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Central Intelligence Agency



29 July 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON: Organizational  
Structure of the Soviet Armed 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

[redacted]  
Richard F. Stolz  
for Deputy Director for Operations

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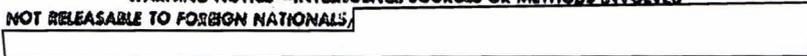
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## Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR  
 DATE OF INFO. 1985

DATE 29 July 1988

SUBJECT

USSR GENERAL STAFF ACADEMY LESSON:  
 Organizational Structure of the Soviet Armed Forces

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following intelligence report is a translation from Russian of the text of a lecture at the Voroshilov General Staff Academy on the organizational structure of the Soviet Armed Forces. This is apparently the introductory lecture in a series on the Soviet Armed Forces, Soviet operational art, and the role of reconnaissance in operations. In brief survey form it covers the nature and role of Soviet military doctrine, the organization of the five branches of the Armed Forces and their branch arms, and the basic hierarchy of organizational entities. Of particular interest are references to current organizational and doctrinal issues and controversies, including a reference to Marshal Ogarkov's 1984 article in "Military Thought" in which he rejects the idea of a limited nuclear war [redacted]

End of Summary

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## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

The organizational structure of the armed forces of any state, including ours, is defined above all by a set of sociopolitical factors, that is, state policy, which is based on social and state [word illegible]. In addition, the organizational structure of the armed forces of a state is influenced by a number of other factors:

- the size and quality of the population;
- the moral and political qualities of the population;
- the level of economic development;
- the geographic location of the state; a maritime power such as Great Britain is one thing, and a continental country is another;
- historical trends in the development of the people;
- historical factors, and a number of others.

However, a key factor in correctly resolving issues of military organizational development is the scientific definition of the nature of a future war and the system of views on the sociopolitical and military aspects of preparing and waging a war which is formulated on this basis and approved by senior state and military leaders as military doctrine. While we are familiar with the definition of military doctrine, one thing should be explained; when the question is asked, "What is doctrine?", the answer is given, "It is a system of views on preparing for and waging war." This is all correct, but the only major correction is that this is not simply a system of views. Anyone is free to express his views in the open press, in periodical literature; views are expressed in "Military Thought". Military doctrine is a system of officially approved views.

[Unknown amount of text missing.]

... as the first chapter in the "Principles"  
it is not called "Military Doctrine," but "The Nature of Modern Warfare."  
However, the "Principles" were worked on for 15 years by a large collective of generals and officers of the Armed Forces and were approved by the government. And this is how they define war, the periods of war, and how a war can be of long or short duration. In other words, this is a system of views which has a methodological basis. In a classified issue of "Military Thought" former Chief

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of the General Staff, Marshal of the Soviet Union Ogarkov makes some critical points. For example, he says that to think that there will be a period with limited employment of nuclear weapons is absurd, but in the "Principles" such a period is examined. It is examined, however, because we frequently tie ourselves [polvyazyryemysya] to the views of the probable adversary, quite closely, so to speak. This is one reason, and a second reason is that it is truly difficult to predict.

Soviet military doctrine must provide definite answers to the following questions:

1. What is the degree of probability that a war will begin and with what sort of adversary will we have to deal?
2. What will be the nature of the war, what objectives will it pursue, and what missions will be carried out?
3. What are the armed forces that we will need to have in order to accomplish these missions and in what direction will military organizational development be carried out?
4. Which forms and methods are to be used to wage war? The "Principles" have an entire section called "Types, Forms, and Methods of Military Operations." Danilevich, who participated in the "Principles" and led a group which worked on operations, wrote an article in "Military Thought" on the system of operations of the armed forces now that space is a factor, and in addition to the two dimensions, depth and breadth, a third dimension, the vertical dimension, has appeared in the air-land operation. In [word illegible] the system of a single strategic operation, 57 other operations [word illegible]. An operation is a form or organizational structure [two words illegible]. As for methods, it is one thing to wage a war with nuclear weapons and another with conventional weapons.
5. How should we prepare the country and the Armed Forces for war? It is quite clear that [word illegible] an enumeration of these [issues] sounds quite concrete. Our [word illegible] indicates that [two words illegible] these issues in order to give a definite answer to them. What are the armed forces that we are [developing]? [Word illegible] the Strategic Rocket Forces, when they were established, [three words illegible] not immediately, but for a whole five years the issue was debated: to establish or not to establish [the Strategic Rocket Forces] as a separate branch? Everyone has three branches, but we had five.

We have every reason to believe that our Soviet military doctrine is being built and developed on a strictly scientific basis, because it takes into consideration the economic capabilities of the country, it is grounded in the

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political aspect, it studies the nature of [two words illegible] of the probable adversary, and it is guided by the present state of development of military science and military art. The fact that there are some omissions [word illegible] natural, inasmuch as there is [word illegible]. We take the organization of the Armed Forces to mean the structure of military units which ensures their optimum composition, the optimum correlation between the types of weapons and the combat arms, and the most successful performance of the tasks assigned to them. The organization of the Armed Forces is a component part of military organizational development and covers all components of the Armed Forces.

The present-day structure of the Soviet Armed Forces includes five branches, plus the Rear Services of the Armed Forces, the Civil Defense Forces, the Border Troops, the Internal Troops, and, if we stick closely to the "Principles", special troops as well. The Border Troops are subordinate to the Committee for State Security [KGB]. The Internal Troops are subordinate to the Minister of Internal Affairs [MVD], although in [word illegible] military units -- all this is part of [word illegible] units, that is, it is part of the Armed Forces. Foreign sources rate our civil defense very highly. Whether they actually know its status or not, they rate it very highly in their publications. According to their sources, not ours, 100 persons for every 1000 are trained. [Several lines illegible.]

A branch is a component of the Armed Forces which has a particular kind of armaments and is designated to carry out missions within a particular spatial sphere. In his article Danilevich distinguishes the following spheres: continents, seas, oceans, air, near space, middle space, and deep space. In his article Ogarkov distinguishes the following spheres: under water, above water, shore, and air. In other words, I believe the very concept of spatial spheres is [word illegible], particularly in connection with the fact that the problem of space is now a very critical one.

There are presently five branches in our Armed Forces. I will provide a very brief description of the mission, structure, and composition of branch arms for each branch, since there have been many changes in this area.

The Strategic Rocket Forces are a major component of the strategic nuclear forces of our state. We have come around to the same triad as they have in the United States. The mission of this branch is to undermine the military and economic potential of the probable adversary; destroy nuclear missiles (primarily strategic missiles); destroy major troop groupings; disrupt high-level government and military command and control; and disrupt the operation of the strategic rear services.

The troops and branches of the Armed Forces, including the Strategic Rocket Forces, consist of branch arms, special troops, rear services units and

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facilities, and facilities and institutions. Until recently, three or four years ago, this was the only branch of the Armed Forces that did not have its own branch arms. At the present time the Strategic Rocket Forces have the Intercontinental Missile Troops (MVR Troops) and the Intermediate-Range Missile Troops (RSD Troops) as branch arms. We should immediately make the reservation, however, that this is a very specific division. They do not have commanders-in-chief for each branch, everything is from Tolubko's unified division, and everything is under unified [word illegible] in the Main Staff. The only thing is that the sectors [napravleniya] are distinguished, and their combat regulations also consist of two parts, one part for each branch arm.

[Unknown amount of text missing.]

... according to wartime TO&E. In other words, these troops are capable of carrying out missions on all the continents and in all geographic areas.

**Ground Forces.** In the "Principles", until recently, as [several words illegible], that they are the largest branch of the Armed Forces and are used to perform tasks in continental theaters of military operations to seize and hold areas and lines; this is their general mission.

The Ground Forces consist of the following branch arms: Motorized Rifle Troops, Tank Troops (shown separately, but actually under a unified command), Rocket Troops and Artillery, Air Defense Troops of the Ground Forces, and Airborne Troops.

[Unknown amount of text missing.] ... and army aviation, which is not a branch arm of the Ground Forces, but is included in combined-arms formations, large units, and units, and at the same time is a component of the Air Forces; army aviation has this dual subordination.

Various components have wanted to [eliminate/simplify this staff] and the Ground Forces in general as a branch of the Armed Forces, but all of this somehow did not [word illegible]. In fact, the Ground Forces have developed intensively recently, because the ground forces of our probable adversary are developing very actively. It is sufficient to note that in recent years, that is, during the current period, the power of the [word illegible] of a motorized rifle division has increased by a factor of 20, its fire [word illegible] has increased by a factor of 30, the number of [word illegible] carriers has increased by a factor of 37, and approximately 50 [two words illegible] tanks in a motorized rifle division.

Perhaps the only branch of the Armed Forces which has particularly undergone reorganization are the Air Defense Forces. Note that this is the Air Defense Forces, not the Air Defense Forces of the Country, as they were called until recently. Whereas until recently the Air Defense Forces had three branch arms,

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they now have six: Missile Attack Warning Troops, Missile Defense Troops, Space Defense Troops, Surface-to-Air Missile and Antiaircraft Artillery Troops, Air Defense Aviation (not Fighter Aviation, as this branch arm was previously called), and Radiotechnical Troops.

The number of branch arms in the Air Defense Forces has doubled, and naturally the tasks this branch performs have increased in volume and become more complex in content. These tasks are: combatting the air and space enemy; detecting a missile attack and warning the relevant authorities about it; protecting administrative-political, industrial, and military targets; and in peacetime, protecting the air borders, monitoring observance of the established flight regime [three words illegible] aviation, including civil aviation, and monitoring circumterrestrial space. [Line illegible.] Of course, the system of command and control has changed; to be precise, it has become more complex due to the fact that many of the functions of the two branches [the Air Defense Forces and Air Forces?] have been combined. Also a [word illegible] publication states that one of the special features of this branch is that the air defense high command has been taken out of the operational [word illegible], so that all air defense means are currently subordinate to the theater command.

During the preparation and particularly during the conduct of front operations the front has a combined command post of the air forces and air defense. It is just now being set up, but in any event....

[Unknown amount of text missing.]

[Air Forces.] This is the only branch [vid] of the Armed Forces with its own elements [vidy] and components [roda]. What are the elements listed by Ogarkov in the "Principles"? Traditionally, there were always elements; we did them that way for convenience [word illegible] left these elements. The "Principles" do not have this. [They simply say] that the Air Forces consist of Long-Range Aviation, which is a component part of the strategic nuclear forces, Front Aviation, Army Aviation, and Military Transport Aviation, each of which consists of components. We have... [Unknown amount of text missing, not more than several lines.] As a whole the Air Forces have the following aviation components: bomber, fighter-bomber, fighter, attack, reconnaissance, transport, and special aviation. In one of the versions of the "Principles" [several words illegible] also missile-carrying/bomber [several words illegible] as an independent [component] [line illegible].

This branch of the Armed Forces is assigned a large set of tasks and has a broad range of missions: destruction of military-industrial installations, disruption of government and military command and control, and disruption of the operation of the rear services. This branch of the Armed Forces supplies all the Armed Forces branches in an operation with aerial reconnaissance data and

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carries out many transport movement tasks and many tasks in support of ground forces in front and army operations.

[Unknown amount of text missing.]

As a branch of the Armed Forces, the Navy has five branch arms: the Submarine Forces (previously called Submarines as a branch), Surface Forces (previously called Surface Ships), Naval Aviation, Coastal Rocket and Artillery Troops (BRAV), and Naval Infantry.

[Several words illegible] with recent [movements], [word illegible] of our Navy, particularly among the strategic submarine forces, has increased tremendously, as has the nuclear potential. [Two lines illegible.] They perform the following tasks: destruction of military-industrial installations; disruption of command and control; destruction of enemy naval groupings both during passage and at bases; gaining naval supremacy in coastal bodies of water and in operationally important areas of the ocean.

**Special Troops.** Special troops are both a component part of the Armed Forces as a whole and with their component parts are included in each branch of the Armed Forces, although not all [special troops] are. For example, the Space Troops are [set apart as] independent special troops, because all of space is removed from subordination to a commander-in-chief. There were [many] [word illegible] under [word illegible], under Tolubko in the [Strategic] Rocket Forces, [two words illegible] subordinate, taken away, [word illegible] also removed from subordination under Tolubko. In the "Principles", however, the Space Troops, as a means of the Supreme High Command, are included as special troops.

In general the support system has changed significantly. Our support system is divided into three groups: operational support, special technical support, and rear services support. Within each of these groups the types of support have also become more complex. There are about 22 types of special troops in the Armed Forces. These include: reconnaissance large units and units, communications and electronic warfare large units and units, troops for protection against weapons of mass destruction, engineer troops, nuclear-technical troops, missile-technical troops, railway troops, pipeline engineer troops, motor transport troops, special control units, and aviation engineer [units]. Approximately one-fourth of all the normative articles in the "Principles" are devoted to the rules and organization of all types of support.

Organizationally the Armed Forces consist of formations, large units, units, and subunits. [Line illegible.]

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A formation is an organizational unit with a variable (non-T/O) composition; everything depends on what kind of formation is performing what kinds of tasks. In the Armed Forces there are strategic, operational-strategic, operational, and operational-tactical formations.

Strategic formations are armed forces [word illegible] in [word illegible] composition, combined armed forces in the TMO. It has been established in practice and now [word illegible] the theater command [two or three words illegible] in the "Principles" -- this is a strategic formation.

Operational-strategic formations are the front, fleet, and air defense district (the Moscow Air Defense District is the only air defense district left).

There are also operational-strategic territorial formations, which include groups of forces, frontier military districts, and peacetime military districts which form fronts. There was an exercise last year by the Moscow Military District which was directed by the Chief of the General Staff; on the basis of the military district a front was formed.

To put it simply, operational formations include all armies in the Armed Forces: combined-arms armies, tank armies, missile armies, missile attack warning armies, operational and strategic air armies of the Supreme High Command, military transport aviation (it appears as both an aviation element and an operational formation), and air forces of fronts, fleets, and flotillas.

There are also operational territorial formations, which include interior military districts which form separate armies at the beginning of a war and all wartime military districts.

Operational-tactical formations. A corps always used to be considered to be an operational-tactical large unit. It has now risen in rank to an operational-tactical formation. In the new "Principles" all the standards go through the corps: army (army corps). In the future our army corps will probably be set up as operational maneuver groups to conduct combat actions [word illegible] front operation deep in the rear of the enemy, [rest of line illegible].

Large units are a T/O entity [formirovaniye] and include all divisions and brigades. A large unit is named according to the predominant type of weapon in a given division. For example, a motorized rifle division does, of course, have a tank battalion and a tank regiment, that is, it has a lot of tanks, but it is not called a tank division because small arms are the predominant weapon. Or a missile brigade also includes other [word illegible], but by virtue of the predominant composition of units, subunits, and weapons it is considered a [missile] brigade.

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Military units include regiments and three classes of ships, can include separate battalions which are not part of regiments, and can even include separate companies which are not part of battalions. A characteristic appurtenance of a military unit is that it is presented colors in the name of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Not all separate units receive this, of course; penal battalions, training squadrons, road and [one or two words illegible] units do not receive this.

These are the main points in a general survey of the Armed Forces.

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