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Central Intelligence Agency



30 June 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON: Principles of Preparation and Conduct of a Front Defensive Operation

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation, classified ~~TOP SECRET~~, prepared in 1985 for use in the Voroshilov General Staff Academy.

25X1, E.O.13526

2. [redacted] this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.



[Handwritten signature]

Richard F. Stolz
Deputy Director for Operations

[redacted]

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Page 1 of 22 Pages

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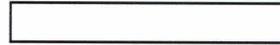
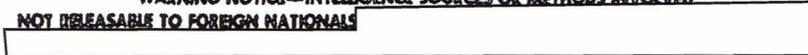
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Intelligence Information Special Report

Page 3 of 22 Pages

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COUNTRY USSR
DATE OF INFO. 1985

DATE 30 June 1988

SUBJECT

USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON: Principles of Preparation
and Conduct of a Front Defensive Operation

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The attached intelligence report is a translation from Russian of the text of a lecture at the Voroshilov General Staff Academy on the subject of defensive operations. It starts off with the statement that defense is generally underrated and, consequently, too little study and training is devoted to it. The topic is developed under three main headings: the circumstances (the situation and objectives) of assuming a defense, the options for structuring it, and the principles of preparation and conduct of the actual defensive operation. The paper is illustrated with numerous examples from World War II, which serve more to justify defensive actions and prove their importance and necessity than to demonstrate the brilliance with which they can be executed.

End of Summary

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Page 4 of 22 Pages

PRINCIPLES OF PREPARATION AND CONDUCT
 OF A FRONT DEFENSIVE OPERATION

Under the principles of preparation and conduct of a front defensive operation we shall consider three points: first, the conditions of transition to the defense, the objectives of a front defensive operation, and tasks of a front in a defense; then the disposition of the defense of a front; and, finally, the principles of preparation and conduct of a front defensive operation.

One of the principal tasks assigned by the Minister of Defense [for training] of the armed forces for the new training year [2 words illegible] is the in-depth comprehensive development, study, and practical assimilation of the methods of preparing and conducting a strategic and operational defense. The importance of these tasks at the present time is due above all to the growing possibility of a surprise attack [1 word illegible] without full deployment of troops with mass employment of fundamentally new weapons, particularly cruise missiles [line illegible] conventional weapons systems. The mass effect of these even without the employment of nuclear weapons may have a decisive impact on the course and outcome of an operation. However, in the practice of operational combat training of troops, the issues of defense are accorded insufficient attention as noted in the order of the Minister of Defense. The MOD order on operational training bids us to put an end to underrating of defense and to pay more attention to training in defensive operations, particularly those to repel a surprise enemy invasion.

The nature of a modern-day front defensive operation shows substantial differences from the nature of a defensive operation in the past war. This is due above all to the availability of weapons of mass destruction and to the increase in striking power and mobility of troops, to the availability of high-power long-range precision-guided weapons. This has complicated the tasks of reconnaissance support of the front defensive operation inasmuch as reconnaissance in a defensive operation is organized in strict conformity with the tasks to be performed by the front troops as well as with consideration of the conditions under which troops go over to the defense and of the possible nature and likely axis of enemy actions.

Considering that a front defensive operation involves a wide range of questions, it will be easier to consider the basic fundamental principles, [1 word illegible] necessity of properly understanding the tasks of reconnaissance support of a front defensive operation.

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Page 5 of 22 Pages

**Conditions of transition to the defense, objectives of a
front defensive operation, and tasks of a front in defense**

A front defense in a modern war, as stated in the "Principles," is a temporary form of combat actions. It is undertaken in those instance when an offensive is impossible by virtue of lack of forces and means or inadvisable for operational/strategic or other reasons.

The transition of a front to the defense may take place before the start of or during military actions. What is true of the front is also true of the army.

Before the start of military actions a front may go over to a defense on some axis in a threat period to repel an enemy invasion in preparation, and also to cover border areas and to support the transition to full combat readiness and the deployment of troops (forces) in a continental theater of military operations. This is a new principle. Formerly and right after the war, for some reason, the matter of the transition of a front to the defense before the start of military actions to repel a possible enemy invasion was never addressed.

At the start of military actions, the need for a front to go over to defense may arise if the enemy anticipates the front troops in deploying and in the delivery of strikes, primarily with precision-guided weapons systems, or when front troops sustain heavy losses from enemy nuclear strikes while the enemy retains the ability to undertake an offensive, as is possible both after a surprise nuclear attack and after an exchange of reciprocal nuclear strikes. Neither is it out of the question that a front will go over to defense at the start of military actions as a result of the unsuccessful outcome of a border meeting engagement. These words imply the transition of a front to the defense at the beginning of offensive operations, when an offensive is planned but does not materialize as a result of a nuclear exchange or a surprise attack; a front offensive operation can likewise be thwarted with conventional means, including precision-guided weapons systems.

During a front offensive operation a front may go over to defense to repel a counterattack, in preparation or already begun, of strong forces or an enemy counteroffensive, when continuation of an offensive to crush his groupings in meeting attacks is not supported by the necessary superiority of forces and means.* It is true that during the years of the Great Patriotic War, the duration of such defensive operations was not long -- for instance, the

* This was often the case during the Great Patriotic War; when a meeting attack did not result in the defeat of the enemy's counterattack groupings, the front would go over to the defense.

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Page 6 of 22 Pages

Southwestern Front in February 1943 south of Kharkov, the First Ukrainian Front in November 1943 on the Kiev axis, the First Baltic Front in August 1944 on the Siauliai axis, and the Third Ukrainian Front in 1945.

A front usually goes over to the defense in full strength. A front defense can be prepared beforehand or during combat actions [in or out of direct contact with the enemy]. Beforehand is when the transition is before the start of military actions in a threat period, and at the time of transition it is clear that at the state border there will be no contact, and both we and the enemy will have a strip of no man's land [zona bezdeystviya].

A front defensive operation in a main western theater of military operations will usually be a component of a strategic offensive operation and be conducted in the interests of the main grouping of troops. For the far eastern theaters, a strategic operation at the very outset of a war may begin with defensive actions.

Thus, the transition of a front to defense may be made in the most varied circumstances. The situation will determine the objectives of the operation, the tasks, the combat strength of the front, and the procedure for preparation and conduct of the front defensive operation.

The objective of a front defensive operation is now defined by the commander in chief of armed forces in the theater of military operations. The objective depends on the concept and tasks of the strategic operation in the theater of military operations, the importance of the strategic axis defended by the front, the availability and arrival times of nuclear and conventional weapons, the combat tasks of adjacent units and the conditions of interaction with them, as well as the force of the anticipated strike of the ground and air enemy. Consideration is also given to the capabilities of the strategic means slated for use in the defense zone of the front.

Everyone knows that in the Great Patriotic War the objectives of front defensive operations were most varied. In the first period of the war, fronts would go over to the defense to prevent an enemy breakthrough to major industrial and administrative-political centers or to targets and lines of strategic importance to buy time for concentration and deployment of reserves for counterthrusts and for going over to a counteroffensive. The objectives of defensive operations in the first period of the war in many operations were not achieved. One need only point to the objectives of the defensive operation of the Bryansk Front. In August 1941, the Bryansk Front was created when Guderian and the Second Army [1 word illegible] turned south; the Supreme High Command created the Bryansk front to prevent him. This objective was not achieved by the Bryansk Front; although, as our historians tell us, the Bryansk Front was not inferior to the Germans, the Germans had the advantage in tanks and we did not yet know how to fight.

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Page 7 of 22 Pages

Neither were the objectives of the front defensive operations in the Battle for Moscow fully achieved, particularly in the first German offensive which began in late September to early October. As we all know, the Western Front sustained heavy damage and was reestablished at the Moshaysk line of defense; other fronts, too, failed to achieve the objectives of defensive operations, although, of course, conducting them brought about conditions for bringing up strategic reserves, etc. And in the subsequent November 1941 German offensive, the objectives were achieved, because the fronts held their positions and had nowhere to yield further.

Subsequently, in connection with adequate numbers of tanks and artillery, increased density of forces and means in defense, and the change in the general strategic situation at the front, when defensive operations were conducted in conditions of the strategic offensive of our troops, objectives were different. They consisted in holding occupied lines and areas, inflicting losses on the enemy, and buying time for preparation of an offensive on this or that defense axis. Take, for instance, the defensive operation of the Stalingrad and Don Fronts in the fall of 1942, the Balaton defensive operation, the strategic [illegible] of the Third Ukrainian Front in 1945, etc. The Balaton operation was conducted in the concluding stage of the Great Patriotic War, when our troops were already outside Berlin. And, although the Germans created a powerful strike grouping which included the 6th SS Tank Army, the commander of the Third Ukrainian Front, Tolbukhin, decided not to move the front troops across the Danube. He assured the Commander in Chief that the front troops need not withdraw behind the Danube, that they would repel a counterthrust at the lines they were on. In these difficult conditions, when the depth of the front to the Danube was just 30 km, the front conducted a defensive operation, set up an antitank defense, and the Germans penetrated it 15-20 km. For a week they repelled thrusts; it was impossible to mount counterthrusts, only counterattacks, because there was no depth. And still the front troops were assigned [rest of line illegible].

In contemporary conditions the capabilities of defending troops have grown markedly with the availability of nuclear weapons, the increase in firepower of conventional weapons, particularly antitank means, precision-guided weapons, [2 words illegible], and multiple-launch rocket systems, and the increase in the striking force, mobility, and maneuverability of troops. Therefore the objective of a contemporary defensive operation will be more decisive than it was in the years of the Great Patriotic War. With adequate nuclear weapons and conventional precision-guided systems, the objective of a front (army) defensive operation may consist in thwarting an enemy offensive in preparation during the time the strike groupings are concentrating and deploying.

The "Principles" state that a front defensive operation is conducted to thwart an offensive operation of the enemy. However, in most cases the

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 8 of 22 Pages

objective of a front defensive operation will consist in repelling an enemy invasion (counterthrust), inflicting substantial damage, and holding operationally important lines and areas. The implication is that a front, if forced to take up the defense, has suffered losses and lacks adequate means of nuclear attack and conventional weapons and has no superiority over the enemy. Once forced to take the defense, therefore, the objective will not be to thwart, but, more typically, to hold lines and areas, inflict damage on the advancing enemy, and bring about conditions for going over to a counteroffensive.

On reaching the seacoast in an offensive operation, the objective of a front defensive operation may be to repel enemy amphibious and airborne landing forces and destroy them during landing.

The objective of a front defensive operation at the start of military actions may be to prevent an enemy invasion into our territory, to hold lines occupied in the border zone, and support the deployment of a strategic grouping for the offensive and its organized commitment.

A question that is now being generally considered is that: "The first front operation of the initial period of a war is an offensive-defensive operation." Perhaps this will be reflected in the new "Principles," which are going to be completely revised. It is necessary to bear in mind the option where a front will not only repel an invasion but itself conduct a front defensive operation with subsequent transition to an offensive. A number of authors in Military Thought -- the chief of the Main Operations Directorate, commanders -- are addressing such multi-option planning of a front offensive operation. At the first stage this is conduct of a front defensive operation. They even propose creating in the front staff and in the operations directorate of a theater two groups of officers: one group would handle defense and plan control of [battle] in a front defense; the other would at this time be preparing and planning a front offensive operation while the defensive operation was being conducted.

The objective of a front (army) defensive operation is achieved by fulfillment of a number of tasks, the main ones of which may be:

- Infliction of damage on an enemy preparing to deliver an attack.
- Repelling of an enemy offensive.
- Holding of assigned lines (areas) and preventing an enemy breakthrough into the depth.
- Crushing of enemy groupings that penetrate or break through.
- Recovery of a lost position.

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Page 9 of 22 Pages

We used to consider three tasks: infliction of damage to an enemy on the approaches to a defense, repelling of an enemy offensive, and crushing of an enemy who breaks through. These tasks are the basis on which cooperation with the troops of the front and army in defense is organized.

Let us bear in mind that the definition of these tasks takes into account the experience of the Great Patriotic War. It is necessary to consider that the enemy will create a grouping and may penetrate the defense, and it will therefore be necessary to repel a penetrating grouping of the enemy, [1 word illegible] crush it, and keep all five of these tasks in mind. It is felt that in individual cases, under conditions of employment of nuclear weapons, when, let us say, the front goes over to defense from the very first and has adequate nuclear weapons or undertakes a deliberate transition to the defense, the objective of a front defensive operation may be achieved by performing a single task, i.e., inflicting damage on the enemy on the approaches to the defense. In other words, the enemy can take such nuclear or conventional damage at the very outset that he abandons the offensive. But this likewise [depends] on the circumstances and may happen most frequently under conditions of a deliberate transition of the front (army) to defense.

To achieve the objectives of a front defensive operation and accomplish tasks, the theater commander in chief and the Supreme High Command, when a the first operations are being prepared, determine the combat strength of the front, which may include 3-4 armies (including a tank army), or 2-3 armies and 1-2 army corps, front air forces, 1-2 front missile brigades, and 1-2 motorized rifle (tank) divisions under front subordination. This will give the front, depending on the importance of the strategic axis, 12-20 motorized rifle and tank divisions, 3-4 air divisions, and 3-4 separate air regiments. But from the experience of defense in the years of the Great Patriotic War, it was often the case that if the front went over to defense, its strength was changed and its grouping diminished by, say, a tank army; units were taken away and transferred to fronts that were [conducting?] an offensive on the axis of the main thrust. But it is possible that if, after a defense, the front is slated to change over and conduct an offensive operation, it will remain at the strength it had when conducting the front offensive operation.

If a front is conducting a defense on a coastal axis, it may have subordinates to it large units of the navy, in particular, naval bases, coastal missile artillery units, and units of naval infantry.

A front is assigned a zone for defense. The width of the defense zone of a front is up to 500 km in conditions of a western theater of military operations, and as much as 1500 km in the Asian theaters of military operations. The depth of defense of a front from the forward edge to the last line is as much as 350 km.

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Page 10 of 22 Pages

Disposition of a front defense

Of great importance for successful conduct of a front (army) defensive operation is the skillful disposition of the defense. The disposition of defense of the front and army is accorded very much attention in the "Principles" and in all our periodical literature, such as Military Thought.

Disposition of defense, in contrast to the past, includes the following complex of interrelated elements:

- The grouping of front troops and its operational disposition.
- The system of defense lines, areas, and positions created in the defense zone of the front (army).
- Prepared strikes with nuclear weapons both on the approaches to the defense and in the depth (2 words illegible) of the enemy.
- A new element is the system of integrated fire damage to the enemy, in front of the forward edge as well as in the event of penetration of the enemy and delivery of a front counterthrust (of army counterthrusts).
- The system of air defense (which includes, for example, the groupings of SAM troops of the front air defense), antitank [defense] (which includes moving barrage fire, and also the lines deployed for the front reserves, army antitank reserves, and mobile obstacle detachments), and antilanding defense.

The system of engineer obstacles.

The system of defense of the front and army is [rest of line illegible]. Establishment of the troop groupings is the first principle of a front defensive operation. Establishment of the troop groupings in defense is a complex matter, since the initiative in determining the axis of thrust belongs to the enemy. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the possible variants of his actions and establish a grouping and operational disposition that takes this into consideration. The grouping and operational disposition may depend entirely on proper assessment of the likely makeup of the enemy grouping and the nature of enemy actions. The grouping of front troops in defense is established by axes depending on the possible actions of the enemy, and it includes the grouping of troops defending on the main axis, the groupings of troops defending on other axes, as well as covering troops, counterthrust groupings of front troops, and groupings of front rocket troops, front air forces, artillery, special troops, and groupings of the front rear services. There is also a definite operational disposition of front troops, i.e., location of troops, forces, and means in a definite system depending on the nature of actions of the groupings and their

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Page 11 of 22 Pages

combat mission. It has a first and second echelon, a grouping of rocket troops, air defense troops, and other groupings.

The importance of establishing the groupings of troops and the operational disposition can [illegible] on the experience of the Great Patriotic War in the Central and Voronezh Fronts. The Central Front, commanded by Rokossovskiy, focused its main efforts on a 95-km sector where 24 divisions, or 58 percent of the motorized rifle divisions of the front, were concentrated. Ten of these divisions the commander placed in the first zone of defense, 6-12 km wide; nine divisions in the second zone of defense, 8-14 km wide; and five he placed in the army zone of defense. To defend the rest of the sector, 200 km, he allocated 17 rifle divisions. The largest number of reinforcements, as much as 50 percent, were in the 13th Army. The average [artillery] density of the artillery units and large units of the RVCK was [36 per kilometer, 105 per kilometer?] on the axis of the main thrust. It must be said that on this front the commander was able to predict the axis of the German main thrust rather accurately: the main thrust of the Germans was aimed right at the 13th Army of General [illegible]. The commander determined the operational disposition of the front accordingly: the first echelon had 3 combined-arms armies, the second echelon had the 2nd Tank Army, and the reserve had 2 tank corps.

The Voronezh Front, commanded by General Vatutin, had difficulty determining the main thrust of the Germans. It was not the commander's fault; Marshal Zhukov's memoirs highlight this point, in particular, describing General Vatutin as an able, energetic, knowledgeable commander. It was difficult to determine the direction of the German main thrust, there were so many axes on which the Germans could [illegible]; but the main ones were three. Therefore, the main forces were placed in the center and on the left side of the front, over a 164-km stretch, or two-thirds of the length of the front -- 12 divisions in the main zone, 8 divisions in the second, and one division in the army zone of defense, for a total of 21 divisions in these 164 km. The greatest densities were established in the 40th and 7th Guards Armies, but it was the 6th Guards Army that was attacked. The Germans had established very high densities and had a six-to-one superiority in tanks alone. But, since it was hard to determine the main thrusts of the Germans, the front commander had created a strong second echelon. The first echelon had 4 combined-arms armies, the second had a tank army and a combined-arms army, and the reserve had the 35th Guards Rifle Corps. True, the Russians had another reserve front there, to which, as you know, was attached the 5th Guards Tank Army of General Rotmistrov and the 5th Guards Army of General Zhadov. These armies launched a counterthrust on the 12th of July.

That is the importance of establishing troop groupings and an operational disposition. Everything depends on proper assessment of the nature of enemy actions. Commander Tolbukhin, for instance, in the Salaton defensive operation, correctly assessed the axis of the German thrust and knew that the Germans usually tried to deliver a strong initial blow, so he created a very strong

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Page 12 of 22 Pages

antitank defense with hundreds of company antitank strongpoints, mobile obstacle detachments and antitank reserves to turn back the strong initial blow of the German tanks.

The operational disposition of front troops today

[We have seen] that during the war there was a first echelon, a second echelon of a tank army and a combined-arms army, and a reserve of a tank corps, for example.

At the present time, a front's operational disposition has two echelons, as a rule, with a combined-arms reserve. The first echelon of the front usually has 3 combined-arms armies. A first-echelon army defends a zone 150-200 km across the front; and the depth of defense of a first-echelon army is some 100-120 km, depending on how many defense lines it establishes (one main zone of defense plus one or two army defense lines). A first-echelon army, in turn, besides [its own?] defense, also usually has two echelons. In the main zone of defense the defense is usually occupied by four motorized rifle divisions; the second echelon employs the tank division (or divisions). The combined-arms reserve is generally assigned assault-landing regiments and assault-landing battalions in an army.

If first-echelon armies occupy the defense at the border in an initial operation, they usually establish a security zone 20-40 km deep from the border to the forward edge of the main zone.

The second echelon of the front consists of a tank army or, failing that, a combined-arms army (or one or more army corps). The second echelon of the front is intended for delivering a front counterthrust and smashing penetrating groupings of the enemy. It is usually located somewhere on the front defensive lines at a distance of 150-200 km from the forward edge.

The combined-arms reserve of the front (army) is meant for tasks that come up unexpectedly in the course of a front (army) defensive operation. The combined-arms reserve of a front usually contains an assault-landing brigade for combatting enemy forces, including tank forces that break through, and tank and motorized-rifle divisions, which occupy areas near prepared defense lines. The reserves may be located at a distance of 100-300 km [from the forward edge].

Another element of the operational disposition of front troops will be the grouping of front rocket troops. These are the front missile brigades, R-300 and R-900. The R-300 brigade is located some 60-80 km from the forward edge, usually beyond the second zone; the R-900 brigade is not closer than 300 km, since its lower limit of launch is 300 km. Therefore it is located at maximum depth so that it can deliver strikes in front of the forward edge and even in

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Page 13 of 22 Pages

the event of a penetration of the enemy to depth. Were it to be placed closer, it would first of all be necessary to change siting areas in the event of a penetration and, second, it would not have the capability of delivering strikes directly in front of the forward edge or against a penetration of the enemy to depth.

Further, the groupings of air defense troops include army and front SAM brigades, which cover the main groupings of front troops, the grouping of air forces, the front control post, the second echelons, and the reserves. The main groupings of air defense troops now include troops of front-subordinate field air defense as well as the corps and divisions of central-subordinate air defense which perform their tasks in their established boundaries (that is, the forces and means of Air Defense of the Country, since they cover groupings within border military districts and groups of forces).

The air forces grouping includes fighter, fighter-bomber, and bomber air divisions and army aviation. Front aviation is located somewhat deeper in the western theaters of military operations for a front defense. As for the far eastern theaters of military operations, it is hard to say what is deeper; regardless of whether it is offense or defense, there is simply no depth where these fields could be concentrated. Army aviation is located at a depth of 50-80 km, fighter and attack aviation no closer than 100-150 km, fighter-bomber aviation 150-200 km, and bomber aviation somewhere over 200-250 km from the forward edge.

A front creates 2-3 antitank reserves, and an army 1-2. In a front the antitank reserve is the antitank artillery brigade, a rather powerful brigade with four antitank battalions of mixed composition. There are 100-mm guns and antitank guided missiles, 2-3 mobile obstacle detachments (ground-based), and one or two helicopter-mounted mobile obstacle detachments in a front.

In addition, separate elements of the operational disposition of troops of a front may be airborne landing forces and raiding detachments. The commander of the Baltic Military District, Col. Gen. Yazov (now in the Far East) wrote in Military Thought in 1984 that the Baltic MD, in the course of exercises while delivering a front counterthrust, created a front operational maneuver group, [4 words illegible].

A separate element of the operational disposition of front troops may be, now in conditions of the creation of reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes, the grouping of front reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes.

A further element of the disposition of a defense is the system of defense lines, areas, and positions. What defense lines are established? First of all, there is the forward security zone, 20-40 km deep. Its purpose is to delay an

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Page 14 of 22 Pages

enemy offensive, reveal the axis of the main thrust, and force the enemy to deploy and operate on inconvenient axes. It is usually defended by forward detachments of [word illegible] divisions of the first echelon, and these are reinforced motorized rifle and tank regiments, including [word illegible] defending on [2 words illegible].

Next comes the main zone of defense, which is for inflicting decisive damage on the enemy. The main zone is defended by the first-echelon divisions of the front and army, generally by motorized rifle division. The depth of the main zone of defense is 20-25 km. A main zone of defense usually has 3-4 positions -- two for the first-echelon regiments, and one or two for the second-echelon regiments.

Then there are one or two army defense lines. The first army defense line is occupied by the second echelon of an army; these are tank or motorized rifle divisions. The first army defensive line is prepared 40-60 km back from the forward edge. In the Great Patriotic War, in particular in the Kursk Bulge, the depth of the main zone of defense was 5-7 km, and the distance from the forward edge of the main zone to the second zone a mere 11-12 km. Now, as you see, the main zone is 25 km, and from the forward edge of the main zone to the forward edge of the first army line is 40-60 km. That is the first army line; the second army defense line, to establish depth of defense, is usually defended by army or front reserves. Two front lines are established; the first front line is back 150-200 km, and the second 250-300 km from the forward edge of the main zone. They are occupied by front reserves -- separate motorized rifle and tank divisions, a landing-assault brigade, and the second echelon of the front.

Besides this, there are interdiction lines and positions -- positions in a division, and lines in an army or front. They are established to prevent the enemy from spreading out in the direction of the flanks (i.e., in the event of a penetration), and these interdiction lines [will be?] the line drawn for conduct of a front counterthrust (army counterthrusts). Hence the distance between the lines is some 40-50 km between army lines, and up to 100 between front ones. The idea is that the enemy cannot negotiate this space quickly, and at the same time it permits our troops in the army and front to [hold these lines with] a large grouping to deliver a counterthrust on the penetrating grouping of the enemy. One more zone is or may be established. Behind the main zone of defense, on the main likely axes of enemy thrusts, there may be a second zone of defense or an intermediate defense line. It is prepared and occupied by departing first-echelon units and forward units of the second echelon.

A front usually has most of its forces and means concentrated in the first echelon. That is why it is called the main zone of defense. But more and more authors are insisting that an army should or may have but part of its forces in the first echelon, and keep the main forces in the second echelon. And now an author has joined in proposing that the front do likewise -- have part of the

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 15 of 22 Pages

forces and means, say one-third, in the first echelon, and put two-thirds in the second echelons and reserves in order to have the capability to counter enemy thrusts. If the axis of the thrust and the nature of enemy actions is [2 words illegible] it is possible either to occupy a zone of defense on the axis of the main enemy thrust or to deliver a counterthrust, etc. But "Principles" still elect the option with the large part of forces and means of the front and army in the first echelon, though it is not out of the question that some instances may see a [small?] part there -- but then this will not be the main zone of defense, but the first defensive line. (And the main zone will be the first army line.)

The next important element is the system of prepared strikes with nuclear weapons. Strikes are prepared according to enemy troop concentration areas, and also on the lines of likely enemy deployment in combat formation while approaching the forward edge, as well as [line illegible].

There will be a system of integrated firing on the enemy which includes prepared strikes with nuclear weapons, the system of prepared strikes by rocket troops with conventional missiles, and strikes of artillery -- massed artillery fire, rolling barrages of artillery fire, fixed barrages of artillery fire, and precision fire of artillery -- on the likely axes of the enemy offensive. Artillery fire is also established for the eventuality of army and front counterthrusts. An important element of the system of integrated firing on the enemy will now be strikes of the reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes of the front and army.

The system of air defense is also organized in a unified system and includes radar reconnaissance of the air enemy, the system of fighter air cover, surface-to-air missile cover, and the system of control of air defense troops and fighter aviation of the front air forces.

There will be a system of antitank defense which incorporates artillery fire on the tank large units and units of the enemy, lines of deployment of antitank reserves and mobile obstacle detachments, and also [word illegible] of antitank means of [word illegible] large units and units.

There will be a system of antilanding defense. This means combatting enemy airborne landing forces [2 words illegible] airland operation. This is essentially the delivery of strikes to the full depth of the disposition of a front or army with the simultaneous landing of airborne forces in the depth and [action?] of operational groups, which the enemy calls "mobile groups" and we call "maneuver groups".

There will be a system of engineer obstacles. In particular [3 words illegible] conventional obstacles, say, explosive obstacles ahead of the forward edge, as well as nuclear obstacles on the most important and most likely axes.

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 16 of 22 Pages

These are the main elements created in the zone of defense of a front: the grouping of troops and its operational disposition, the system of defensive lines, areas, and positions which are created in the zone of defense of a front, and the system of integrated fire damage to the enemy.

**Principles of preparation and conduct
 of a front defensive operation**

The preparation of a front defensive operation includes a large complex of measures. Naturally, the basis for all the measures for preparation of a defensive operation is the decision of the front commander on the conduct of defense of the front.

An important measure is the determination and assignment of tasks to the troops. A defense implies, if the front has been forced to go to the defense (from offense to defense), almost always a regrouping and change of troops and their occupation of assigned lines, areas, and positions.

An important element of preparation of the operation is organization of nuclear and conventional damage to the enemy, organization of air, antitank, and antilanding defense, organization of counterpreparation if contemplated, preparation of army and front counterthrusts, organization of cooperation of troops, engineer preparation of the zone of defense, organization of all types of support (operational, special technical, rear services, [1 word illegible] reconnaissance and other types of support), organization of troop control, monitoring of the readiness of troops, establishment and proper positioning of supplies of material. The sequence of these measures and the work of commanders and staffs will depend on the circumstances under which the operation is prepared.

Important factors will be availability of [time?] for preparation of the defense, the type of weapons to be employed, the operational situation, the nature of combat activity of the troops of the front and the enemy at the time the front receives tasks for the defense, and the availability of nuclear, special, and conventional weapons and supplies of other material.

The front commander makes the decision on the basis of thorough study of the tasks and comprehensive evaluation of the situation. Naturally, the most important concept of the front commander is determination of the axes of likely enemy thrusts and the creation of troop groupings on these axes. Other elements are the methods of hitting the advancing enemy and the operational disposition of troops of the front. The commander's decision for the defense must necessarily provide for a system of defensive lines, areas, and positions.

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 17 of 22 Pages

Naturally, if the front assumes the defense with advance preparation, it may have all these lines. If it has had to go to the defense, then not all these lines may be established. A main zone, one army line, and one front line -- these must necessarily be established. If time is available, the front commander, to update the decision made [on a map?], usually carries out a regrouping on the terrain, which, if prepared in advance, is done while it is still peacetime. In border military districts and groups of forces, if defense is contemplated there, an incoming commander will, as a rule, begin with an operational field trip and update the tasks of the front troops. Nor is a regrouping completely out of the question if there is time in the event of deliberate transition of front troops to the defense.

Planning of a front defensive operation is done by tasks [to be done?] by front troops to carry out the objectives of the operation in the likely direction of advance of the enemy [2 words illegible] of combat actions of front troops. The most detailed planning is devoted to the delivery of the first nuclear strike, the conduct of fire counterpreparation, the repulse of an enemy offensive in front of the forward edge, the conduct of combat actions beyond the lines of the main zone, and the delivery of counterthrusts [line illegible]. Planning a defensive operation involves developing a plan whose basis is a general operational part (just as in preparation of an offensive operation) on a map with attachment of an explanatory text. Starting at the main zone of defense, the distance to the first army line is 40-60 km. This is regarded in the front as the tactical zone of defense. Next, beginning with the forward edge of the army line (40-60 km) to the full depth of the front is the operational zone of defense.

Also developed, as in an offensive operation, is a plan of the first nuclear strike, a plan of fire counterpreparation (if contemplated), a plan of front troop preparation in an air or air defense operation, a plan of antilanding defense, a plan of combat employment of branch arms and special troops of the front, and also plans for all types of support of the front defensive operation, reconnaissance, engineer and chemical support, electronic warfare, etc., which are components of the plan.

It is typical that fire preparation and fire damage to the enemy is planned with all tasks which front troops carry out. Say, for instance, the task of front troops is to hit the enemy on the approaches to the defense, fire counterpreparation is done. If front troops are performing a task of repelling an enemy offensive, fire to repel the enemy offensive is planned. If front troops are performing the task of holding lines and positions, fire support of troops is planned. Front and army counterthrusts and, consequently, a new stage of fire support in defense involves fire support of troops in the conduct of front and army counterthrusts.

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 18 of 22 Pages

In defense the average standard operational-tactical unit [word illegible] of fire damage of the enemy is taken to be hitting of 30 percent of the nuclear targets of the enemy strike grouping while deploying and conducting a defense to hold a main zone of defense. It is considered that to a depth of 25 km defending troops [must hit 30 percent of the targets?] of the main strike grouping of the enemy. This consideration is used to determine the reinforcement of first-echelon troops of the front and army and to compute the density of fire means per kilometer of front. Densities of firing means are understood in connection with reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire means. They cannot be considered as they were during the Great Patriotic War. There are great capabilities for maneuvering fire with the use of reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes.

A front defensive operation may begin various ways. During conduct of an operation with conventional weapons, a defensive operation may, depending on the conditions, begin with the repelling of enemy air strikes, the conduct of fire counterpreparation, fire interdiction of the advance and deployment of the enemy, and [fire] repelling of an assault. With advance preparation of the defense, front troops will repel the enemy strike with a preestablished defensive grouping at prepared lines.

In a defense occupied in a short time under enemy pressure, when the front has not established a defensive grouping, a defensive operation may begin with repelling of strikes in the troop disposition in which the previous combat action, i.e., the offensive, was being conducted. This is the most difficult variant, to go from offensive to defense and establish defensive troop groupings under enemy pressure.

During actions with nuclear weapons, a defensive operation may begin with repelling of an enemy nuclear strike and delivery of the first nuclear strike on the enemy. After repelling of the enemy nuclear strike and delivery of the first nuclear strike on top-priority targets, steps must be taken promptly to ascertain the situation and the composition of our own and enemy troops, to restore control and combat effectiveness, and also to establish minefields, including nuclear minefields.

Subsequent combat actions may be conducted on separate axes with a limited complement of troops, forces, and means. If necessary, the front commander may make updated or new decisions. Under favorable conditions, as the "Principles" point out, defending troops, after the first and subsequent nuclear strikes, must rigorously go over to the offensive with part or all forces to finish off the opposing enemy troops. In this case, an offensive operation is planned and organized with a limited complement of the [surviving] troops, forces, and means.

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Page 19 of 22 Pages

If the enemy manages to renew the offensive, all available troops, forces, and means are used to repel it. The most combat-effective large units and units are [illegible] on the main axes. The main forces of defending troops are sent to hold the most important areas and lines, and also to wipe out an enemy that has broken through, deliver nuclear and fire strikes on him, and deliver counterattacks and counterthrusts.

When defense is conducted with nuclear weapons as well as with conventional ones, troops acting in the forward security zone of the front hold their occupied positions and during the preparation of air and artillery support inflict maximum losses on the enemy, forcing him to prematurely withdraw his main forces. It is necessary, at least from behind the forward security zone, to identify the axis of the main thrust and [project] reinforcement of the defense on the main axes in time. To deceive the enemy and get out forces out from under his strike, especially in the event of an immediate threat of the use of nuclear weapons, part of the troops of the second echelon and reserves, as well as some units and large units of rocket troops and artillery and air defense troops can be moved to prepared areas.

The experience of the Great Patriotic War tells us that initially, when the possible start of an enemy offensive is detected, it is still necessary to carry out troop changes and especially changes of control posts. There is a typical example in the Bryansk Front in the first German offensive in September and early October 1941, when front control posts were located for a long time in the same places and the Germans knew them all; they first hit all the control posts and the front commander lost control of the troops. This has to be kept in mind also in today's conditions, particularly when strikes can be delivered with such great accuracy [3 words illegible] on electronic means, including control posts. At the same time, to somehow save the second echelons against which strikes are planned [line illegible]. When this is done, as the "Principles" point out, the second echelons and reserves may be placed on the axis of the main enemy thrust [2 words illegible] only with the beginning of the enemy offensive.

Fire counterpreparation is conducted upon occupation by the main enemy forces of departure areas in the depth or in direct contact with defending troops. The front commander will, on the basis of the latest reconnaissance data, establish the objective of counterpreparation, the complement of forces and means involved, and the disposition [2 words illegible].

The principle targets of fire counterpreparation may be means of nuclear attack, precision-guided weapons systems, artillery, first-echelon large units, aviation at forward airfields, and troop control posts. The conduct of fire counterpreparation involves large units and units of front and army aviation, rocket troops, artillery, first-echelon formations and large units on the axis where the counterpreparation is taking place, reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes, specially allocated artillery large units and

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 20 of 22 Pages

units of the second echelon and reserves, and also adjacent formations of the [illegible] grouping on the axis of counterpreparation.

Fire counterpreparation is done with massed air strikes, strikes of rocket troops, conventional missiles, and massed artillery fire. A decisive role in counterpreparation will belong to precision-guided weapons systems. We all know, from the experience of the Great Patriotic War, counterpreparation [line illegible]. And now this acquires greater importance than before. You are familiar with the counterpreparation conducted on the Central Front which drew on 1067 guns and mortars and launchers [2 words illegible]. The Voronezh Front had fewer -- 686 guns and mortars.

The results we all know: communications and control were disrupted and the grouping and attacks of the Germans were delayed several hours, but still the main objectives and tasks of counterpreparation were not achieved. Either it began too early, or it was not done effectively enough. This means that reconnaissance was inadequate; aviation was supposed to strike the German aviation, but when it took off, the Germans had managed to take off earlier, and so the strikes were delivered on empty airfields. There was no more time to retarget aviation on the infantry -- only one option had been planned. And this too ought to be considered. Front air forces did not participate in counterpreparation -- only artillery. And to begin earlier when the Germans were sitting in concealment and powerful shelters, their personnel [would have suffered then, too.] Artillery batteries on the Voronezh Front [line illegible]. The idea is that, if counterpreparation is carried out, it must hit precisely reconnoitered targets, as we say, top-priority targets, such as means of nuclear attack, troop control posts, ground-based centers of reconnaissance/strike and reconnaissance/fire complexes, and main attack groupings.

Fire interdiction of the advance and deployment of the enemy is done in the event they occupy a departure position in the depth. Fire repelling of an enemy attack and fire support of defending troops is done through full exploitation of the fire capabilities of the defending troops.

During the conduct of combat actions to hold the main zone of defense or the first line, defending troops repel the attack of the enemy and inflict maximum losses on him. Should the enemy penetrate the defense, first-echelon large units use [non-nuclear?] strikes and fire of all types to hit the advancing troops. In some cases counterattacks may be launched. In conditions when counterattacks are neither advisable nor possible, second echelons and reserves, regrouped first-echelon units and divisions deployed at advantageous lines hit the enemy with air strikes, tank and artillery fire, and antitank guided weapons, delay his advance, and bring about conditions for an army counterattack. An army counterattack is delivered on the decision of army commanders. It is usually delivered in battles beyond the main zone of defense. When observing that the first echelon of an army is not going to hold the main

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 21 of 22 Pages

zone, an army counterthrust is delivered across the first or second line, but basically across the first army line. Front counterthrusts are delivered principally across army and front lines.

Front counterthrusts. The most favorable time to conduct a front counterthrust is considered to be operational conditions when defending troops retain their ability to establish defense on the flanks of a penetrating enemy grouping and are continuing to hold back the enemy offensive before the front. It is more advantageous to deliver a front counterthrust on both flanks of a penetrating enemy grouping to ensure the most favorable conditions to get out of [illegible].

Front and army counterthrusts should be delivered unexpectedly on the enemy during actions with nuclear weapons. The counterthrust may be preceded by delivery of nuclear strikes and the conduct of short fire preparation of the attack. After this, the troops deploy and attack the enemy from the march in approach and combat formations. When actions are conducted without nuclear weapons, counterthrusts generally begin after a powerful fire preparation and assault of troops in combat formations.

From the experience of the Great Patriotic War we know that the conduct of front counterthrusts is a complex matter but, at the same time, a very effective one. In the Battle for Moscow, for instance, the counterthrusts of the First Shock Army of General Kuznetsov in the Yakhroma area, the Third Army in the [illegible] area, and the counterthrust of the First Guards Cavalry Corps of Belov in the Kashira area were of decisive importance. In the Kursk Bulge so were those of the Fifth Guards Tank Army and the Fifth Guards Combined-Arms Army of General Zhakov which had been given to the Voronezh Front. They conducted a counterthrust on 12 July. It is necessary to say that the front counterthrust did not fully attain its objective, to smash the penetrating grouping of the Germans; in the area of Proletarskiy they were only stopped and went over to a defense. (Actually, the objective was achieved: the Germans did not go any further on this axis.) What happened? Exactly when the counterthrust was scheduled, the Germans struck even harder, [hit] the second echelons, and drove Rotmistrov's Fifth Guards [Tank] Army, Zhakov's army, and part of the other armies several kilometers back. They went out to the firing positions which they had prepared for delivering strikes in the counterthrust and took part of the artillery out. In all, half the artillery was lost, and only part was able to maneuver and withdraw. As you can see, there should be more preparation, and the troops located forward on [illegible] should hold the enemy. In this case they did not hold, and the Germans came into direct contact with the counterthrust grouping, and so this grouping had no flexibility, being in direct [contact with the Germans]. The ultimate objective -- stopping the Germans -- was achieved, but a decisive total defeat was not achieved.

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 U.S.C., section 403g)

Page 22 of 22 Pages

The disposition of troops for delivering counterthrusts should ensure decisive superiority in forces and means on the chosen axes, delivery of a powerful initial strike, the possibility of exploiting the results of nuclear strikes and fire preparation, and completion of the defeat of the advancing enemy troops [2 words illegible]. The actions of troops participating in the counterthrust should show determination and be conducted at a constant rapid pace.

In exercises, many districts, when delivering a counterthrust, establish and drop airborne forces, allocate raid detachments, and create an operational maneuver group -- not only in an offensive but also in the counterthrust itself. In other words, a counterthrust can grow into an offensive operation. Of great importance on those axes where the counterthrust takes the form of a meeting engagement are preemption of the enemy and delivery of fire strikes on him, rapid deployment of large units and units in combat formations, and daring, determined actions of troops. Success must be promptly exploited until the enemy and his approaching reserves are finished off.

During a defensive operation with or without nuclear weapons the front commander takes all steps to promptly identify enemy means of nuclear attack and ground-based centers of strike and fire complexes.

Defending troops must be prepared to combat airborne landing forces and airmobile troops in today's context of an airland operation. Airmobile troops [in a concentration area] and airborne landing forces in departure areas can be hit with nuclear and air strikes. In flight, landing and airmobile troops are destroyed by fighter aviation and air defense troops, and, at low altitudes, also by motorized rifle large units and units. Destroying landing forces already on the ground will be done by reserves and other troops, in particular, assault-landing brigades, assault-landing regiments and battalions, and also large units and units that happen to be near the landing area, as well as aviation and artillery. Actions during an engagement with an enemy airborne landing force must be vigorous and determined so as to prevent more landings.

The objectives of a front defensive operation are considered to be achieved if the front troops perform the assigned tasks, smash the [encroaching] enemy groupings, recover a lost position, and bring about conditions for an offensive operation if one is contemplated on the particular strategic axis.

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