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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

1 October 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Deployment
of Soviet Tactical Air Units from the Zone of
Interior to Forward Areas.

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." This article discusses the planning and procedures for rebasing tactical air units from the interior of the country to a combat theater. The experience of the 1967 DVINA maneuvers is the basis for the article. While the author generally approves of this aspect of the maneuvers, he takes issue with the view that fighter regiments being rebased should cover advancing troops by operating from intermediate airfields. He emphasizes the necessity of further training to prepare air units to change bases and resume combat operations quickly. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.

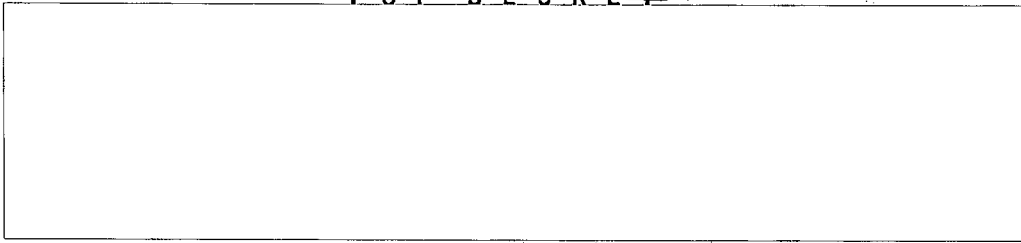
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William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

[Redacted]

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1970

DATE 29 Sept. 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Rebasing of Aviation Large Units and Units of Front Aviation from the Interior of the Country to a Theater of Military Operations (from the experience of the "Dvina" combined arms maneuvers).

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (91) of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The author of this article is Colonel-General of Aviation Ye. Gorbatyuk. The study describes the planning and procedures for rebasing tactical air units from the interior of the country to a combat theater. The experience of the 1967 DVINA maneuvers is the basis for the article. While the author generally approves of this aspect of the maneuvers, he takes issue with the view that fighter regiments being rebased should cover advancing troops by operating from intermediate airfields. He emphasizes the necessity of further training to prepare air units to change bases and resume combat operations quickly. The AN-12 transport and MI-6 helicopter are identified as the aircraft to be used for rebasing air units.

End of Summary

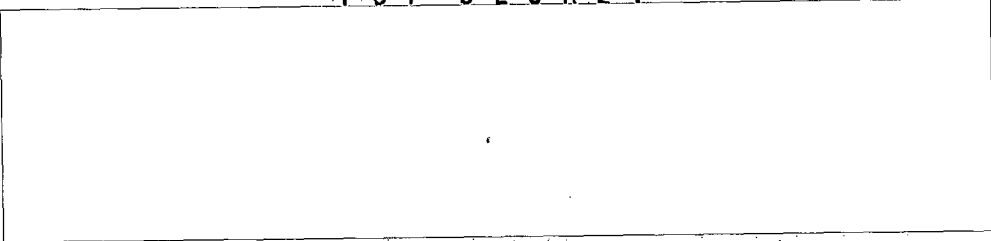
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Comment:

Colonel-General of Aviation Ye. Gorbatyuk was identified as Deputy Commander of Soviet Air Forces for Military-Educational Institutions in December 1971. Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past -- TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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THE REBASING OF AVIATION LARGE UNITS AND UNITS
OF FRONT AVIATION FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE
COUNTRY TO A THEATER OF MILITARY OPERATIONS
(from the experience of the "Dvina" combined
arms maneuvers)

by

Colonel-General of Aviation Ye. Gorbatyuk

There is no doubt about the necessity for regrouping large masses of troops, including the rebasing of front aviation, from the interior of the country to a theater of military operations in modern warfare, irrespective of whether weapons of mass destruction are employed or not. Such a regrouping can take place during a threatening period, if one precedes the outbreak of war, or at the onset of combat actions. There is also a variant in which the regrouping of troops and the rebasing of aviation will begin during a threatening period but reach completion after combat operations have begun.

Whatever the conditions of a situation may be, the large units and units of front aviation, in rebasing into a theater of military operations, will be required to move with speed and secrecy and to maintain full combat readiness and the capability to conduct aggressive combat actions within the shortest period of time after arrival at their new base. During this rebasing activity, the staffs must assure uninterrupted control of the combat actions of large units and units.

For the successful fulfillment of these requirements, a whole series of measures must be taken, above all with



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regard to the daily combat preparation in the large units, staffs, and units of the internal military districts. In order to accomplish this, we are taking the following action:

- calculations have been worked out and are being systematically refined for the rebasing of units by air and rail transport, their own means, and by a combination of methods;
- air regiments make one or two training flights per year to the maximum practical distance, landing at unknown airfields in other military districts and conducting air-technical exercises from them;
- the equipment scheduled to be shipped with the various komendaturas of aviation-technical and advance commands of aviation units is kept packed at all times with the weight indicated on each crate;
- personnel are being routinely trained in loading into rail transport and aircraft (helicopters);
- drivers, particularly vehicle transport specialists, are perfecting their skills in driving great distances at increased speeds, at night, during winter and summer;
- staffs at all levels are working out forms of combat documents, variants of loading procedures, and various instructions, instruction booklets, and recommendations.

However, the experience of many exercises (including the "Dvina" maneuvers), as well as the experience of flights by air regiments to maximum practical distances, with landings at airfields of other military districts and conducting combat actions from them, shows that these measures are still inadequate for ensuring that air units

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are ready to carry out combat actions from unfamiliar airfields. It is also necessary during peacetime to prepare the probable theaters of military operations for the rebasing of units, installations, and staffs of front aviation. We believe that it is advisable first of all to:

- prepare a certain number of airfields, primarily dirt ones, for basing air units coming from the interior of the country to reinforce the air grouping in the theater of military operations;
- create reserves of materiel and equipment at or near these airfields for the support of newly arriving air units;
- have reserve aviation-technical units, communications units, and radiotechnical units to receive and, if necessary, to service temporarily air units rebased into the area until their own support units arrive;
- provide rear installations (depots) with the necessary materiel for use by the newly arriving air army so that it can supply its air large units and units according to plan;
- assure the capability to deploy command posts, with reserve communications lines and centers.

During the "Dvina" maneuvers, we began the direct preparation of large units, units, and staffs for rebasing upon receipt of a directive from the troop commander of the military district, specifying the troops to be involved, the time within which they were to be ready for rebasing, the necessary preparatory measures, the mobile reserves of materiel which had to go forward with the troops, and the area where the maneuvers were to take place. Then, as the beginning of combat actions approached, the staff of the district issued the combat

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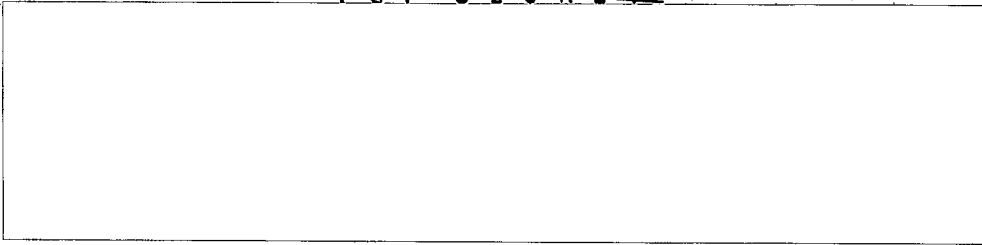
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instructions, setting forth the procedure for rebasing (number of rail echelons and automotive vehicle columns, stations and time schedules for boarding and detraining, and air bases), the routes of advance, the phase lines and the times for crossing them, and the times of arrival at designated points.

On the basis of these documents, the commander of aviation adopted a plan for the rebasing of the aviation of the district. This plan provided for the rebasing of large units, units, and directorates of the aviation of the district to departure areas and airfields, the rebasing to be carried out by a combination of methods (air echelons, air and rail transport, and their own means) using allotted aviation equipment, armament, automotive and special transport, and mobile reserves of materiel and equipment in accordance with prescribed norms. The first echelon consisted of rear units, communications units, advance commands, and operations groups from the staffs of large units, units, and directorates of district aviation (temporarily reorganized by this time into a directorate of the army), and air units of auxiliary aviation. The second echelon consisted of flight units of combat aviation.

Air transport was used for the transfer of the engineer-technical staff of air regiments, operations groups of the staffs of flight large units and units, support units, the directorate of the air army, and the first unit of fire for the air regiments. Rail transport was used for heavy (mainly tracked) equipment and materiel which the organic automotive transport of the units could not handle. Each air regiment and its supporting battalion were allotted two railroad echelons. The air regiment had two AN-12B and two MI-6 aircraft at its disposal for transport (each making two or three trips). An organic mixed air squadron was used to rebase the staff of the air army.

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The plan required that each unit preserve its complete combat readiness while rebasing. This was accomplished by keeping the subunits and units organizationally intact during rebasing, i.e., they proceeded with their organic weapons, transport, and established mobile reserves of materiel and equipment.


Each rail echelon was planned to include sufficient automotive transport to ensure the transfer of the cargo to the nearest station (in case individual sections of the rail line should be put out of service), or delivery of the cargo to its destination.

Rebasing by their own means had to be carried out in two night moves, which, for a total distance of 800 to 1000 kilometers, required an average speed of thirty to thirty-five kilometers per hour by the automotive columns.

The secrecy of the movement of the air echelons was preserved by flying at low altitudes, with full radio silence and outside the zone of radar detection from the contiguous sides. The actual flight was planned for nighttime and dusk, in small groups and by single aircraft. Two hours after rebasing to new fields, the air units had to be ready for combat.

During the time that the combat readiness of troops was being heightened and completed, troop control was effected from the command post and the alternate command post of district aviation; units transported by rail were controlled via organs of the military transportation service of the military districts; troops proceeding by their own means were controlled via message centers organized by the staff of the military district along the routes of advance; and air echelons were controlled from command posts of district aviation and of the air army to whose territory the air units were being rebased, and also from intermediate control points. The lines of control transfer of air echelons were determined in advance.

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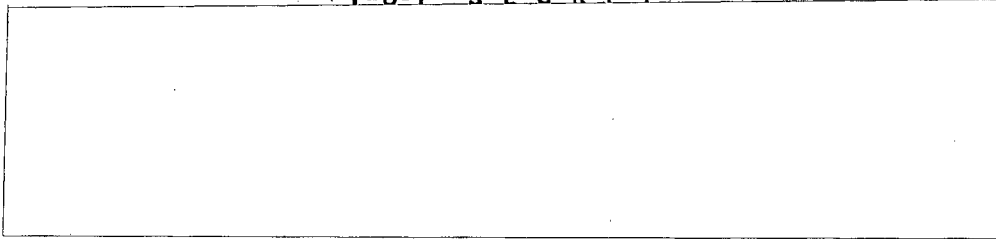


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On the basis of the adopted plan, the staff worked out a plan for rebasing, which was the basic planning document. This plan determined whence and where each unit should be rebased. And they also established the number of echelons, the time limits within which each echelon must begin and complete its transfer, as well as the personnel and aviation and special equipment needed; the method for rebasing echelons (air, automotive vehicle, or rail), and the amount and type of transport equipment assigned for each echelon. The working out of such a plan made it possible to establish a precise procedure for rebasing units in echelons, to determine the amount of transport means needed, and to ensure reliable control during rebasing.

Proceeding from the adopted plan and the plan for rebasing, the staff also worked out instructions on rebasing, with excerpts from the plan, for all units. These instructions set forth the composition, procedure, and destination of rebasing for each large unit (unit) and under whose authority each one would be; and they established the flight routes for the air echelons, as well as their altitude, battle formation, and alternate airfields. Regarding rail transport, the instructions indicated the stations, the rate and time of boarding, and the numbers and composition of the echelons. For automotive columns, they indicated the route, the line of departure, phase lines and the time they were to be crossed, and the area for daytime rest and refueling and the time when this area was to be reached.

The instructions for rebasing indicated when air units were to be ready for flight; the time frames within which support functions were to begin at the new airfields; the measures to be taken for the preparation of the rebasing and for maintaining constant combat readiness during rebasing; the norms for mobile reserves of materiel to be taken by units; provisions for power enroute; communications, radio and lighting support while in flight; and other specific points.

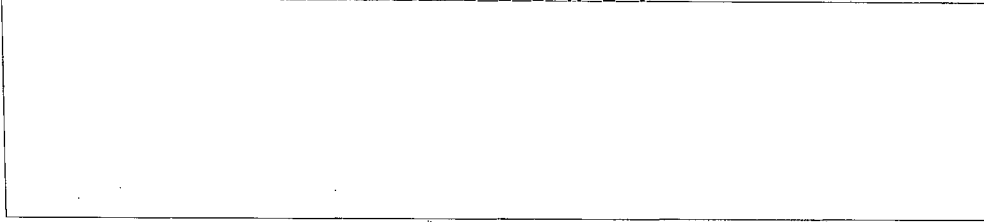


A special feature in the planning for the rebasing of ground echelons of support units was that we divided them into three parts: first, the komendaturas of the separate airfield technical maintenance battalions of the air regiment the odsrtg, [possibly separate battalions of medium repair technical servicing], and UASU [possibly Directorate of Special Automotive Equipment], with the required special automotive transport and supplies of materiel and equipment for receiving and supporting air units following by their own means; second, heavy equipment and certain types of materiel transported by rail; and third, the forces and means of the support units which remained behind to service air regiments and then followed by their own means after the departure of the aircraft from their permanent bases or alternate airfields.

The experience of the rebasing exercise showed that, contrary to existing views, it is more advisable to rebase the komendaturas of support units (or the first echelons of these units) together with the greater part of the forces and means in order to be capable of long-term support of air regiments at their new fields. The forces and equipment left behind at the former fields should include only what is necessary for temporary support and dispatch of the air regiments.

Our experience showed that the organization and completion of moves by units using their own means was particularly difficult. First, large masses of troops must be advanced simultaneously over a limited number of roads (especially complicated in winter conditions). Second, considerable difficulties arise in organizing daytime rest places in winter, where personnel can warm up and have a hot meal while vehicles are serviced and refueled. Third, the necessity for receiving and supporting aviation units at their new fields one to two days before the arrival of ground troops, and this applies particularly to receiving and servicing fighter aviation regiments which must be ready to provide cover for concentrated groupings,





requires that the komendaturas of support units be moved out ahead of the main forces of ground troops (this will most often be immediately following the departure of covering troops, if there are any, or after the traffic support detachments).

These problems can only be solved by coordination with the front operations directorate which plans the regrouping of troops, and this is what we undertook to accomplish.

Our maneuvers showed the growing capabilities of automotive columns of aviation-technical units, communications units, and radiotechnical units to complete a move. In rebasing, a move of about a thousand kilometers was actually made in two nights at an average speed of thirty-five kilometers per hour. Therefore, the combat instructions provided for splitting the automotive columns of the units into echelons of not more than thirty to forty similar vehicles each, with the echelons five to ten kilometers apart. This assured a higher rate of speed for the march, better mobility and control, and less vulnerability to air strikes, including nuclear strikes.

We should dwell particularly on the time limits and procedure for rebasing the flying echelons of air regiments of combat aviation, and their control points.

The rebasing of the staff of an air army with its support units (communications regiment and komendaturas for command support) was done in two echelons using air transport and their own means. In the first echelon, support units, moving out with their own means, had the task of setting up a complete control post for the air army within two full days of their arrival in the designated area. Part of the command staff of the air army was then transported to this prepared post by air and immediately assumed command of rebasing the large units and units and of their preparation for combat operations. The remainder of the air army command staff (proceeded by



its own means together with the staff of the front, ready to fulfill its control functions during the rebasing.

Such planning and execution of rebasing of the air army staff made continuous control possible in large units and units, assured close coordination with the staff of the front, and created the capability of constant readiness to fulfill combat tasks in case of an abrupt change in the situation.

The rebasing plan also called for the completion of the flight by the echelons of air regiments of combat aviation three days before the beginning of actual combat actions, but the weather caused substantial alterations to be made in the plan. Thus, because of weather conditions, the fighter-bomber aviation regiment was able to rebase to its departure airfield only one day before the beginning of combat operations. In an even more complicated situation, one of the fighter aviation regiments was placed on combat alert just before actual combat actions were to begin and was rebased to a new airfield four hundred kilometers away; but, within twenty hours of being put on alert status, it had already fulfilled missions to protect troops from air strikes, to support the actions of other arms of aviation, and to mount strikes against enemy ground installations.

These examples show that air units and support units have high maneuverability and are capable of becoming completely combat ready within short time limits, of covering great distances, and of conducting aggressive combat actions in a complex air and ground situation immediately upon arriving in the area of combat actions.

In rebasing to departure airfields, air regiments of combat aviation flew there directly without using intermediate airfields to conduct temporary combat actions, thus shortening the direct flight time and also increasing the security of the move. This, in turn, enabled the units to prepare more rapidly for fulfilling

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combat tasks, particularly the task of fighter aviation regiments to protect troops and rear area installations from air strikes. The latter is very important in assuring the advance of groupings of ground forces into the theater of military operations.

Our experience has convinced us that it is best to rebase fighter aviation regiments directly to their departure airfields in the theater of military operations, with intermediate landings only for refueling. We cannot completely agree with the presently existing opinion on the necessity of having fighter aviation regiments cover advancing troops along their route of march from intermediate airfields.

The following points confirm the expediency of the rebasing procedure used in our maneuvers.

First, strikes against advancing troops within the interior of the country are possible only when the troops are passing major road junctions or large populated points, and then only by forces of strategic aviation or, in a nuclear period, by missiles. As a rule, however, these areas and locations are reliably covered by the forces and means of the Air Defense Troops of the Country. Thus, direct action against troop columns at any appreciable depth in the interior is scarcely feasible. Second, in order for regiments of fighter aviation which are rebasing from the interior to conduct combat operations from intermediate airfields to cover advancing groupings of ground forces, the following will be required: the timely transfer to these airfields of the komendaturas of support units; the presence of an engineer-technical staff and means for the deployment of control posts (including those for guiding fighters to air targets); reserves of materiel, primarily all munitions; equipment for the preparation of missiles; and a certain amount of repair facilities. All of this would inevitably lead to a situation in which we would be unable to mount timely support for combat flights by air regiments from

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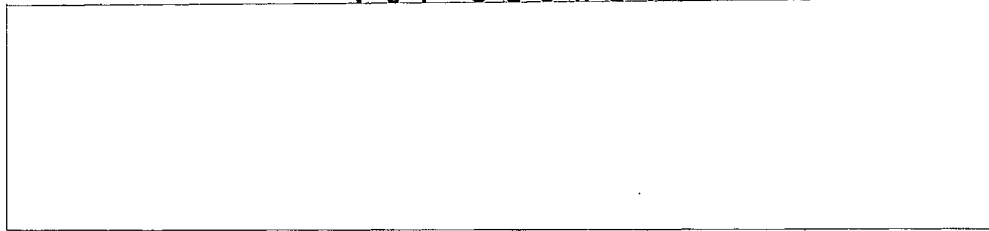
their new bases, where there would be a greater need for their combat actions.

As the groupings of ground forces approach the national border or the front line, the enemy capabilities for direct action against troop columns advancing into the troop concentration areas will rise sharply, particularly for tactical aviation, of which up to thirty to forty percent can be used to isolate the zone of combat actions. Protecting these troops in the FEBA requires considerable effort by air defense means, which can be achieved by rebasing fighter aircraft of the air army into the area. Therefore, it is more expedient to cover advancing groupings of ground troops by using rebased fighter aircraft directly from their assigned operational airfields in the areas of combat operations rather than from intermediate airfields.

Rebasing must be completed no more than one day before the arrival of the groupings of ground forces in the areas of concentration; this will ensure that they can be covered on the last halt (i.e., up to three hundred kilometers from the national border), after the halt, and in the concentration areas. This kind of rebasing also assures that flight personnel and flight equipment are prepared for aggressive combat actions.

It must be noted that such capabilities are attained only if the komendaturas of support units arrive at the new airfields promptly. As shown by our experience, the komendaturas of aviation-technical units must be sent forward not less than one and one-half to two days before the departure of the main forces of the grouping of ground forces, i.e., immediately after the covering troops or the march security detachments; when possible, part of the forces and means should be rebased by air transport.

The conduct of combat actions from intermediate airfields is not, of course, entirely ruled out. It is possible if the fighter regiments are supported by rear



and communications units based at these fields.

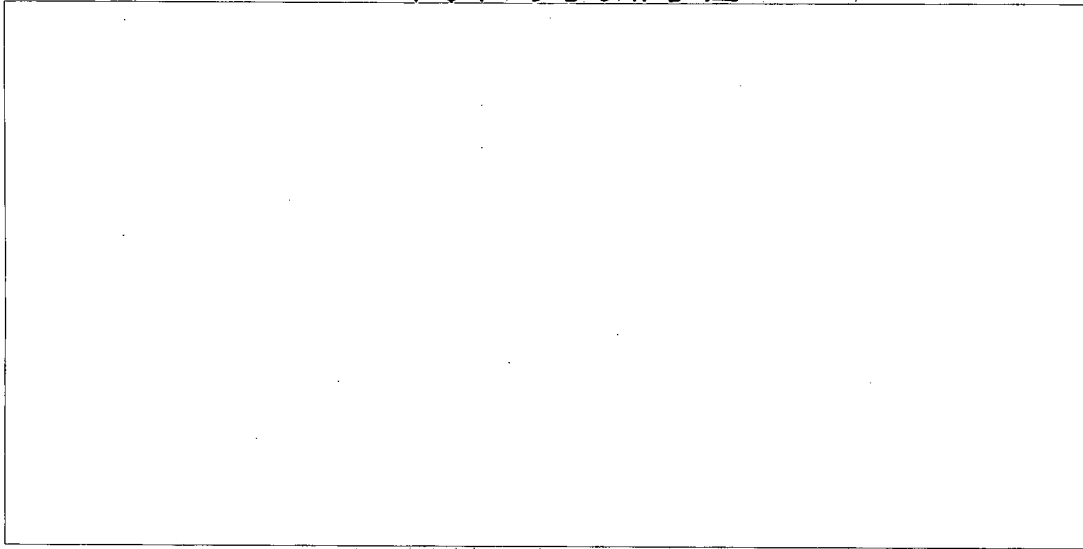
The actual rebasing during the "Dvina" maneuvers also revealed individual weak points in the preparation of our large units, units, and staffs for fulfilling this most important task. The principal weaknesses are great losses of time in loading and, especially, unloading of bulky equipment and certain types of materiel and equipment; lack of skill of some commanders in leading automotive columns over large distances, especially under winter conditions; absence of effective modern snow-clearing equipment in airfield engineer units and communications units; low maneuverability of heavy tracked equipment because of an insufficient number of trailers in the units; insufficient training of personnel in bivouacking in deep snow and low temperatures; and the absence of standard winter camouflage equipment in the units.

In our opinion, the most practical way of eliminating these shortcomings is the regular (at least twice a year, both winter and summer) training of flight regiments, rear units, communications units, and radiotechnical units in rebasing to unoccupied and unequipped airfields, from which they then conduct tactical flight, and airfield-rear service exercises.

The practical experience of rebasing front aviation during the "Dvina" combined-arms maneuvers confirmed that it has high maneuverability and the capability to relocate over long distances within short time limits, together with its support units, qualities which are vitally necessary under conditions of nuclear as well as non-nuclear warfare.



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