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20 February 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Organization of Party
Political Work in a Front Offensive Operation

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET Soviet Ministry of Defense publication Military-Theoretical Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article sets forth the approaches followed by a front Political Directorate in planning for a front offensive operation. The article delineates the authority and responsibilities of political organs vis-a-vis the troops and the command structure throughout the planning and execution of a large-scale exercise. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (6) for 1975.

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 also been assigned the

[redacted] Codeword [redacted]

[redacted signature box]

Clair E. George

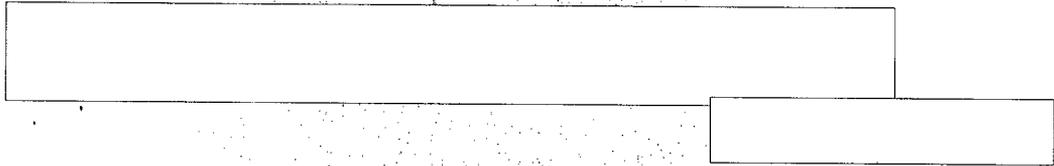
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Organization of Party Political Work in a Front Offensive Operation

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (6) for 1975 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Military-Theoretical Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel General I. MEDNIKOV. This article describes the approach followed in organizing political work in a front offensive exercise by the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany. It outlines the responsibilities of the Political Directorate through the various stages of an exercise: conversion of troops from peacetime to wartime status; mobile agitation-propaganda activity with the troops while being deployed; coordination of activity with other Warsaw Pact military-political organizations; steps to restore troop morale and combat effectiveness after sustaining losses from an enemy nuclear strike, including plans to bring political departments back up to T/O strength; explaining to troops the nature of offensive operations and particularly assault crossings of water obstacles; familiarity with enemy troop and civilian morale and political status, and special propaganda in the form of radio broadcasts and leaflets directed at the enemy, in cooperation with intelligence organs.

End of Summary

[REDACTED] Comment:

The author entered the Soviet Army in 1938 and is a post World War II graduate of the Lenin Military-Political Academy. He has held various positions with the Chief Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy since 1959 and has published a number of articles on political training and indoctrination. He was a member of the Military Council and Chief of the Political Directorate of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany in 1971.

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THE ORGANIZATION OF PARTY POLITICAL WORK IN A FRONT OFFENSIVE OPERATION

(From the experience of the Political Directorate, Group of Soviet Forces, Germany)

by

Colonel General I. MEDNIKOV

This article examines some aspects of this topic as they apply to conditions when a specific amount of time is available to prepare a front offensive operation which is to be executed during the initial period of a war.

A political directorate plans and organizes its work in keeping with the decision made to undertake an offensive operation and in compliance with directions received from the Chief Political Directorate and the front commander. As a rule, while acting as a political directorate of a front, we developed two plans: the political directorate's work plan which includes the preparation and execution of the operation, and a plan of special propaganda directed at the troops and population of the enemy. (Sometimes there arose the need for additional planning. This pertained, for example, to the period needed for the operational regrouping of troops, to the refining of the tasks designed to eliminate the effects of an enemy nuclear attack, and to the strengthening of the morale and psychological condition of the troops.)

The first plan contains two basic sections: "Political Work During the Preparation for an Operation," and "Political Work During the Execution of an Operation." It was developed while taking into account the special features of political work during combat actions which employ conventional as well as missile/nuclear weapons.

The rapid and timely conversion of troops from peacetime to wartime status is an extremely important and complex task for all commanders, staffs, and political organs. It will be accomplished while the military-political situation is heating up and the struggle to gain time becomes critical.

During suitable briefings, the front political directorate, not losing a minute, familiarizes the political organs of formations and large units with the basic goals, tasks, forms, and methods of political work. Here it is paramount to address several practical issues which arise as a result of an attack by an aggressor. In order to address these issues it is necessary to condition personnel to a wartime outlook, to explain the developing military-political situation and the tasks of the armed forces, and to clarify the moral-political

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and psychological frame of mind required to conduct combat actions until the aggressor is completely defeated.

Great attention is devoted to mobilizing personnel, particularly the rocket troops, air defense troops, aviation, and all forces and means on combat alert and combat service, and to ensuring superior vigilance and constant combat readiness for immediate and decisive actions to repel a surprise enemy attack. The political directorate made provisions to send to these units groups of officers headed by deputy chiefs and department chiefs of the political directorate. Instructions to political organs were transmitted (in the interests of timeliness) by technical communications, as well as personally by a member of the military council, by the deputy chief of the political directorate, by the department chiefs and by inspectors-action officers.

One of the important tasks in preparing front troops for the first offensive operation is their mobilization expansion, while for the Group of Forces it is bringing them up to full authorized wartime strength.

A qualitatively high augmentation is contemplated, as a rule, to bring large units and units up to full strength. The complement of political personnel has been improved, especially in such a sizeable category as that of deputy company commander for political affairs, whose number will be increased considerably during wartime. The political directorate devotes great attention to the selection, education, and placement of these cadres. Recently, there has been an improvement in their training which addressed political work in a combat situation. Annual training sessions are held for reserve, company-level political workers who fulfill their functional duties during the tactical exercise portion of the training. Many political organs have prepared for each worker a field folder containing the literature and training aids necessary for their work with personnel under field and combat conditions.

However, some commanders and political organs have not yet studied thoroughly enough their human resources, including those earmarked for the political complement, and show little concern for their training. The changes that will take place in the party organization upon augmentation of the units and the allocation of political workers are still not fully understood everywhere.

Upon receipt of the order to move the troops out, the political directorate draws up a military council directive on the tasks of party-political work in coordination with the measures contemplated by the front staff. The manning by party political personnel is reviewed. The main complement of political directorate personnel is assigned to troop unit as part of the staff operations groups to assist commanders and political workers in carrying out the operational deployment. Additionally required personnel are allocated and distributed among control posts to supervise party-political work and to

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maintain continuous liaison with political organs. Provisions are made for the arrival of a member of the military council -- the chief of the political directorate or one of his deputies at the post from which control over troop deployment is exercised. This does not rule out some cases which will necessitate their travel to the troops via specific routes or crossings.

When troops are regrouping, it is very important to work with wheeled and tracked vehicle drivers, particularly since they now represent the most widespread military specialty among conscript personnel. During preparations to execute a march, we enlist the efforts of personnel, and particularly of vehicle drivers, for the thorough preparation of the march, for strict observance of discipline during its execution, and for an orderly concealed arrival at the scheduled time and in the designated area in full readiness for rapid deployment and combat.

To fulfill the tasks which address completion of a march either under one's own power or by rail, the front political directorate allocated agitation and propaganda groups along the troop movement routes and at railheads. They participated directly in purposeful party-political tasks. Along troop movement routes, at halts and short stops, tasks were clarified to various categories of personnel; also discussed were the results of the march and the actions of drivers and vehicle commanders during the march. We also arrange for the dissemination of the most recent experience, and for the study of standard operating procedures and instructions. Experience shows that there are definite opportunities to meet with personnel and to organize brief party and komsomol meetings, discussions, and instructions for political workers and party activists. Front political organs are also in the immediate proximity of traffic control and support, march security, and combat support subunits, upon which the success of the march depends to a considerable degree.

Naturally, the enemy will oppose an active front troop movement with all forces and means at his disposal. Therefore, during training periods, the political directorate, and formation and large unit political organs along with commanders and staffs, take all necessary measures to ensure strict compliance with rules for secure troop control, camouflage, reconnaissance and warning, troop air defense, river crossings, and a constant readiness of personnel to function under conditions where the enemy employs missile/nuclear weapons.

Each branch arm has its characteristic special features and tasks which must be taken into account when organizing and carrying out political work. The front political directorate has made provision to activate operations groups and attach them to troop units in order to render practical assistance to the political organs of the different branch arms while taking into account their special characteristics and role in fulfilling combat tasks. For example, for one of the exercises in 1973, nine such groups were set up, which included 40 officers of the political directorate (groups consisting of five to six

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individuals were sent to each formation, and groups consisting of three to four individuals were assigned to the special troops). In order to direct political work more efficiently and in constant correlation with the specific tasks being performed by the troops, a group of political directorate officers was established at the front command post, and the necessary number of political workers was sent to the forward command post and the rear control post.

Only fighting men who are ideologically conditioned, utterly devoted to the party and the people, who can sustain a high level of morale, and are able to handle extreme emotional and physical stress without losing the will to fight and win, can successfully cope with the new, more complex tasks of modern warfare. In order to achieve victory, our commanders, political organs, and staffs must have the ability to make a comprehensive assessment of the morale of our troops and that of the enemy, and must make the maximum use of our spiritual endurance during a war.

In organizing ideological work, the front political directorate attributes the greatest significance to the ways and means of mass agitation work. Here, the experience of the Great Patriotic War is taken into account.

The actual experience of organizing ideological work during operational-strategic exercises is of interest. The front political directorate and the political departments of the armies trained and dispatched their workers to the Group large units and units to help set up, on the spot, mass propaganda work, to brief subordinate party activists, and to instill in personnel high combat morale and psychological qualities. All ways and means of propaganda and agitation were used to this end. Command personnel also participated extensively in this work.

If the imperialists succeed in unleashing a war, then it will be a war of coalitions. In this context, we are addressing the tasks involved in thoroughly coordinating actions with our allies in all areas, including political work. Of course, political work in national components is directed, in all instances, by the central committees of the communist and workers parties of the allied countries through the political organs of their own armed forces. However, in practice, it becomes an imperative to unite the efforts of the allied military political organs in several areas of political work, such as the mobilization of personnel for combat, the strengthening of friendship and combat collaboration, and ensuring cooperation between political organs. A certain amount of experience has already been acquired in this area. Close contacts have been established between the Political Directorate of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany and the Main Political Directorate of the National People's Army of the

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German Democratic Republic, and between the political departments of the armies and political directorates of the military districts during joint exercises.

* * *

An extremely necessary and critical task of political work during a front operation is the clarification to personnel of the essence and nature of war unleashed by the imperialists and the just and liberating goals on our part. It is important to ensure that our fighting men maintain a high rate of advance, that they are ready to employ decisively conventional as well as nuclear weapons, that they strive constantly to prevent the enemy from delivering bold and surprise attacks, and that the troops intensify their combat activity while developing an offensive to the entire depth until the assigned tasks are accomplished.

In this context, we believe the primary concern of the political directorate and all front political organs to be the necessity that each soldier and officer clearly understands his specific combat duties and the methods to accomplish them. This assumes that our fighting men are familiar with the characteristics of the enemy, that their confidence in the power of our weapons is reinforced, and that they have developed a desire to employ boldly, skillfully, and with maximum effectiveness, weapons and combat equipment on the battlefield to achieve victory. Of course, direct work with the troops in units and subunits is primarily the responsibility of tactical-level political organs. But in this area there is also plenty to do for the front political directorate and the political departments of armies. First of all, they must organize political work in the large units and units operating along the main axes, as well as in those large units and units -- such as missile, aviation, tank, artillery, assault-landing, reconnaissance, and other units which at various stages of the operation carry out the most responsible tasks.

Since the political officers were right with the first echelon troops on the main axes and in the most demanding sectors, they efficiently drew conclusions from the latest experience, briefed commanders, political workers, and party activists, informed the political organs concerning completion of combat training tasks, about changes in the operational environment, and about the state of personnel morale and political consciousness.

It is very difficult to achieve continuous party-political work due to the dynamics of combat actions. The ability of political organs, commanders, and political workers, given their assigned combat tasks and combat orders, to react efficiently to changes in the operational environment, to determine the necessary measures, to select and persistently apply the most effective

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techniques to influence the state of personnel morale and political consciousness in the interests of achieving success will be of decisive importance. Political organs at the operational level must constantly influence the political departments of large units and the party-political apparatus of units so that they will always be up-to-date and able to knowledgeably organize party-political work during exercises. The following practice has developed in this regard in our Group of Forces: When commanders receive a combat training task from the senior commander, the appropriate chiefs of political departments and the deputy unit and subunit commanders for political training are present.

While seeking new forms and methods of wartime political work, our political organs have acquired a definite experience in providing combat and political briefings to officers and personnel. The method of having political organs establish agitprop groups, instructor-propaganda groups, briefing groups, information centers, and agitprop teams has proven its value. We consider it advisable to attach briefing groups consisting of party activists, mainly staff officers, to the political departments of formations and large units so that they may effectively explain the military-political situation and combat tasks to these personnel.

An exceedingly serious problem in modern warfare will be the elimination of the effects of enemy nuclear strikes and the restoration of troop combat effectiveness.

Personnel morale after enemy nuclear strikes will depend to a considerable degree on the correctness and flexibility of measures being instituted to restore troop combat effectiveness. Many forms and methods of politically influencing personnel can be employed to accomplish this task. At a number of exercises, the political directorate brought in special technical means of propaganda and manned field vans for broadcasting to our troops who had been subjected to nuclear attack. Upon receipt of a message concerning a massive nuclear strike by the enemy against our troops and the implementation of the decision to eliminate its effects, broadcast detachment crews, in accordance with their tasks, moved out to the effected areas and transmitted to personnel a brief message from the command, explaining the latest developments, first aid measures for injured troops, instructions for units and subunits to proceed to special decontamination areas, and other matters.

The personal example of commanders and political workers and direct participation by command cadres in political work will have a strong influence on maintaining steadfast morale among troops who have been subjected to enemy nuclear strikes. Their courage, self-control and persistence in fulfilling orders and combat tasks, their ability to firmly uphold discipline and not to allow panic, to overcome possible manifestations of depression and confusion will motivate personnel to restore combat effectiveness and to fulfill assigned combat tasks.

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In case new formations are established, it will be necessary to select quickly command and political personnel, to set up party and komsomol organizations, and to assign and brief party and komsomol activists.

When restoring and strengthening the morale of troops who have been subjected to enemy nuclear strikes, prominent emphasis is given their materiel-technical and physical well being. In this context, the activity of the political department of the front rear services and party and komsomol organizations of rear services units and establishments are a subject of special attention on the part of the front's political directorate. During large scale exercises, the political directorate and the political departments of armies sent the most experienced political workers to rear services units and subunits to render assistance in restoring the capabilities of rear services organs to fulfill the tasks confronting them.

As a result of enemy nuclear strikes, political organs, the party-political apparatus, and party organizations may incur heavy casualties, and some of them may cease to exist. Therefore, one of the top priority tasks of a front political directorate will be to re-establish the political organs and party organizations which were put out of action, to bring the complement of political workers up to strength, and to give them practical assistance in conducting party-political work intended to restore the combat effectiveness of troops and to prepare them for an offensive.

It is expedient to provide ahead of time for reserves of political workers directly with the front in order to restore immediately the losses suffered during an operation. We feel that a front political directorate should have organic courses of instruction and a reserve of political personnel. Also evident is a requirement for an army level reserve of political workers.

Highly maneuverable, dynamic, and purposeful actions, and consequently, high rates of advance, depend greatly on the ability of troops to negotiate zones of destruction and contamination resulting from massive enemy nuclear strikes. Under such conditions, the central task of political work consists of mobilizing all front personnel to negotiate quickly such zones, and to fully and timely employ all means of protection against weapons of mass destruction.

We also assume that it is the responsibility of all commanders, political workers, party organizations, and every communist member to ensure an in-depth understanding by each serviceman of his responsibilities to negotiate rapidly zones and areas of contamination and destruction.

Political work in radiation and chemical reconnaissance subunits is very important. It is all the more necessary because there were incidents involving personnel of some units who inadequately implemented means of protection against

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weapons of mass destruction during exercises and everyday training.

The organization of political work during combat in a nuclear environment is a very difficult and unique problem. It is even further complicated by the fact that political organs can not provide fully realistic training in this matter during peacetime. Therefore, the Group of Forces political organs seek ways and means of influencing personnel, and of maintaining their high morale and psychological steadfastness, while employing complex, combat-like troop training conditions as provided by the present-day training program.

High rates of advance in a front operation depend directly on the ability of personnel to negotiate water obstacles. Every theater of military operations has many rivers, canals, and other water obstacles, particularly in Central Europe. The command of the aggressive NATO bloc devotes much attention to the creation of zones of destruction, areas of radioactivity and chemical contamination, and sectors of engineer obstacles along the major water barriers and at approaches to them.

The Group of Forces conducts exploratory troop exercises, as well as conventional exercises, during which the troops make assault crossings of water obstacles. Careful, comprehensive studies are made concerning the utilization of personnel to organize the assault crossing of a body of water, to destroy means of nuclear attack, to defeat the opposing forces on the approaches to the water obstacle, to forestall the enemy's attempt to seize crossings with forward detachments and airborne landing forces, to make a purposeful assault crossing, and to conduct combat on the opposite bank.

At one of the recent exercises, the political directorate made a special effort to apply the experience gained in conducting party-political work during assault crossings of water obstacles, and, with this in mind, sent its officers to line units and staffs.

During this exercise, one tank division was to make an assault crossing of the Elbe River. The political department of the division, in participation with officers of the political directorate, worked out measures to organize party political work during this period, in keeping with the operational situation. Subunit commanders and political workers, and party and komsomol activists were briefed efficiently by personnel of the political department and the unit party-political apparatus about the peculiarities of negotiating this water obstacle, and about the ways and means of working with personnel. Political workers were sent to the most demanding sectors, particularly to those units and subunits scheduled to first complete the river crossing, and also to provost and traffic control service organs.

Much attention was devoted to the morale and psychological preparation of personnel, particularly of servicemen who were participating for the first time

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in a /tank/ assault crossing of a water obstacle along the river bottom or by swimming. Discussions, briefings, practical training, and a sharing of experience by the best specialists were held everywhere. Also studied was the experience acquired in crossing of water obstacles during the DNEPR and DVINA exercises. The quality and timeliness of preparing equipment and weapons to withstand the negotiation of a water obstacle were specifically monitored. Commanders, political workers, and technical service officers personally checked equipment readiness and personnel's knowledge of their functional responsibilities and safety measures. The division successfully fulfilled its assigned task, thanks to the coordinated efforts of commanders, political workers, and party and komсомol organizations.

The nature and conduct of modern warfare and the complexity of the operational environment in which a front offensive operation will unfold require firm and continuous troop control. A battle or an operation is not just a clash of the wisdom and will of commanders, or just a fight between opposing troops, but is also an intense contest between the staffs. The state of affairs is usually better where a staff works more cohesively, efficiently, and on a scientific basis. All this imposes an obligation to regard most seriously the organization of political work in control organs (bearing in mind the military-technical as well as morale and psychological aspects of troop control.)

Even now, in peacetime, all political work in staffs is intended to assure their readiness to control complex processes during a war. The focus of this work is to instill in officers and generals a great sense of responsibility for the organization of combat actions. Firm, steadfast, and continuous control of troops in a complex operational environment is inconceivable without the appropriate practical training of staff and line officers in the precise and efficient execution of tasks or without their ability to make a comprehensive analysis and to take into account the operational-tactical situation, to foresee the development of events, and to competently employ the entire might of modern combat equipment and the physical strength and morale of the troops to achieve success.

It is precisely in this context that political work is organized in the staffs of the Group of Forces. Here, for example, are the types of problems solved by the political directorate and the political department for the Group staff and directorates during the preparation and execution of one of the large-scale exercises.

A report was made to officers and generals concerning the status of the armed forces and NATO command views on conducting the operation. There was a very useful military theoretical conference on the topic "The Military-Political Nature of the Theater of Military Operations and its Application to the Preparation and Conduct of a Front Operation." Staff officers of formations and

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of many large units participated in a conference entitled "Special Features of Troop Control in Modern War."

The front political directorate prepared a military-political briefing for officers which gave a political profile of the NATO command and the morale and political condition of its troops in the Central European Theater of Military Operations, a description and disposition of the military-economic potential in the theater, and the sociopolitical situation in the countries located along the advance of the front, etc.

But, as experience shows, commanders, political organs, and party organizations must devote more attention to increasing the level of military and professional competence of officers, generals, and operations staffs in the planning and control of combat actions. This was pointed out particularly by the USSR Minister of Defense during the command-staff exercise held in 1974.

As a rule, front troops carry out their combat duties under radioelectronic warfare conditions, which greatly complicates troop control. This, in turn, imposes tasks of great responsibility on radioelectronic warfare units. We are taking steps to enhance this sense of responsibility and to rally the communists in staffs, in the radioelectronic warfare and communications services, and in other directorates and departments to fulfill their tasks under radioelectronic warfare conditions and to ensure steady troop control.

All radioelectronic warfare units are attached to a single political organ for political training. Two advisers -- an inspector from the department for organization of party work and an instructor from the special propaganda department, have been detailed to represent the interests of the political directorate whenever party-political work is conducted in these units during regular training periods and exercises. The Group Political Directorate regards it as its urgent duty to make standard practice of the positive experience of party-political work, accumulated during the special exercise conducted in 1974, and to integrate it to the maximum extent in the radioelectronic warfare units.

An important aspect of the work of front political organs during an operation is their ideological influence upon enemy troops and population, using special propaganda means. Its goal is to disrupt enemy morale and fighting spirit, break his will to resist, encourage him to desert and surrender, and so on.

Problems of special propaganda are now being worked out ever more extensively in exercises, drawing on the experience from the Great Patriotic War. The Group of Forces political organs conduct important work in this area. Recently they started a more thorough study of the probable enemy, the morale and political status of his armies and population, and his command personnel. In arriving at decisions during exercises, commanders and staffs are more fully

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taking into account relevant reports concerning enemy troops and population. Exercises bear witness to the productive work of the front political directorate in the field of special propaganda. Thus, for example, at the command-staff exercise in 1974, the political directorate drew up the following documents: a directive of the front military council concerning work with enemy troops and population; a political profile of the area of advance and of the NATO troops in the theater; a political profile of the formations and large units located in the front's area of advance; and radio broadcast programs, leaflets, and other material intended for enemy troops and population. Coordination was insured between the political and intelligence organs to study the enemy's political status and morale. In order to coordinate activities, an officer from the special propaganda department of the political directorate was assigned to the information department of the Group intelligence directorate.

Based on the analysis of intelligence reports, special propaganda concepts were prepared in order to make our ideological measures as effective as possible, facilitating the weakening, and, if possible, the disintegration of enemy morale and political ideology.

* * *

In conclusion, it should be said that the political organs of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany will continue to search persistently for new ways and means of wartime political work. We have been greatly assisted in this by the conclusions and recommendations of the conference of army and navy senior political personnel held in late 1973, which discussed the problems of organizing political work during the conversion of troops from peacetime to wartime status and during initial combat actions, and by the reports of the Chief Political Directorate which analyzed party-political work conducted during the command-staff training and operational-strategic exercises conducted in 1974.

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