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3034

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

18 July 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON:
The Soviet Air Forces

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.

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

25X1, E.O.13526



[Handwritten signature]

Richard F. Stolz
Deputy Director for Operations

[redacted]

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. 1985

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SUBJECT

USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON:
The Soviet Air Forces

SOURCE Documentary

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Summary:

The following intelligence report is a translation from Russian of a fragment of the text of a lecture at the Voroshilov General Staff Academy on the subject of the Soviet Air Forces. The text covers in brief outline form the mission, tasks and organization of the Soviet Air Forces. Interspersed with this are a few facts and figures, such as the scale of participation of airborne landing forces in the exercise ZAPAD-81, and some surprisingly candid comments, particularly on the BACKFIRE bomber.

End of Summary

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THE SOVIET AIR FORCES

[First part of sentence illegible] mission, tasks, composition, weapons, development in the postwar period, and current status.

Mission and tasks

The Air Forces are a highly maneuverable branch of the Armed Forces whose mission is to perform strategic and operational tasks in the airspace over continental and ocean theaters of military operations in coordination with the other Armed Forces branches and independently. If we refer to the "Principles", we see that the mission of the Air Forces is set forth somewhat differently there, with all the main tasks included.

The main tasks of the Air Forces are:

1. Defeating enemy aviation groupings, ground forces groupings, and naval groupings.
2. Gaining air supremacy and nuclear superiority.
3. Air support for ground forces and naval forces.
4. Combat with enemy reserves. This is one of the most important tasks. At the present time 50 to 60 percent of the forces and means in a theater of military operations are in the second echelon or in the reserve. It is therefore difficult to say, particularly when nuclear weapons are employed, which is more important, destroying the enemy's first echelon or destroying his second echelons and reserves.
5. Cover for troop groupings and installations from attacks and reconnaissance by the air enemy.
6. Destruction and annihilation of military, military-industrial, and energy-producing installations, administrative-political centers, and communications centers. Performing this task leads to undermining of [the enemy's] military and economic capability and disruption of government and military command and control.
7. Dropping airborne landing forces, which is also a very important task. In response to "AirLand Battle," our military science is developing the so-called "three-dimensional operation," which is a front offensive operation in which a large number of airborne landing forces are employed. In the ZAPAD-81 exercise this theoretical idea was put to a practical test. In the course of a

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front offensive operation -- 15 days -- 140 airborne landing forces of various types were dropped. Three of these were operational, two were operational-tactical, and all the rest were tactical forces. The total number of personnel in the airborne landing forces reached 80,000 according to data from the classified publication "Military Thought," or 60,000 according to the film on ZAPAD-81. The total number of men in a combined-arms army [line illegible]. ... that is, virtually an entire combined-arms army is dropped into the rear of the enemy.

8. Aerial reconnaissance. Aerial reconnaissance is carried out in the tactical, operational, and strategic depth, forces and means permitting.

9. Interdicting enemy troop maneuver and transport movements.

10. Air transport of troops and materiel.

11. Special tasks: electronic warfare, supplying troops and aviation with POL, troop transport, evacuation of the sick and wounded, and a number of other tasks.

12. Disruption of the operation of the enemy's rear services and transportation.

The Air Forces are equipped with manned and unmanned means to perform these tasks.

Composition

The Air Forces consist of Long-Range Aviation, Front Aviation, Army Aviation, and Military Transport Aviation. These were previously referred to as aviation branches [vidy aviatsii]; now the "Principles" simply state, "The Air Forces consist of Long-Range Aviation, Front Aviation, Army Aviation, and Military Transport Aviation, and include the following components [roda aviatsii]: bomber aviation, fighter-bomber aviation, attack aviation, fighter aviation, reconnaissance aviation, transport aviation, and special aviation." The first three air components -- bomber, fighter-bomber, and attack aviation -- were sometimes referred to in the literature as "strike aviation."

Long-Range Aviation

Long-Range Aviation is a means of the Supreme High Command. Its mission is to perform tasks in the operational and strategic depth. The components of Long-Range Aviation are: bomber aviation, reconnaissance aviation, and special aviation. Long-Range Aviation is equipped with the following aircraft: the 3-M; the TU-95, which is subsonic, not the latest aircraft in any event; the TU-22, which is newer; and the TU-22M, which is sometimes called BACKFIRE.

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As far as the TU-22 and TU-22M are concerned, they are completely different aircraft, notwithstanding the fact that they have the same designation. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the design bureau did not have enough money to build a new aircraft, but they did have money for upgrading the TU-22. Since the TU-22M was "ripe" in terms of the [R&D] work, it was decided to begin construction using the money allocated for updating the TU-22. At this time SALT II had been negotiated, and [the Americans] were supposed to sign it. When they accused us of building a [new] strategic bomber, we responded that it was an upgraded bomber. The refueling device was quickly removed [and they started to include it in the set that came with the aircraft]. When the aircraft enters service in the field, these sets come with it and [will be] [word illegible] for in-flight refueling. When necessary, all this can be [word illegible] within a few hours. While [the TU-22] does not have variable-sweep wings, [the TU-22M] does, and it has completely different equipment and different characteristics.

Long-range reconnaissance aviation is equipped with the TU-22R and TU-22MR, the IL-20M, and the TU-95.

Special aviation has the M-3 and the TU-16D. Note the difference: the M-3 is a combat aircraft; the M-3 is the same aircraft, but a tanker.

Front Aviation

Front aviation is the largest branch of aviation. It is intended for joint actions with front troops as well as operations of the other branches of the Armed Forces. It is the main attack means of the front commander. The components of front aviation are: bomber aviation, fighter-bomber aviation, attack aviation, fighter aviation, reconnaissance aviation, transport aviation, and special aviation.

Front bomber aviation is equipped with the SU-24, which has replaced the YAK-28. The latest version is the SU-24M, which has improved characteristics and in-flight refueling capability.

The mission of fighter-bomber aviation is to destroy targets in the immediate operational and tactical depth. It is equipped with various versions of the SU-17, such as the SU-17M3 and SU-17M4, and the MIG-27. These are all variable-geometry aircraft.

The mission of attack aviation is to perform air support tasks for troops in the battlefield, in the tactical and immediate operational depth. It is equipped with the SU-25. [Line illegible.] ... It is in the field. It proved its worth quite well in Afghanistan. [Line illegible.] ... an aircraft with

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the wings and engines mounted high. It is subsonic; it does not need to rush about the battlefield at high speeds.

The mission of fighter aviation is to destroy the air enemy. It is equipped with the MIG-23, the MIG-29, which is a very new aircraft, and the MIG-21bis, which is finishing up its service life in the field. It is a pretty good aircraft; the F-15 was built to counter it as an air combat aircraft. It proved its worth as an air-superiority fighter quite well in the Near East.

[Several lines illegible.]

... in some ways it is better, and in some ways it is inferior. In what ways is it inferior? Not in the avionics, as you might think, but in the range and endurance. This is our misfortune, which [word illegible].

Other aircraft are the long-range fighter-interceptors: the MIG-31 and the SU-27.

The mission of reconnaissance aviation is to conduct air reconnaissance in support of a front offensive operation. It is equipped with aircraft which are based on combat aircraft: the SU-17M3R, SU-17M4R, SU-24MR, MIG-25RV, and MIG-21R. The MIG-25 is considered the world champion. It has a very high speed -- 3000+ [km/hr] -- and its ceiling is higher than 30 km. This is the aircraft which was [taken] to Japan.

Front transport aviation is equipped with the AN-26, sometimes the AN-12, and the MI-26, MI-6, and MI-8 helicopters.

The mission of special aviation is to perform special tasks: refueling of aircraft, jamming (that is, electronic warfare), freight transport, evacuation of the sick and wounded, etc. It is mostly equipped with transport aircraft.

Army Aviation

Army Aviation is a means of the commanders of combined-arms armies, army corps, and motorized rifle and tank divisions. Its mission is air support for troops in the battlefield. The components of Army Aviation are attack aviation, transport aviation, and special aviation.

[Army attack aviation] is equipped with various versions of the MI-24 attack helicopter; the latest version is the MI-24B.

[Army] transport aviation is equipped with the MI-6, which is the main heavy transport helicopter; the MI-26, a new helicopter which is larger, perhaps not as much as half again as large, but nevertheless larger; and the MI-8.

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In army special aviation MI-8SM MALTA helicopters are used to jam [communications], and MI-2RTR helicopters are used for electronic and technical reconnaissance. The TU-144 TANGOYZER is no longer in service; it was not cost-effective.

Military Transport Aviation

The components of Military Transport Aviation are transport and special aviation.

Organizationally the Air Forces consist of formations, large units, units, and subunits. Formations are the Operational Air Armies of the Supreme High Command (VAVGKON)....

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