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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Combat Readiness of Reconnaissance
in a Border Military District

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The Combat Readiness of Reconnaissance
in a Border Military District

by

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Reconnaissance by border military districts and armies can successfully cope with its tasks if its organs, forces and means are at a high level of combat readiness.

At the present time three levels of combat readiness have been established for the troops of border military districts: constant, increased and full. They differ from each other in definition and in the specific indicators characteristic of one or another stage of combat readiness of each branch arm and service including reconnaissance, depending on their role and location in combat and operations, their tasks, the time required to accomplish them, the conditions of the theater of military operations and others. Ensuring a high level of combat readiness depends on many factors, the most important being that of working out a unified opinion on the definition and basic characteristics of levels of readiness of reconnaissance. In the final analysis these factors determine the number of measures that must be taken in a military district and army in advance, while it is still peacetime. The need for a more thorough examination of the problem of combat readiness of reconnaissance arises out of a number of other circumstances as well.

In the first place, there is the concept of operational reconnaissance as a constantly "ongoing battle" and, accordingly, supposedly always in full readiness. We know, of course, that in peacetime reconnaissance is conducted with only partial forces and means and that the volume of tasks, the nature of its activity and the conditions for its conduct differ radically from those which exist on the eve of and at the outbreak of war. Secondly, in troop practice commanders and staffs sometimes oversimplify combat readiness, considering it mainly from the point of view of the level of training of units and subunits in assembling during combat alert and leaving the military cantonments

In the third place, in preparing reconnaissance forces and means for war, the major requirements made of them under present-day conditions are not always taken into consideration. Specifically, the fact that reconnaissance forces and means must be of such composition, quantity and quality as to ensure the detection of that number of enemy targets,

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primarily of his nuclear weapons, the destruction of which will enable the troops to conduct successful combat actions in a nuclear or non-nuclear war. They must be able to bring themselves up to full combat readiness in sufficient time to detect the major enemy targets before the enemy brings his principal grouping of troops to full combat readiness. Reconnaissance must be capable of committing the bulk of its main forces and means to action before the combat actions begin, within the first 24 hours, or at the most three or four days, of the operation. A high level of reconnaissance readiness in peacetime is one of the main factors in the combat readiness of troops, since the timely bringing of troops to full combat readiness, the adoption of a decision for the initial operation, and the effective use of nuclear weapons and troops in the operation, depend to a considerable degree on the ability of reconnaissance to be informed on a day-to-day basis regarding the military-political situation in the corresponding part of the theater of military operations, and on its ability to react quickly to any change in that situation and to obtain information needed by the commander in time.

It must also be noted that sufficient allowance is not always made for the conditions and nature of reconnaissance activities in peacetime, on the eve of, and at the outset of war. These conditions are extremely variable. Increased tension in the international situation and frequent provocations by hostile forces close to our national border require high vigilance, efficiency, and flexibility on the part of reconnaissance. The more imminent the threat of immediate enemy attack, the steeper the increase in the volume of tasks, the more complex the situation in the enemy rear, the more intense the border and counterintelligence procedures, camouflage and deception measures, and the more rapid the changes in the location of targets.

Finally, the fact is not always considered that reconnaissance readiness is determined not only by the readiness of reconnaissance units and subunits, but mainly by the readiness of the reconnaissance organs being sent out by them, the amount and time of training of these organs being significantly greater than that of combat subunits of troops.

All this requires early, thorough and constant preparation for the conduct of active reconnaissance under conditions of a period of threat, and then at the outset of war, on the part of all forces and means operating in peacetime as well as those committed subsequently. This preparation must be directed toward precise execution, in terms of target, time and place, of all reconnaissance and special measures, as well as toward the protection of reconnaissance forces and means from the action of

enemy weapons of mass destruction, his counterintelligence organs, sabotage-reconnaissance groups, and means of radioelectronic warfare.

How should we define the combat readiness of the reconnaissance of a border military district and armies? In our view, combat readiness of reconnaissance is the status which determines the degree of preparedness of forces and means, and the existence of the necessary conditions for the successful accomplishment of reconnaissance and special tasks in peacetime, as well as at the outset of war. It includes two inseparably linked elements: the first -- the reconnaissance capabilities of the troops of a border military district, which depend on the number and composition of the forces and means, their corresponding organization, the degree of training of the reconnaissance troops, their knowledge, experience, and morale, as well as on the availability and status of combat, reconnaissance and special equipment, and armament, all of which possess the necessary tactical-technical specifications, and other materiel-technical means.

The second element is the ability of reconnaissance forces and means to proceed to their tasks in a timely and organized manner, on the basis of all the steps taken earlier and systematically and which were designed to ensure timely reporting of the information on the enemy needed by the command in making a definitive decision for the operation; and also to quickly switch the intelligence organs, units and subunits from a peacetime to a war footing.

The combat readiness of reconnaissance is characterized by definite indicators. In the practical activity of staffs of border military districts and armies it is extremely important to distinguish such indicators for a separate intelligence unit and subunit on the one hand, and for district and army reconnaissance as a whole.

For an intelligence unit or subunit these factors are basically the following: full manning and equipping in terms of personnel, weapons, reconnaissance, special, and other military equipment; the condition of weapons and military equipment, their conformity with the present level of science and technology, and with the conditions in the given theater of military operations; the availability of the necessary materiel-technical means; the state of political and special training of personnel and the degree of operational-reconnaissance skill of officers; the ability to bring itself up to readiness in an organized manner to accomplish combat tasks or complete mobilization within a set period of time; the effectiveness of reconnaissance in peacetime (if it is conducted) and the readiness for immediate actions of forces and means on alert; the number of

reconnaissance organs (groups, teams, posts and others) which a unit or subunit may send out; the quality of their training and materiel-technical support for accomplishing tasks in the initial operation; and the state of military discipline and everyday facilities and services for the troops.

The combat readiness of reconnaissance of a border military district and army as a whole depends on the combat readiness of its composite units and subunits. However, it would be quite erroneous to consider it only as the total of the readiness of the various reconnaissance units, subunits and organs. Under modern conditions reconnaissance will be able to successfully accomplish its tasks if the activities of reconnaissance organs, units and subunits are coordinated in advance by a common goal, concept, and overall plan of operations, and if all the conditions are created in advance for the organized deployment and effective activity of reconnaissance units on the eve of and at the start of war. Further, the success of reconnaissance in an initial operation and in a war as a whole will depend on measures of an organizational and mobilization nature, which must be taken on the scale of an operational formation, likewise according to a unified plan. Among the most important of these measures are the organization and planning of reconnaissance in peacetime for the conduct of an initial operation, preparation of control organs and of conditions for the creation of a grouping of forces and means, the coordination of different reconnaissance units for the conduct of reconnaissance in a system on the scale of an operational formation, the preparation for war of versatile reconnaissance cadres from the reserve, their registration, the planning of reconnaissance mobilization measures in a military district and an army, and the organization of a system of materiel-technical support for reconnaissance units under conditions of nuclear war.

Our research enables us to conclude that the combat readiness of the reconnaissance of a border military district and army is characterized by four basic factors.

The first factor is the composition of reconnaissance forces and means and their status. By this is meant the forces and means operating in peacetime and intended for deployment on the eve of, at the beginning of, and during a war. They must be able to accomplish the tasks assigned to the reconnaissance of large units and formations located in the given theater of military operations, over the entire period planned for combat actions, but especially during the initial operation. Of great importance here is the organizational structure of reconnaissance units and of the reconnaissance of the military district as a whole. It must ensure an advantageous combination of the types of reconnaissance, great independence

and functioning ability of each unit and subunit, efficient control of reconnaissance organs, constant readiness for actions in any situation, the best capabilities for combat training, as well as the rapid conversion of units and subunits from a peacetime to a war footing. The organizational structure of reconnaissance forces and means must enable reconnaissance to successfully accomplish its tasks in a modern operation without any major reorganization of it.

Combat readiness requires a high manning level of reconnaissance units and subunits, relative to the wartime tables of organization, with well-trained personnel, as well as full equipping with weapons, combat, reconnaissance and special equipment, transport, supplies, rations, and other materiel-technical resources. The condition of these resources must be appropriate to the methods of armed combat and the conditions under which reconnaissance is conducted in the given theater of military operations. The political-morale state and the discipline of the personnel, and the field training and teamwork of the units also must be maintained at a high level.

The experience of the Great Patriotic War and postwar exercises shows that it is extremely important for the maintenance of the combat readiness of reconnaissance to quickly replace losses in personnel and equipment and to activate new units and subunits during combat actions. The latter depends on the availability of a reserve of reconnaissance personnel created from among eligible reservists and a system adopted for training them, constant maintenance of skills, and regular registration of them. It also is important in advance to establish in the district reserves of combat, reconnaissance, and special equipment, weapons, and all necessary materiel-technical means.

The second factor on which the combat readiness of reconnaissance depends is the volume and type of measures carried out in advance, which ensure an organized commitment to action of military district reconnaissance forces and means and their effective use in support of the initial operation. Such measures include timely warning of the troop command of a military district or of the front formed on the basis of it regarding possible aggression, and preparation of the data needed in making a definitive decision for the operation; concealed and rapid expansion of reconnaissance efforts in the event of a deteriorating situation in the theater of military operations or a sudden enemy attack; and creation of favorable conditions for the organization and conduct of reconnaissance in an initial operation in order to considerably shorten the time required to accomplish important reconnaissance and special tasks.

Reconnaissance must at any given moment have information on the activity of opposing enemy groupings and on targets marked for destruction in the initial nuclear strike. This is achieved through a high level of organization and a continuous increase in the effectiveness of reconnaissance in peacetime, and efficient recording of the information obtained. Also important is careful monitoring of the key points, sectors and targets where reconnaissance indications of immediate preparation of aggression may appear. Data about the situation in a theater of military operations are required for the successful activity of each type of operational reconnaissance. Under conditions of fluid and highly mobile combat actions none of them will be able to accomplish its tasks in a short space of time if all the information required on the areas in which it is to operate, and on important targets, is not accumulated in peacetime.

The proper organization and effective conduct of reconnaissance in the initial operation of a front and army, require in advance the most practical planning possible of reconnaissance at all levels. Thus planning for an initial operation must include all questions of the organization and conduct of reconnaissance, including working out documents on the organization of control, communications, and the assignment of tasks to executors; cooperation with the border troops and reconnaissance of adjacent military districts, branches of the armed forces (Air Defense Forces of the Country, long range aviation, navy) and other reconnaissance organs operating in the zone of the front and army; as well as materiel-technical and all-round combat support of reconnaissance activity. Important and complex reconnaissance and special measures should be planned and prepared most thoroughly -- for example the first sortie by reconnaissance aviation, dropping intelligence groups into the enemy rear, disrupting enemy counterintelligence activities, and increasing the resistance to jamming of communications equipment and the survivability of reconnaissance organs, units and subunits.

The combat readiness of reconnaissance requires the creation in peacetime of a desirable grouping of its forces and means in the theater of military operations which would permit secure and rapid deployment of forces and means and an expansion of their efforts during the period of threat and at the beginning of combat actions. The determination and early accomplishment of the volume and type of measures required to prepare the theater of military operations is highly important in creating favorable conditions for distributing reconnaissance forces and means, ensuring their rapid deployment, camouflage and concealment, as well as for shortening the time required to accomplish reconnaissance and special tasks. Specifically, such measures include preparing the airfields of

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reconnaissance aviation and the operational deployment areas of reconnaissance units and the routes of approach to them, and concealing equipment and materiel-technical means.

The third factor determining the combat readiness of reconnaissance is the volume and type of measures taken in advance, which ensure the organized and rapid transition of operating and reserve reconnaissance forces and means from peacetime to wartime conditions. Reducing the time required to bring reconnaissance units and organs operating in peacetime up to the highest level of readiness in order to successfully accomplish the tasks entrusted to them acquires special importance, as does their timely removal from the area of anticipated enemy nuclear strikes. Both of these are achieved by detailed planning, preparation, and comprehensive materiel-technical support of such measures as: warning, the assembly of personnel on the basis of a combat alert, the removal of military equipment from storage, the movement of reconnaissance subunits and units from points of permanent deployment into areas of operational assignment, and the transport there of the necessary materiel-technical means; the deployment within a set period of time of reconnaissance units and the activation of new ones; and the conversion of all forces and means operating in peacetime to a wartime working routine.

In carrying out these measures a correct definition of the levels of combat readiness (constant, increased, and full) of reconnaissance forces and means and the sequence of their transition from one level to another acquires exceptionally great importance.

Since reconnaissance, in contrast to other forms of combat support, not only accompanies, but also precedes the combat actions of the troops, its forces and means always must proceed ahead of the troops, and at any given moment must be a minimum of one degree of readiness higher. Thus when the troops are shifted to an increased level of readiness, the reconnaissance forces and means must already be at full combat readiness. However, such a head start may be achieved not only by shifting reconnaissance units and subunits to a higher level of readiness before the troops are brought up to that level of readiness, but also by establishing and maintaining higher indicators of constant readiness.

In our view, the constant combat readiness of the reconnaissance of a border military district and army should signify a status in which part of its forces and means conduct continuous and active reconnaissance, allowing it to follow the everyday activities of the armed forces of a probable enemy, obtain at any time the data needed by the command on the location of

vitaly important targets and troops, and on the nature of their actions. In the process other reconnaissance forces and means engage in combat training and remain in a state which ensures transition to full combat readiness in a set period of time and the accomplishment of reconnaissance tasks in support of the employment of nuclear weapons and troops in the operation.

Ensuring the high, constant combat readiness of reconnaissance, in our opinion, requires the following basic conditions (indicators). A front and army must maintain a full complement of reconnaissance units and subunits, with the permanent manning level brought up to at least 95 percent, and the basic specialists to 100 percent, of the wartime table of organization. Each reconnaissance aircraft requires at least 1.5 trained crews. The total equipping with weapons, combat and special equipment must be at 100 percent, with at least 85 percent in good technical repair (the remainder may be out for repair, preventive maintenance, etc.). The training of officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted men and the level of their field training must ensure the accomplishment of reconnaissance and special tasks under the conditions of modern operations and battles.

Continuous and active reconnaissance against a probable enemy by all available peacetime means and methods, in accordance with the tasks set by the General Staff and the troop commander of the military district, for timely warning of impending aggression and support of the initial nuclear strike are the basic indicators of its constant readiness. Thus, it is important to have forces and means on alert for continuous control and timely reinforcement of reconnaissance on the main axes and targets in the event of an abrupt change in the situation or receipt of the first indications of immediate preparation of aggression, as well as for assembly and continuous processing of reconnaissance data and the reporting of it to interested staffs. The status of the rest of the reconnaissance forces and means must enable them to be brought up to full readiness in no more than five to six hours (considering the fact that the main grouping of NATO forces brings itself to full readiness in 10 to 12 hours) and, if required, to be included in the combat assignment right after the forces on alert.

One of the indicators of constant combat readiness is the precise cooperation of the reconnaissance forces and means, both within an operational formation and with other reconnaissance forces and means operating in a given theater of military operations, as well as the availability of continuous, stable, efficient, and secure communications with subordinate units, the General Staff, the staff of the border troops and other reconnaissance organs. The most important prerequisite of this

level of readiness is the availability of an advance reconnaissance plan, carefully worked out in every detail, for the initial operation with a firmly established procedure for transmitting to the executors each combat task and the steps for carrying it out.

Thus, it is important for the reconnaissance plan for the initial operation to be closely coordinated with the mobilization plan and the plan for bringing the reconnaissance units, subunits and organs up to increased and full combat readiness. A necessary indicator of constant readiness is also the availability of previously established reserves of materiel-technical means, and their proper storage and timely issue.

Increased combat readiness of the reconnaissance of a border military district and army is that status from which they can be brought on signal up to full combat readiness in the minimum amount of time, and move from their deployment points to carry out combat tasks or move into areas of concentration and full mobilization. This level of readiness is most often put into effect during a worsening not only of the general international situation, but also of the situation in a given theater of military operations, as well as during major military exercises of the aggressive imperialistic blocs. This level of reconnaissance readiness may be put into effect even if the district troops are on a peacetime footing.

In our view, the increased combat readiness of reconnaissance must mean: maximum strengthening of reconnaissance against the enemy by all forms and methods available under the conditions of a period of threat; increasing the number of forces and means on alert and their readiness by switching a large number, and for certain types of reconnaissance all available forces and means, to combat alert status; increasing the alert at the control posts of the chiefs of intelligence of the military district and armies, and at the command posts of radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance units and subunits; partially deploying the means of control and communications in accordance with the reconnaissance plan, as well as fully amplifying all planning documentation for the initial operation. This level of readiness must provide for secure full mobilization of all reconnaissance units and subunits.

When this level of readiness is announced, reconnaissance units and subunits prepare for immediate abandonment of deployment areas and the removal of materiel-technical means; personnel return from leave and assigned trips, officers are switched to barracks status, weapons and combat equipment are drawn from long-term storage and are brought up to combat readiness; mobile reserves of materiel are loaded onto motor

transport; routes of advance and areas of operational assignment or concentration are refined; security is strengthened, and antinuclear and antichemical protection measures also are taken.

Full combat readiness of reconnaissance is introduced in the event of an immediate threat of enemy attack. It means that reconnaissance units and subunits must be capable of immediately accomplishing their combat tasks. This is a state in which active and purposeful reconnaissance against the enemy is conducted in support of and according to the plan of the initial operation of the front and army by switching to wartime operating routine the greatest possible number of types of forces and means available under the conditions of a period of threat. The remaining reconnaissance forces and means (reconnaissance units and subunits, particularly air, long-range reconnaissance groups, and the reconnaissance groups of divisions and regiments) are ready immediately on signal to begin carrying out combat tasks from deployment or basing points and from areas of operational deployment. The reconnaissance of a military district may be brought up to a state of full combat readiness from both peacetime status and the status of increased combat readiness. In our view, reconnaissance units and subunits must be trained in bringing themselves up to full readiness directly from peacetime status.

Thus, the basic element in bringing border military district and army reconnaissance up to full readiness is the further expansion of its efforts in order to obtain reliable information on the time of possible initiation of combat actions by the enemy and to provide the command with information needed for the initial strike, for a maximum increase in the number of forces on alert, and for completion of preparation for action by all reconnaissance forces and means in the shortest amount of time.

Border military district and army reconnaissance may be considered as having been brought up to full readiness if it has deployed the maximum number of forces and means possible under conditions of a threatened attack, and uses them to conduct active reconnaissance in accordance with a refined plan for the initial operation; if reconnaissance aviation is dispersed (if this is called for by the situation) to alternate airfields and not less than two-thirds of its crews brought up to a flight readiness of three to five minutes (after having been in a state of full combat readiness over a long period of time, some of these forces will have been switched to a lower level of readiness); all personnel of the reconnaissance units and subunits are fully mobilized, equipped, and ¹50X1-HUM to carry out combat tasks, and the units are fully equipped with reconnaissance and special equipment prepared for combat employment; if the

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reconnaissance groups of units and large units are brought to departure areas, and agent and special reconnaissance organs are ready to cross to the enemy rear or engage in immediate actions.

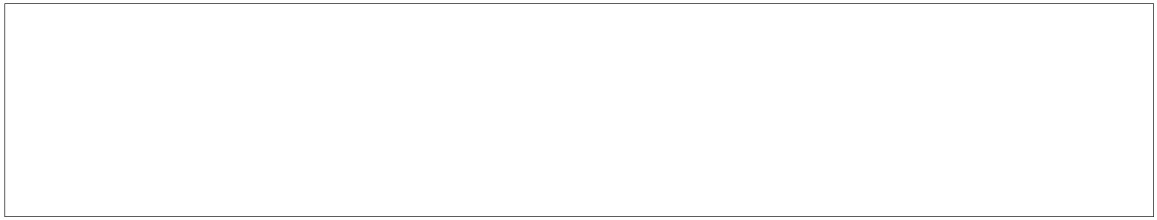
In addition, the radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance units and subunits of the first-echelon formations and large units are deployed at battle positions and carry out active work: precise, stable control of reconnaissance forces and means, and cooperation within front and army units and subunits and with other reconnaissance organs, as well as with radioelectronic countermeasures units are organized. When observing the previous radio communications operating routine, stable, secure, and efficient communications with all reconnaissance organs, units and subunits, and with the General Staff, as well as communications with all concerned command levels are established; all mobile and emergency reserves of reconnaissance units and subunits, including armed parachute drop equipment, engineer and special intelligence equipment, ammunition, rations, personal equipment and other supplies are sent to the area of operational deployment.

The moment that reconnaissance forces and means are brought up to full combat readiness, particular attention should be paid to concealing their actions, and to conducting them under the guise of exercises and other routine activities, taking measures for air defense and for protection against weapons of mass destruction, and exercising continuous control of units and subunits.

Experience shows that the period of time the troops, including reconnaissance forces and means, remain at increased and full readiness may be prolonged; therefore, it is particularly important to monitor the constant maintenance of high vigilance and readiness for immediate actions in the reconnaissance units, subunits and control organs.

And finally, the fourth factor on which the combat readiness of reconnaissance depends is the volume and type of measures taken to maintain the combat readiness level attained and to further improve it. These include timely reaction to changes in tasks, in the situation and in conditions for conducting reconnaissance in a theater of military operations; refinement of all documents worked out for the initial operation, and of activities undertaken to prepare the forces and means; establishment of a strict procedure determining the training process, combat duties and everyday routine of reconnaissance units and subunits, as well as the conduct of regular and surprise checks on the combat readiness of reconnaissance units and of military district and army reconnaissance as

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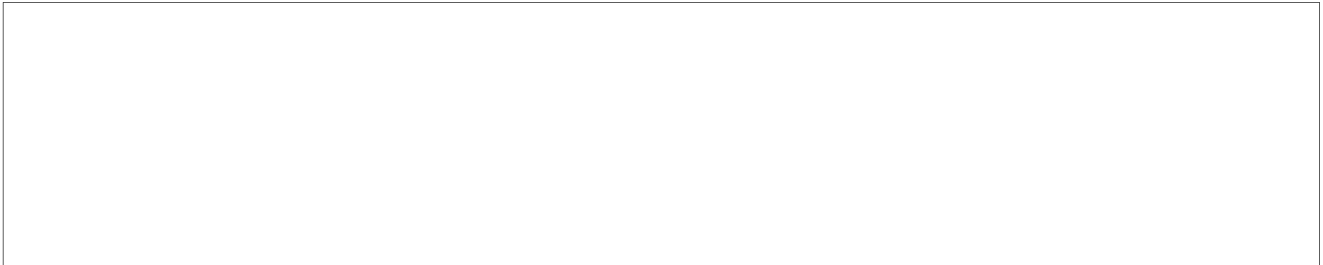


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a whole; the conduct of special research, and the persistent implementation of everything positive and the elimination of deficiencies that are discovered.

The combat readiness of reconnaissance thus includes many interconnected measures, which must be examined both alone and in a whole complex of individual elements. A border military district and an army have reconnaissance forces and means which are quite varied in terms of purpose, organization, armament, technical equipping and operating methods. Therefore, to achieve rapid, efficient and coordinated actions by these forces and means in a nuclear war situation is a complex matter requiring time, systematic training practices, research, and a thoughtful approach to each measure. In this connection, a high level of combat readiness of the reconnaissance of a border military district and army may be achieved not by some one-time act, but by the day-to-day, tedious, persistent work of the commanders and staffs and all personnel of the reconnaissance units and subunits.

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