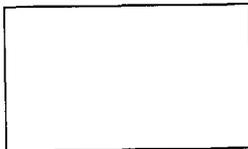
The commitment to battle of the army corps making up the army's reserve is supported by the delivery of nuclear strikes with the field army's means and the means of this corps, as well as by the strikes of supporting aviation. In individual instances, its commitment can be supported by the delivery of nuclear strikes and artillery fire from some of the army corps of the army's first echelon.

In those instances when the army reserve consists of individual divisions, the nucleus of the attack grouping for the exploitation of success will be one of the army corps of the first echelon. All or part of the divisions of the army's reserve and one or two divisions from the complement of the adjacent first-echelon army corps are usually subordinated to this corps.

For example, in the offensive operation of the 30th Field Army, after the first phase was fulfilled, new zones of attack were assigned to the army corps and resubordination of the divisions was carried out. A large-scale regrouping of the first echelon did not take place.

The 1st Army Corps was charged with developing the offensive. In connection with this, the 10th Armored Division from the army's reserve, the 25th Armored Division, the 21st Infantry Division, and the 203rd Armored Cavalry Regiment from the 3rd Army Corps consisted of three armored divisions (10th, 23rd, and 25th) and two infantry divisions (20th and 21st), two armored cavalry regiments (201st and 203rd), and a tank group (706th Tank Group). In addition, seven nuclear warheads were allocated to this corps.

During the training of command cadres in military educational institutions, the American command sometimes forms even stronger attack groupings. In one of the training materials, in order to exploit success at rapid rates after the first phase of the offensive operation has been conducted, provisions were made to form an army corps made up of four armored divisions (21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th), two infantry divisions (20th and 55th), and two armored cavalry regiments



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(201st and 275th). In addition 32 nuclear warheads, with the planned expenditure of eight of them in a nuclear preparation, were allocated to the corps.

The plan was to capture the final objective by landing an airborne division. In view of the fact that the first-echelon army corps of the field army, to which the task of exploiting success had been assigned, had a considerably large complement (23rd and 24th Armored Divisions and 20th and 55th Infantry Divisions), the attack grouping could be formed only by subordinating the two armored divisions (21st and 22nd) from the army's reserve to the corps. The personnel and combat equipment of the divisions in this corps were replaced in the course of battle. In this case, replacement was done by means of complete subunits. Thus, the 100th Motorized Infantry Battalion and 101st Tank Battalion were allocated to the 23rd Armored Division to replace the 115th Motorized Infantry Battalion and 120th Tank Battalion, which had suffered great losses.

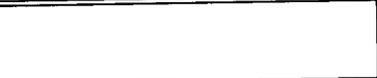
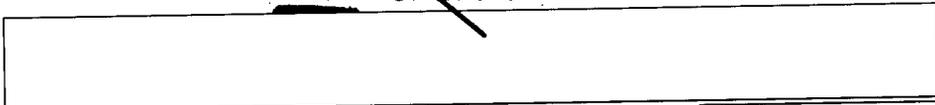
To avoid a pause after accomplishing the first phase of the operation, the directive specified that the flank army corps, as well as the 23rd and 24th Armored Divisions of the army corps, on the basis of which the attack grouping was formed, were not to halt the offensive. The 21st and 22nd Armored Divisions, having come up from the army reserve, were committed to battle from the march. Until their commitment to battle they were not permitted to use radio communications. To cover the columns of these divisions, two flights of fighters were constantly in the air. A fire preparation preceded the commitment to battle of the 21st and 22nd Armored Divisions.

The army corps having the indicated composition went over to the offensive in a zone of approximately 100 kilometers with three armored divisions (21st, 24th, and 22nd) and two infantry divisions (20th and 55th) in the first echelon and one armored division in reserve. The infantry divisions were assigned the task of supporting the actions of the 21st and 24th Armored Divisions while proceeding behind them. The 275th Armored Cavalry Regiment was attached to the 22nd Armored Division.

We should mention that the procedure in forming attack groupings for the development of success is the same in those cases when the field army has a coalition complement. In this

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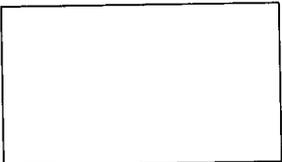
respect, command-staff exercise BLUE LION is revealing. In this exercise the 7th Field Army, made up of two US army corps, two Federal Republic of Germany corps, and three separate divisions, overcame a hastily occupied defense on four axes. To exploit the success, the field army formed two strong attack groupings: the first (main) -- made up of the American 5th Army Corps (8th and 10th Infantry Divisions, 3rd Armored Division, 14th Tank Group, 14th Armored Cavalry Regiment) and the West German 3rd Army Corps (2nd Infantry Division, 5th Tank Division, 1st Armored Division (French), and an independent tank group); the second -- made up of the American 7th Army Corps and part of the forces of the West German 2nd Army Corps (American 20th Infantry Division, 4th Armored Division, 11th Airborne Division, and 2nd and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiments; and probably the West German 4th Infantry and 1st Tank Divisions).

The operation plan provided for the placement of the headquarters of the 2nd Army Corps (Federal Republic of Germany) and one division in the army's second echelon and the subordination of two divisions to it (probably the US 21st Armored Division and the FRG 10th Tank Division) from the reserve of the 7th Field Army. Subsequently it was planned that this corps would be used to develop the offensive.

Worthy of attention is the allocation of a great number of water crossing means to the attack groupings (army corps) which develop success.

According to the experience of exercises, an attack grouping made up of three or four divisions may be reinforced with two to four battalions of transport helicopters, two to four battalions of amphibious tracked armored personnel carriers, two or three companies of amphibious trucks, and two field engineer groups.

The main striking force of these groups in the exploitation of success are the armored divisions. The task of the mechanized (infantry) divisions consists in securing the freedom of actions and increasing the speed of movement of the armored divisions. The armored divisions do not get involved in drawn-out combat with the enemy and try to bypass his strongpoints. These are destroyed with nuclear weapons and by the mechanized (infantry) divisions which follow immediately behind the armored divisions.



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Where the enemy offers stubborn resistance, the mechanized divisions contain him from the front, and the armored divisions, delivering nuclear strikes, attack the enemy's flank and rear. To assist them in their attack, provisions have been made to use airborne forces extensively. Their landing can be preceded by the delivery of nuclear strikes. The composition of the airborne forces under these conditions will vary and will depend on the task assigned to them and on the time during which they must conduct independent combat actions.

The armored cavalry regiments conduct reconnaissance in the zones of attack of the army corps. In certain instances, they can be subordinated to the armored divisions.

In exploiting success, nuclear strikes are delivered against nuclear warhead delivery means, reserves on the deployment lines, fire means, and personnel in strongpoints and at intermediate lines.

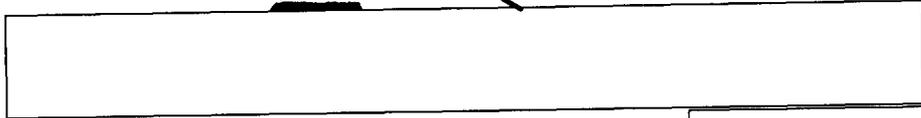
Counterattacks can be repelled from position or from the march. It is considered advantageous to repel counterattacks with the mechanized (infantry) divisions operating on the flanks of the attack groupings that are exploiting the success.

Nuclear weapons are the main means of repelling counterattacks. To repel counterattacks provisions are made for the extensive practice of delivering concentrated strikes with nuclear means on the counterattack deployment lines of the enemy's large units, and, for the purpose of delaying the approach of his reserves, of setting up "fire barriers" in defiles, gorges, and road junctions by using nuclear weapons.

To set up "fire barriers" and deliver concentrated nuclear strikes against deployment lines, it is considered advantageous to employ nuclear warheads with a yield of 28 to 47 kilotons or more. The delivery of strikes with five or six missiles of this yield on the deployment line of each division can result in the disruption of the counterattack, especially in those instances when nuclear strikes are delivered while a division is deploying.

In order that our troops successfully deliver counterattacks, it is necessary to neutralize the enemy's reconnaissance, especially air reconnaissance, by the time the

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divisions begin to deploy, to suppress or destroy his nuclear warhead delivery means, and to move forward swiftly. It is very important that our troops deliver the counterattack from the march, and that they do not remain at the deployment lines for a long time.

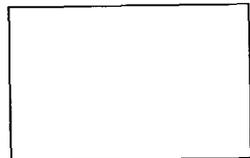
The examples cited are indicative of the efforts by the command of the US Army to form strong attack groupings, supporting them with large numbers of nuclear warheads (from 20 to 60 missiles), not counting the nuclear means remaining in the reserve of the field army commander. The question arises, however, of whether these groupings will have this strength in the offensive operations of the initial period of a war.

Based on the experience of the present-day ground forces of the NATO bloc in Europe, it is not difficult to conclude that the attack groupings (army corps) allocated to exploit success in the offensive operations of a field army in the initial period of a war, will, evidently, be made up of two or three armored and one or two mechanized (motorized infantry) divisions. However, the number of nuclear warheads, obviously, will increase considerably. In evaluating the combat capabilities of these groupings we must bear in mind that by the time they are formed the divisions operating in the first echelon will have had a minimum of 30 to 40 percent losses. The divisions comprising the field army's reserve may also suffer considerable losses from the nuclear weapon strikes both in the areas where they are concentrated and while moving.

Of course, in the process of preparing to exploit success, certain divisions, especially the armored ones, may have their personnel and combat equipment replenished. However, even in these instances, it is most likely that they will not have more than 70 to 80 percent of their T/O&E complement.

If these indices are taken into account, then it can be assumed that the attack groupings formed in the course of the operation for the exploitation of success, depending on their composition, can have an average of 20 to 60 nuclear warheads, 800 to 1,500 tanks, 50 to 80 launchers and nuclear artillery pieces,\* and 400 to 900 guns and mortars.

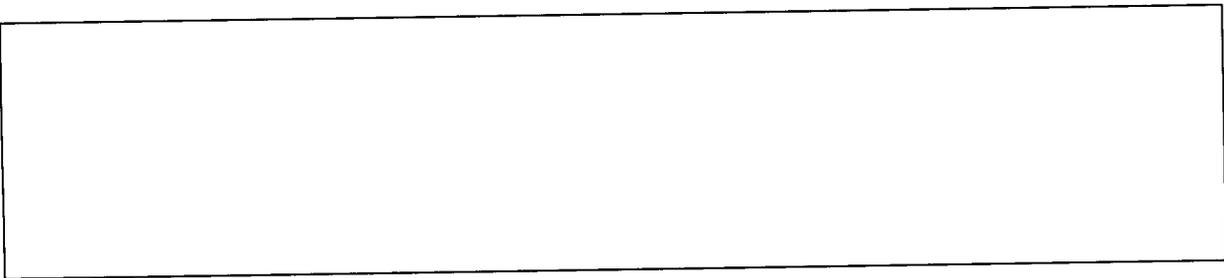
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\* Not counting the Davy Crockett.





From the table it is apparent that the attack groupings formed in this manner, despite their large losses, can have considerable forces whose destruction will require rather large operational reserves. Committing the army's reserve to battle by individual large units is worthy of attention provided there is a strong attack grouping when the exploitation of success is initiated. Such a procedure for building up the strength of the first-echelon troops can ensure the covert movement of large units of the reserve and their surprise commitment to battle.

The weak point in the exploitation of success is the fact that the American command is attempting, in essence, to destroy the enemy's first operational echelon and to exploit success in the depth of the offensive operation with the very same large units. In forming a strong attack grouping for the exploitation of success by using the first echelon and the army reserve, the Americans weaken considerably the other army corps of the first echelon. Therefore, on the second (following) phase, the main force of the field army is the attack grouping which exploits success. The army corps operating on other axes will have been weakened and therefore will be unable to render tangible assistance to the attack grouping.





Possible Composition of the Attack Groupings of a Field Army  
for the Exploitation of Success (taking probable losses into consideration)

Composition of Attack Grouping	Possible losses, percent	Armament				
		Number of Nuclear Warheads	Number of launchers and artillery pieces*	Tanks	Guns and Mortars	SAM launchers (AA guns)
Armored Division - 2	20		68	1,050	550	180
Mechanized Division - 1	30	20 to 60	57	920	480	150
Armored Cavalry Regiment - 1	40		48	800	410	130
Armored Division - 3	-		-	-	-	-
Mechanized Division - 2	20	20 to 60	80	1,500	880	230
Armored Cavalry Regiment - 2	30		70	1,300	770	200
Tank Group - 1	40		56	1,100	660	170

\* Not counting Davy Crockett.

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