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Front Aviation in Army Operations  
and a Combined-Arms Battle

by

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The practical value of the textbook Front Aviation in Army Operations and a Combined-Arms Battle,\* drafted by a team of authors of the Air Forces Department of the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze consists in the fact that it sets forth briefly information about the aviation equipment in service in front aviation, the principles of combat actions of the aviation, its purpose, the combat characteristics and capabilities of each type of aviation, the tasks and methods of accomplishing them, and all the matters of organizing and conducting the combat actions of the front aviation in army operations and in a battle.

In examining the principles of combat actions, the authors rightly emphasize that the front aviation is intended for joint actions with the ground forces. This is very important, considering that, in some articles, assertions are sometimes encountered that the front aviation must support the actions of the ground forces or reinforce and strengthen their fire.

By joint actions are understood actions of the troops of the front and the aviation, coordinated as to time, place, and targets, and directed toward the achievement of the final objective of the operation in a short time and with the fewest losses. The actions of the front aviation have great importance for the success of the operation, being the most effective means of hitting small-size and moving targets, which constitute more than half of all existing targets in the zone of an army. Besides that, the aviation is capable of delivering strikes against targets in the tactical and operational depth of the enemy, switching its efforts from one axis to another, conducting constant aerial observation of enemy actions, observing sizeable areas in his depth and obtaining reliable data about him in a short time.

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\* Front Aviation in Army Operations and a Combined-Arms Battle. Textbook approved by the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Forces. M. V. Frunze Military Academy publication, 1964. 251 pp. 50X1-HUM





In the textbook, the tasks of the front aviation in army operations are formulated and given a brief definition. These include: support of troops, cover of troops and rear installations against air strikes, conduct of aerial reconnaissance, and landing of tactical airborne landing forces.

In revealing the essence of air support, the authors indicate that its main content is the destruction of the means of nuclear attack and radiotechnical means, and the neutralization of enemy troops in the tactical and immediate operational depth. The depth of air support is determined by the tactical operating radius of pairs and flights of fighter-bombers at low altitudes and amounts to 150 to 200 kilometers.

The task of cover of troops and rear installations with the forces of the fighter aviation ought, in our opinion, to have been examined not on an army but on a front scale. The fact is that fighters must accomplish this task by intercepting and destroying air targets on the distant approaches to the zone of actions of the entire front. This is caused by the following circumstances.

First of all, by the striving of the probable enemy to ever more widely develop and employ from delivery aircraft air-to-surface missiles, whose launching against targets can be carried out from far beyond the range of the front surface-to-air missiles. Thus, the Hound Dog missile employed by B-52 aircraft can be launched at low altitudes from a distance of 500 kilometers from the target, and at high altitudes from a distance of 1,200 kilometers.

Secondly, delivery aircraft with nuclear bombs or missiles, after being hit by surface-to-air missiles, fall into the disposition of the troops on the ground, which is extremely disadvantageous. Calculations and actual flights carried out to intercept air targets have shown that, from an airborne alert zone located near the front line, given a target flight speed of 1,000 to 1,500 kilometers per hour and existing detection radars, the line of commitment to action of fighters may be 70 to 90 kilometers forward of the zone. This ensures intercepting and destroying high-speed air targets and delivery aircraft carrying nuclear bombs and missiles before their approach to our troops.

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Thirdly, the command of the US Air Force intends to have in a field army over 1,000 reconnaissance, transport, and auxiliary aircraft and helicopters. The intensity of flights of these forces in the 200 to 250 kilometers of the zone beyond the forward edge will be exceptionally high. Only fighter aviation is capable of penetrating this zone and intercepting





and destroying the transport and auxiliary aircraft and helicopters. This is why the task of covering the troops of the army with fighters must be accomplished for the entire front and according to its plan.

Naturally, for a tank army operating apart from the remaining forces of the front, or a combined-arms army operating on a separate axis, part of the forces of the fighter aviation will be allocated for purposes of their immediate cover against air strikes.

In speaking of the principles of the combat employment of aviation, the authors examine in detail its massed employment, centralized control, cooperation with the ground forces, continuity and surprise of actions. This is right. But the constant combat readiness of the aviation to fulfil combat tasks and its employment primarily to hit mobile and small-size objects (targets) on the ground have great importance now. It has been established by research that a pair of SU-7B aircraft is capable, with cannon fire and rockets (54 rockets on one aircraft), of knocking out of action or destroying a launcher (Honest John, Lacrosse, Mace) or a gun of the atomic artillery, a radiotechnical station, and other similar small-size ground targets.

The actions of the front aviation when fulfilling combat tasks by subunits, flights, pairs, and single crews should be considered new. The current speeds of the new types of aircraft, the increased power of the weapons employed by them, and the high effectiveness of the enemy means of air defense exclude, in present-day conditions, flying to targets of actions and attacking them in large aircraft groups as was done in the last war. Nowadays, successful fulfilment of the combat tasks of the front aviation can be achieved primarily by the skilful actions of small groups or even single aircraft with their surprise appearance at extremely low (50 to 100 meters) altitudes.

Deserving of attention are the methods recommended by the authors for determining target coordinates by aerial photographs, by use of the tactical bombing system, by use of television equipment, and by actual observation. In this matter, it is stressed that, to ensure the necessary accuracy -- 150 meters for targets situated up to 100 kilometers, and 200 meters for targets situated beyond 100 kilometers -- the first two methods will find most application: aerial photographs and use of the tactical bombing system. The latter method is extremely effective because the time spent on determining the target coordinates is not great -- 12 to 20<sub>50X1-HUM</sub> minutes.





The authors consider that, for air support of the armies, up to 60 to 70 percent of all the resources of the fighter-bombers and part of the forces of the bombers and cruise missiles can be allocated. The number of nuclear bombs and missiles with nuclear warheads may constitute up to 20 to 25 percent of the whole quantity of nuclear warheads allocated for an army operation. Such an allocation of flight resources and nuclear warheads is possible. However, it can hardly be considered correct that, besides the fighter-bomber aviation, part of the bombers will be allocated for support of the armies.

The fact is that the bomber aviation complement of the air army is usually limited (not more than one division). At the same time, it is faced with two important tasks to be accomplished for the entire front: combat with the missile/nuclear means and operational reserves located beyond the range of the fighter-bombers and the army missile means. Bombers are more advantageously used to accomplish these tasks in cooperation with the rocket troops of the front.

Set forth in sufficient detail in the textbook are the matters of organizing cooperation of the front aviation with the ground forces. Attention is drawn to two important principles.

First, as to the role of the operations group of the air army. The experience of many exercises, especially the exercise conducted in July 1964 in the Moscow Military District with the participation of the professors and instructors of four military academies, shows that the operations group is the most rational connecting link between the combined-arms (tank) army and the air army. The constant presence of the operations group at the command post of the combined-arms (tank) army and the availability of radio communications with the command post of the air army and the aviation in the air, especially the fighter-bomber aviation, ensures its continuous cooperation with the advancing troops. Under these conditions, the chief of the operations group knows all the decisions of the commander of the combined-arms (tank) army, promptly refines the tasks of the aviation with him and transmits them to those who are to carry them out, informs the staff of the army about the actions of the air army, and continually reports to the commander of the air army about all the events taking place in the offensive (defensive) zone of this army. 50X1-HUM

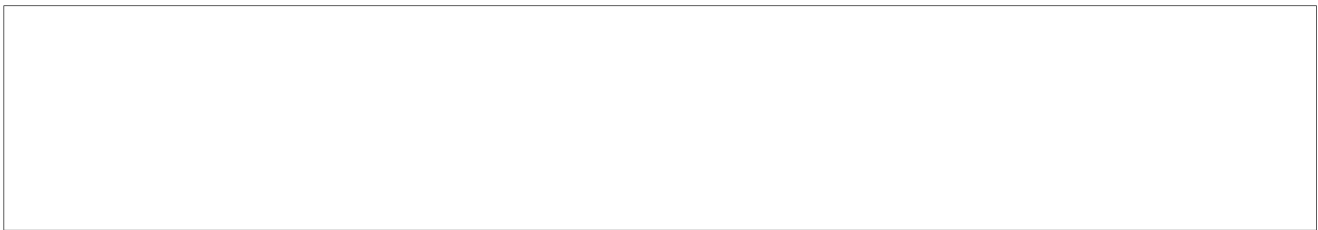
Second, in order to maintain continuous cooperation of aviation with troops, timely airfield maneuvering of the air units is important. Close basing makes it possible for aviation to appear quickly when requested and to operate to a great depth. Therefore, the textbook quite rightly





emphasizes the necessity of seizing enemy airfields with ground forces -- sometimes even with specially allocated detachments, and the rendering of all-round assistance to air units in mine clearing and restoration of captured airfields.

One cannot, however, agree with the authors' assertion that cooperation of the aviation with the troops on the ground is provided by allocating them air units (air large units, pp. 196-200). Under present-day conditions, for support of combined-arms (tank) armies there are allocated not air units, much less air large units, but flight resources in terms of aircraft sorties or squadron sorties. Therefore it would be more correct to speak of air units fulfilling the task of support of the troops.



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