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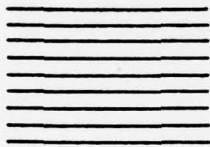


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**STUDENT RESEARCH REPORT**

LTC. RAYMOND E. ZICKEL  
SOVIET COMBAT INTELLIGENCE  
AND RECONNAISSANCE

-1973-

**GARMISCH, GERMANY**

**APO NEW YORK 09053**

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FOREWORD

This research project represents fulfillment of a student requirement for successful completion of Phase III Training of the Department of the Army's Foreign Area Specialty Training Program (Russian).

Only unclassified sources are used in producing the research paper. The opinions, value judgments and conclusions expressed are those of the author and in no way reflect official policy of the United States Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army or the U.S. Army Russian Institute.

Interested readers are invited to send their comments and critique to the Commander, U.S. Army Russian Institute.

  
WILLIAM F. DUNKELBERGER  
LTC, PI  
Commander

SUMMARY

This essay attempts to describe and to a lesser extent, to analyze, combat intelligence and reconnaissance in Soviet ground forces at the division and smaller unit level.

It is based on Russian language sources openly published in the recent past in the Soviet Union. The essay includes descriptions of the principles of combat intelligence; basic collection methods, both tactical and technical; and employment patterns of reconnaissance units. The essay concludes with a brief, subjective evaluation of Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research essay is to describe, and to a lesser extent to analyze and evaluate, certain of the more fundamental aspects of combat intelligence and reconnaissance applicable to Soviet ground forces at the division and smaller unit level.

The research, which resulted in the descriptive portions of this essay, was conducted by utilizing available Russian language sources published from 1965 to 1972 in the Soviet Union. Obviously, information concerning Soviet military intelligence and reconnaissance which is available in open, authoritative publications, is neither abundant nor complete. However, a few books on Soviet tactics and articles on various facets of combat intelligence operations are openly published by the Ministry of Defense of the USSR to inform and guide officers and sergeants of the Soviet Army. There are frequent references, for instance, to the principles that are regarded as fundamental to Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance. The basic and less sensitive methods of reconnaissance are also described, to a limited extent, by Soviet military writers. Some information is also available on the ways that reconnaissance units can be employed during the various phases of battle. Such source materials have provided sufficient facts for a limited but hopefully useful, survey of the subject.

Unfortunately, information pertaining to several important areas of interest could not be found and hence, definite gaps will be apparent in this essay. Particularly distracting was the absence of any data on the organization and composition of the reconnaissance group which is organic to the Soviet division. Source materials were also unavailable on prisoner of war interrogation, counter-reconnaissance, and on the employment of agents as collectors of information.

The analytical and evaluative portions of this essay were based in a large measure on the author's own training and

assignments in the U.S. Army, initially as an Infantry officer and subsequently as a military intelligence officer. The subjectivity and limitations of the author's personal experience have hopefully been modified by frequent referrals to the U.S. Army Field Manual on Combat Intelligence.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to explain that in the Russian language, the word "razvedka" can be interpreted as meaning either "reconnaissance" or "intelligence." However, reconnaissance, according to U.S. Army usage,

is a mission undertaken to obtain information, by visual observation or other detection methods, about the activities and resources of an enemy or potential enemy; or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area.

On the other hand, combat intelligence is defined as "that knowledge of the enemy, weather and geographical features required by a commander in the planning and conduct of tactical operations."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, for purposes of this essay, "razvodka" was normally translated as "reconnaissance," or "combat intelligence operations" for variety's sake. The adjectival form of "razvedka" was usually translated as "intelligence." But on a number of occasions it appeared advisable to conclude that "razvodka" could best be interpreted as meaning both "reconnaissance" and "intelligence."

## II. THE CONTEMPORARY REQUIREMENTS FOR INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE

In the Soviet Armed Forces, the term military reconnaissance is officially defined as

the collection of intelligence information about the location, disposition, composition, number, armament, combat preparedness, character of activities and intentions of the enemy in the interests of combat.<sup>3</sup>

As described in a Soviet manual on tactics, the term reconnaissance also includes measures taken to obtain information not only about the enemy's disposition and intentions, but also about the terrain, weather and area of impending operations. Particular emphasis is given to the collection of information on the enemy's nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction.<sup>4</sup>

Reconnaissance is also officially described as the most important kind of support provided to the combat operating forces. For commanders at all levels, the organization of reconnaissance and intelligence is a major responsibility which involves not only the commander and his staff but combat troops and special units as well.

Information about the enemy, his disposition and intentions, about the terrain and weather, and about the area of impending operations is, according to Soviet tactical doctrine, necessary for the organization and successful conduct of combat operations. For only with such intelligence information can a commander make a responsible decision with regard to the combat situation, or foresee the character of forthcoming operations and the probable changes during the course of battle. To support its assertion of the necessity for intelligence information, Soviet tactical doctrine frequently cites the experience of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War (The Second World War). That experience demonstrated that the successful accomplishment of assigned missions was possible, only if the combat forces had at their disposal reliable, relatively complete, and timely intelligence.

Where reconnaissance and Intelligence were given proper attention, according to Soviet authorities during the Second World War operations were accompanied by success; on the other hand poorly organized reconnaissance often became the reason for defeat.<sup>5</sup> Frequent references by Soviet military writers to the "chronicles" of the Second World War are understandable for that record represents the most recent, large-scale combat experience available to them.

Soviet tactical doctrine acknowledges that to obtain precise Intelligence Information about the enemy is indeed a complicated matter. For the enemy will not only provide security for his own forces but will attempt to neutralize the collection efforts of his opponent's reconnaissance and Intelligence resources. In addition, the enemy will strive to mislead his opponent by deceptive operations, by disseminating false information, and by disguising his real location and activities. In order not to be misled by the enemy, Soviet commanders are advised that it is necessary to conduct reconnaissance by a variety of means which would allow not only the collection of Intelligence Information but would also help to assure its reliability. Therefore, the reconnaissance group (RG), which is organic to all types of Soviet divisions, and the personnel and resources of combat units must be employed in combination with elements of the air forces, radio - technical units, and artillery, engineer, chemical/ radiation reconnaissance units and even naval units, when appropriate. Soviet military writers acknowledge that all of this complicates the organization and conduct of reconnaissance and makes much higher demands on commanders than in the years of the Second World War.

Coordination of the efforts of the various Intelligence and reconnaissance resources and the timely transmission of Important Information to Interested commanders and staffs is a responsibility of senior Soviet commanders. In their turn subordinates are required to report, without delay, the results of any contact with the enemy and to assure their superiors that

they are collecting Intelligence Information by all means available to them. It is interesting to note that neither the responsibilities of the deputy chief of staff for intelligence nor the functions of the Intelligence staff is specifically described in available source materials.

When new information is received, Soviet commanders are admonished to precisely report it to the senior commanders and to briefly but clearly report it to subordinates. Currently, no officer regardless of his abilities as a commander can effectively employ his troops and resources if he does not receive timely and comprehensive information about the disposition of the enemy.<sup>6</sup> The collection, processing and evaluation of intelligence information is a time and labor consuming process. It demands of the commander and his staff the highest erudition, personal knowledge of likely enemies, and a thorough understanding of contemporary warfare.<sup>7</sup>

According to at least one Soviet military authority, the significance of intelligence and the role of reconnaissance have grown considerably since the Second World War. In modern combat operations, both sides will be highly dynamic, fast moving and will cover a very extensive area. The situation on the battlefield can change rapidly and critically, particularly if weapons of mass destruction are used. Small units will often be required to accomplish their missions in a short amount of time while separated from the main forces.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, commanders even of small units will often need reliable intelligence information and will become more directly concerned with the intelligence process. For this reason also, the quantity and scope of tasks which intelligence and reconnaissance must accomplish has grown considerably since the Second World War. However, the time available for organizing intelligence and reconnaissance activities, and for gathering and processing information, has been sharply curtailed. Therefore, according to Soviet military authorities, modern warfare demands a well organized, highly skilled intelligence and reconnaissance effort.

### III. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE

Basic principles have been established to guide Soviet military commanders, staffs and combat troops in the conduct of combat intelligence and reconnaissance operations. These principles are: continuity, aggressiveness, purposefulness, timeliness, reliability and accuracy.<sup>9</sup> It is instructive to examine briefly these guiding principles in order to learn what Soviet tacticians consider important in the intelligence process. It is also interesting to note that whole articles have been devoted to explaining these principles to Soviet soldiers and officers.

Continuity (nepreryvnost') of intelligence operations emphasizes the necessity for all commanders and units to conduct reconnaissance continuously in all types of combat operations, day and night, regardless of the terrain, season or weather conditions. To insure the continuous flow of intelligence information it is necessary to organize and conduct reconnaissance continuously. For instance, it is important, once contact is made with the enemy, not to lose contact and not to interrupt observation of known enemy deployments and likely enemy targets. For the timely resolution of difficult tasks, especially those which arise suddenly during the course of battle, commanders may be required to rely on information which is already at hand or is immediately obtainable. Therefore, frequently only those reconnaissance units, or combat units detailed for intelligence missions, which are already deployed can accomplish the mission. Such units must always be prepared to fulfill missions regardless of the complexities of the situation. How to accomplish a particular task can, of course, only be successfully worked out by soldiers, sergeants and officers who have been thoroughly trained in reconnaissance. But the conduct of reconnaissance must continue without interruption in order to obtain needed intelligence information.

Aggressiveness (aktivnost') of the reconnaissance effort can be expressed as the striving of commanders and staffs to obtain -

at any cost - necessary Intelligence Information. This principle suggests that commanders are encouraged to exercise initiative and imagination in organizing intelligence operations and resourcefulness in employing their reconnaissance resources. The term aggressiveness can also be seen in the activity and determination of units designated for the collection of intelligence information. Aggressiveness in intelligence is achieved by sudden, bold and decisive actions of reconnaissance units and by the skillful application of various resources and methods for the collection of intelligence information. While displaying initiative and aggressiveness, Soviet commanders and reconnaissance scouts as well are warned that they must act wisely so as to assist in the accomplishment of the mission and not to act in any way that would conflict with the orders of their superiors.

Purposefulness (tselestremnost') of intelligence means that the commander is responsible for concentrating the primary reconnaissance and intelligence efforts on those vital areas which will insure the successful accomplishment of missions assigned to his unit. The development of purposefulness requires several stages. First, the objectives of the intelligence effort must be understood and the commander must clearly define the tasks of the collection effort. Second, the most likely course of the developing battle must be foreseen by the commander. Third, specific tasks must be distributed expeditiously among the various collection resources in conformity with their capabilities and limitations. Purposefulness of intelligence operations by no means implies that the commander or his reconnaissance units should be inflexible. On the contrary, much depends on their ability to react promptly to changing situations and to quickly transfer their efforts to another objective which is of greater interest.

Timeliness (svoevremennost') of intelligence is one of the most basic requirements confronting everyone involved in the intelligence process. In modern warfare, the factor of time will

have even greater significance than it had in previous wars. Intelligence information which is not promptly reported, although it may be important, loses a large measure of its value. Timeliness, in essence, consists of collecting intelligence information sufficiently ahead of time to insure both the possibility of foreseeing the character of the enemy's actions, and sufficient time to take necessary measures. Timeliness of intelligence is inconceivable unless the need for specific intelligence information is foreseen by commanders and staffs organizing prospective combat operations.

Reliability (dostovernost') of intelligence means that the information furnished to the user corresponds to reality; that it is authentic and trustworthy. Reliability is achieved by the compound employment of various collection methods and by the careful comparison of the information received from these different sources. It may require the formulation of additional tasks for reconnaissance units to obtain more precise information or to resolve apparent discrepancies.

Accuracy (tochnost') of intelligence information has special significance in the contemporary era when weapons of mass destruction could be employed. For instance, reconnaissance efforts must be able to determine the exact position on the ground of such small targets as enemy missile launchers and nuclear ammunition depots. The map coordinates of such targets must be precisely ascertained and correctly reported to the responsible commander. The effectiveness of his actions against those targets depends entirely on the accuracy of the intelligence used when planning the operation. The principle of accuracy is applicable not only to the collection of information but to the entire intelligence process and therefore involves staffs as well as reconnaissance personnel.

The principles of Soviet military intelligence operations are, as could be expected, generally similar to those which guide the U.S. Army combat forces. It is interesting to note, however, that Soviet tactical doctrine appears to stress the continuity and

aggressiveness of the reconnaissance effort while these principles are not included in the guidance furnished to the U.S. Army. In addition, Soviet Intelligence principles do not mention the need for safeguarding classified information. However, it appears quite likely that that requirement is well-covered in non-tactical indoctrination of personnel and repetition is considered unnecessary. In addition, security measures and instructions for their implementation would probably fall within the purview of the Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GRU) and therefore would not be included in guidance of a tactical nature.

#### IV. METHODS OF COLLECTING INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION

The basic methods employed by Soviet ground forces to collect intelligence information can be divided, for the sake of analysis and description in this paper into two somewhat overlapping categories: technical methods which require rather sophisticated equipment, and methods employed by military reconnaissance units or tactical units specifically designated for the collection of intelligence information.

The primary technical means of collecting data for the Soviet ground forces are radio intercept, radio direction finding, photography, heat sensing and radar.<sup>10</sup> At the present stage of development of warfare, wide use is made of radio intercept (radioperekhvat) as a technique for obtaining needed intelligence information about the enemy forces and his intentions. Radio intercept is carried out for Soviet forces by specially designated radio stations and receivers which operate by receiving signals on the wave length of the radio transmitters of the enemy. By employing techniques of radio intercept it is possible not only to determine the content of the message transmitted by the enemy station but to gradually reveal the scheme of his entire radio net and to gather technical data on his radio stations. Obviously such information could be very valuable but by itself it is not sufficient.

In order to determine the disposition and location of the enemy, it is necessary to establish the exact location on the ground of his radio transmitting stations. For this, at the same time the enemy's radio messages are being broadcast and intercepted, special radio direction finding (DF) equipment is used by radio reconnaissance units. Radio direction finding (radiopelengatsiia) is carried out by designated stations at various locations which can determine the direction of an operating radio station by intersection. The aim, of course, is to obtain the station's location on the ground and consequently, to reveal the area of the deployed headquarters which furnishes the messages transmitted by the radio station.

Radio Intercept in combination with DF can reveal the composition, disposition, location and intentions of the enemy. However, while the intelligence information collected by radio reconnaissance is being evaluated it is mandatory to take into consideration the possibility of disinformation and deceptive broadcasts by the enemy. Therefore "all information received by radio reconnaissance units is always compared with data collected by other methods."<sup>11</sup>

Photography, as a method of collecting intelligence information, can be divided into airborne and ground photography. Airborne photography is the basic type of airborne reconnaissance and is conducted with specially equipped airplanes by all branches of combat aviation. It permits a commander, in a relatively short span of time, to determine the exact location and deployment of enemy forces, whether they are in position or moving, and to learn the disposition of the enemy's major weapons, tanks and vehicles, and other suitable targets.

Ground photography is normally conducted by employing the resources of artillery and engineer units to obtain photographs of specific objects, for example a bridge, for later detailed examination. Sometimes, to obtain photographs of important targets or objective areas located deep within the enemy's positions, it is advantageous to draw on reconnaissance units to accomplish the mission. The reconnaissance group, organic to all types of Soviet divisions, has suitable photographic equipment for such missions and can be dispatched into the rear areas of the enemy.

However, both ground and airborne photography, as methods of reconnaissance are not devoid of substantial drawbacks. The lens of the camera, irrespective of where it is located, cannot unflinchingly establish the presence of an enemy deployed in a forest, in populated areas, or in well-concealed positions. For this reason one cannot always be sure that the enemy is not present merely because he is not visible in the photograph. Photography is also limited owing to the fact that it is not

always possible to distinguish false objects from real ones. In addition, photography cannot establish unit identities nor reveal his intentions.

Ground photography has very limited applicability in modern warfare for it is able to capture on film only objects which are directly visible and all that is behind natural or man made obstructions cannot be photographed. Perhaps an even more important deficiency of ground photography is its relatively insignificant range. For, in the final analysis, photography from the ground of objects which are deep within the enemy's rear is not always possible even by reconnaissance units. Airborne photography, although it possesses immeasurably greater possibilities than ground photography, is also impossible under a variety of circumstances. Well organized enemy air defense cannot only hamper reconnaissance flights but can virtually deny flights over specific areas. Airborne photography is also hindered by conditions of poor visibility.

The serious drawbacks inherent in photography as a method of collecting needed information about the enemy is fully appreciated by Soviet military tacticians.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, commanders are advised not to rely on employing photography as a technique of reconnaissance in all situations, for there are many instances when it is plainly not applicable. Soviet commanders are also cautioned against immediately accepting photographic information as being valid even if on first impression it appears quite reliable. All data obtained from photographic reconnaissance must be compared with information collected by other means before final evaluation.

Heat finding devices (teplotelongatornye apparatury) are another means of technical reconnaissance available to the Soviet ground forces. Heat finding devices are employed to locate objects which are emitting radiant energy (infrared rays) and to determine the direction and the distance from the device to the object. These devices operate by registering the difference in the heat emanating from an object and its background.<sup>13</sup> Heat finders are used at night to determine the ground location of

tanks, trucks, and other self-propelled vehicles while their motors are operating.

Radar (radiolokatsiya) as a means of collecting intelligence information is used to reveal the exact location of firing positions of artillery and rocket launchers of the enemy and also to determine the flight trajectory of shells and rockets. Radar is also used to reveal the movements of tanks, self-propelled guns and other vehicles.

Radar, radio intercept, photography and other technical methods of reconnaissance can provide substantial information on the enemy, terrain and the area of future operations. But such methods cannot fulfill all the intelligence requirements of commanders. Information which would reveal the identities and subordination of enemy units and the level of their combat readiness cannot be obtained by technical methods. Nor can the enemy's concept of combat operations be derived from technical gathered intelligence, as a general rule. For information of this nature, prisoners are needed and these can be captured mainly by means of raids, ambushes, and by conducting reconnaissance in force. Reconnaissance patrols can also actively assist in the collection of needed information as can the reconnaissance group operating in the rear of the enemy.<sup>14</sup>

Raids (poiska) which are conducted for the purpose of gathering intelligence information, are carried out by small combat units from squad up to reinforced platoons in size, and also by the reconnaissance groups organic to maneuver divisions. Reconnaissance groups are composed of specially selected and trained soldiers, sergeants and officers. Combat units detailed to conduct raids usually include elements of other branches of the service (intelligence, engineer, chemical) who possess special skills. Raids are conducted both in the forward deployment areas of enemy units and in the enemy's rear areas. Targets of raids can vary from a single soldier in foxhole (acting as a sentinel or forward observer) to a communications center or headquarters or similar facility. The objective of a

reconnaissance raid is to capture enemy personnel and secondarily, to obtain documents, new weapons and technical equipment.<sup>15</sup>

In preparation for a raid, information is gathered, by observation and other appropriate methods, in order to learn as much as possible of the enemy's deployment and the location of his weapons, to study the terrain and obstacles near the objective, to select the best approach to the objective, and to ascertain the enemy's activities in the area of the raid.<sup>16</sup> If possible observation of the objective area should continue without interruption up to the time of the raid to insure that actions taken by the enemy will not preclude the successful accomplishment of the raid's mission. For example, a significant change in the enemy's disposition would require a change in the plan of the raid.

A unit conducting a reconnaissance raid is normally divided into an assault group, a support group, and a group of sappers. The assault group, which is usually led by the commander of the entire unit, is responsible for making the final attack on the target and for capturing prisoners, documents and material. The support group provides security for the assault group by placing itself in the most favorable firing positions in the target area. Sappers clear a passage way through enemy obstacles, such as a mine field or barbed wire. The three groups receive training in their special functions and their actions are coordinated through planning and practice. Supporting fires from artillery and mortar units are also planned for and coordinated. Raids are executed as quietly and as rapidly as the terrain and enemy situation permit. A concealed approach to the objective area and a short, speedy assault on the target are favored by Soviet tacticians.<sup>17</sup>

When used for the purpose of gathering intelligence information, an ambush (zasada) has the same objectives as the raid, i.e., to capture prisoners, weapons and military equipment, or documents. But in contrast to the raid, which has an objective not larger than a small group of persons, the ambush

may have an objective consisting of a relatively large number of combat or transport vehicles or foot troops.<sup>18</sup>

Ambushes are organized during periods of direct combat with the enemy in areas immediately beyond the foremost positions of the Soviet forces or behind the forward edge of the battle area of the enemy, i.e., in enemy held territory. The site for a prospective ambush is selected with great care, secretly and well in advance of the positioning of the ambushing force. Usually the site would be on a road which serves as a line of communication or supply; or it could be at a river crossing or a water supply point. The site must also provide concealment for the ambushing force in order to insure a surprise assault. If the site is not beyond the range of artillery and mortars, fire support is arranged for, and signal information coordinated.

Usually the ambushing force consists of a specially designated squad or platoon but can consist of the entire reconnaissance group of a division. If the force is a platoon or larger in size, it is divided into two groups: support and assault. In addition to the two main groups, observers are designated and sometimes sappers are also attached to the force. The unit establishing the ambush must move quietly to the site and carefully prepare and camouflage the positions of individual members. Sappers are responsible for placing mines before the positions of the unit and on the most likely routes of movement of the enemy. Observers are sent off to the most advantageous positions to provide early warning.

When the observers report that a suitable target is approaching the site, the commander gives the order to spring the trap. If the target consists only of a few soldiers an attempt may be made to capture them without making any noise so as not to disclose the presence of the ambushing force. If the target consists of a large number of soldiers or vehicles, the ambushing force attempts to destroy the target by using all its weapons, grenades, and supporting fires. Following this, the assault group moves in to capture any soldiers and officers who remain alive and to seize documents from the dead and new

types of combat equipment and weapons. All tanks and other vehicles will be destroyed before the ambushing force departs.<sup>20</sup>

The reconnaissance patrol (dozor) is another primary means employed by Soviet tactical units to collect data about the enemy, terrain, and the area of future operations. Reconnaissance patrols are sent out to collect intelligence information by observation of the enemy and by careful examination of the terrain to the front and flanks. Patrols are employed by units which are occupying positions or are conducting a march. The strength and composition of a reconnaissance patrol is determined by the patrol's mission, the terrain and the combat situation. A patrol can vary in size from a rifle squad of a unit deployed in a forward position to a divisional reconnaissance group reinforced by a motorized rifle company. In the latter instance, a company of the reinforced group could send out 1-3 patrols each reinforced by a platoon. Strengthened in this manner, a reconnaissance patrol can maneuver not only in its basic direction but can also periodically send out patrols in several other directions as well.<sup>21</sup> Thus a reinforced reconnaissance group of a division can patrol a large area while moving primarily in one direction. The distance a patrol may be sent from its parent organization depends not only on the mission, terrain and enemy situation, but also on the strength and composition of the patrol.

In addition to foot patrols, motorized patrols are also sent out to rapidly reconnoiter road networks, terrain, and subjects of special interest. Motorized reconnaissance patrols can be dispatched from the divisional reconnaissance group or from small tactical units which have been detailed to collect intelligence information, or from units which are fulfilling other missions.<sup>22</sup> Normally small motorized patrols must maintain visual contact with their parent units or the main body of the patrol.<sup>23</sup> In situations where combat with the enemy is very unlikely, motorized reconnaissance patrols move at the maximum speed possible under the terrain conditions. In areas where a meeting with the enemy can be assumed or when actual

contact is made, the troops dismount to fight on the ground or become dismounted patrols in order to continue accomplishing their mission. The commander of a motorized reconnaissance patrol may dispatch a motorcycle to check on the possible presence of enemy forces by "demonstrative action." This entails the motorcyclist to approach - at high speed - to within 200 meters of the possible enemy position to draw fire. If the motorcyclist fails to draw fire, the conclusion is that no enemy is present.<sup>24</sup>

Reconnaissance patrols, both motorized and foot, usually bypass enemy reconnaissance units and elements of a mobile defense to stealthily move towards the main enemy force. Although patrols must report their observations of the enemy to higher headquarters, to engage the enemy would jeopardize fulfillment of the patrol's mission. To avoid actual contact with the enemy, the patrol moves, as a rule, cross country, from one suitable observation point to another. If the patrol consists of both motorized and foot elements, every effort must be made to maintain contact between the two elements. In the event of unexpected meeting with the enemy, where it is not possible to avoid combat, the patrol opens fire, makes an assault, captures prisoners, and then continues to fulfill its assigned tasks.<sup>25</sup>

Another method employed by Soviet Ground Forces to collect Intelligence Information is reconnaissance in force (razvedka boem). This method had wide use during the Second World War and was regarded as one of the most effective methods of military reconnaissance. The aim of reconnaissance in force is to "verify or make more precise Intelligence Information of the enemy, or to obtain necessary information which is not obtainable by any other means."<sup>26</sup> Reconnaissance in force is conducted by the combat actions of specially designated motorized rifle or tank units reinforced by necessary supporting weapons.<sup>27</sup> While these units are engaging the enemy, Intelligence Information is being collected by careful observation of the enemy's combat activities. Observation is conducted from all suitable points previously established, from posts especially organized for that

operation, and from the air. At the same time, all available means of reconnaissance, including airborne photography, radio intercept and DF, radar and other methods of collection are employed to gather the needed information.

Although reconnaissance in force can help obtain valuable intelligence information about the enemy, Soviet tacticians acknowledge that it involves the expenditure of large numbers of troops and resources. In addition, if it is unskillfully executed, it can betray to the enemy preparations for a prospective attack. For these reasons, reconnaissance in force is conducted in modern times "only when authorized by senior commanders."<sup>28</sup>

A reconnaissance group dispatched to operate in the rear of the enemy, can have a great variety of assigned tasks, and consequently the composition of the group can also be widely varied. Under contemporary conditions of warfare, an especially important task entrusted to such groups would be the collection of intelligence information concerning the nuclear strike capability of the enemy. Other tasks could be to determine the strength, disposition and intentions of the enemy, or to gather first hand data on the terrain and area of future operations.

The basic collection methods used by a reconnaissance group operating deep within the enemy's rear are observation, photography and listening. On certain occasions, a group may organize an ambush or conduct a raid. However these methods are used only as a last resort because they disclose the presence of the group in the rear of the enemy. Obviously the survival of the group and its effectiveness as a collector of information are dependent upon its ability to conceal its presence from the enemy. Therefore, under normal circumstances, a group will avoid direct contact with the enemy's rear elements.

Observation (nabliudeniye) is perhaps the oldest and most fundamental, but least interesting, method of collecting intelligence information about the enemy. It's also the most widely used method, even today, in units up to and including regiments. It is employed by all branches of the service and in all types of

combat situations. Its organization is the responsibility of unit commanders and it is required to be conducted - uninterruptedly - by specially designated individuals.

For the conduct of reconnaissance by observation, each unit is assigned responsibility for a sector of terrain, and in turn, assigns observers to occupy positions selected to insure the best view of the enemy and terrain. Squads have one observer; platoons and companies have one or two additional observers. Battalions, depending on the terrain and the breadth of the sector of operations, have one or two posts, consisting of 2-3 observers each. Battalion observation posts are furnished with instruments for observation and orientation, maps, overlays and various manuals. Observation posts are not limited to the ground but may be on helicopters or even on balloons.

For the conduct of observation during the hours of darkness instruments for night vision including infrared devices are furnished to observers. To supplement reconnaissance by observation during darkness and other periods of poor visibility, observers move as close as possible to the enemy to collect information by listening (literally: eavesdropping). These observers include sergeants and officers who possess keen hearing and can differentiate among the various sounds of enemy activity thereby learning the character of his activities.

All the methods of reconnaissance discussed above pursue, in the final analysis, only one objective; that is, to collect needed information about the enemy, terrain and the area of future operations. Therefore, they must be regarded as being closely connected - if only by their ultimate purpose. No one method has proved itself to be pre-eminent. In fact, all the modern technical methods of reconnaissance combined with all the methods of combat reconnaissance units, have not obviated the necessity for tactical troops to conduct visual observation - the simplest and most basic of collection methods.

Soviet military tacticians and writers appear to be well aware of the advantages, short-comings and conditions of applicability of each of the methods described in this paper.

They are also cognizant of the requirement to employ the various methods of reconnaissance so that they supplement each other, so that the collected information is not redundant but confirmatory, more reliable and hence, more valuable. Soviet tactical doctrine concludes that

only the skillful employment of all methods of reconnaissance, including the full use of the new technical means, will provide the possibility of collecting information necessary for insuring the success of combat operations in a modern combined arms battle.<sup>29</sup>

## V. TASKS AND EMPLOYMENT OF RECONNAISSANCE UNITS

A reconnaissance group of a Soviet maneuver division is normally assigned specific tasks to accomplish during the period the division as a whole is engaged in one or another of the basic types of tactical operations, that is, march, offense, defense, or meeting engagement. For each type of tactical operation, Soviet doctrine has established general intelligence requirements and guidelines for priorities for the collection of the needed information. Each type of tactical operation may, by its nature, also impose limitations on the applicability of one or more of the methods of reconnaissance used to gather the information. Thus, the type of tactical operation, normally, both prescribes and constrains the activities of reconnaissance units supporting the operation.

It should be noted, however, that a larger unit may be engaged in one type of operation while a smaller, subordinate element may be executing a different type of operation. For instance, a division may be conducting an offense, while one of its battalions could support that attack by assuming a defensive posture on a flank. In this example, the intelligence requirements of the division would certainly differ from those of the battalion; and hence, the collection tasks and deployment patterns of the units designated for reconnaissance duties would also differ. However, for the purpose of simplicity in the discussion that follows, the divisional reconnaissance group and other units detailed for reconnaissance, are considered to be supporting only the main effort of the division.

A march, according to Soviet tacticians, is an organized movement of forces in columns along roads and on cross country routes with the aim of entering a predesignated area. A march can be executed to the front, from the front to the rear, and along flanks.<sup>30</sup>

During the execution of a march, great attention is placed on all-around defense of the moving forces. Therefore, reconnaissance is conducted continuously, in depth, both in the direction of

movement and along the flanks. The task of reconnaissance units, first of all, is the timely detection of the enemy, and the determination of his strength and composition. Particular emphasis is placed on ascertaining the presence of nuclear weapons and tanks.

A secondary but nonetheless important task of reconnaissance units during a march, is to determine the condition of the route of the march, the degree of cross-country mobility permitted by the terrain, and the character of the terrain in areas of likely contact with the enemy. These tasks are accomplished mainly by observation and by first hand examination of the terrain but also by other methods.

The reconnaissance effort must be organized and coordinated to insure that designated observers are assigned specific sectors and foot and motorized patrols are dispatched in correct directions. The distance which patrols operate from the main body is not predetermined but must always, according to Soviet doctrine, be such that the patrols can successfully accomplish their assigned tasks.<sup>31</sup> Patrols emanating from a divisional reconnaissance group would probably have engineer and chemical reconnaissance elements with them. Engineers provide skills necessary to determine such matters as capacities of roads and bridges along the route of march. Chemical reconnaissance support is provided to determine the presence of chemical, radioactive, or bacteriological materials in the path of the moving forces. Soviet military authors attach a high priority to the early discovery of contaminated areas and to rapidly finding routes to circumvent those areas.

Reconnaissance acquires a special significance during the conduct of the offense. The offense is regarded by Soviet tacticians as the basic form of combat action. It has as its aim the complete destruction of the defending enemy in a short amount of time, and the seizure of important objectives. Regiments and smaller units of the ground forces engaged in offensive actions must make the best use of terrain for maneuvering so as to quickly gain the flank or rear of the enemy in order to inflict a decisive blow.<sup>32</sup>

During the offense, reconnaissance units dispatch patrols not only in front of the forward units of the main force but also on the flank and sometimes even in the rear. Patrols attempt to accomplish their collection tasks primarily by observation and by the capture of prisoners. Other methods of reconnaissance, such as raids or reconnaissance in force, may also be employed, particularly in the preparatory stages of offensive actions.

The fundamental task of reconnaissance during the offense is the timely discovery of the intentions of the enemy and the character of his actions. Such information provides the possibility of taking necessary steps to counteract the enemy's intended actions. During the course of an assault, a primary collection effort is directed at uncovering unneutralized weapons, particularly those with a nuclear capability. Secondary efforts include detecting enemy strong points, command posts, location of reserves, obstacles and contaminated areas. In addition, reconnaissance, especially the airborne methods, are employed to ascertain the actions being taken by the enemy forces. That is, whether the enemy is reinforcing his forward elements or is withdrawing them. If the enemy is beginning to withdraw, the composition of the withdrawing forces and the direction of their movement must be determined so that they may be cut off from the main forces.

In preparation for offensive operations to be conducted during the hours of darkness, reconnaissance units receive several additional tasks. These tasks include the requirement to detect the presence among the defending forces of night vision devices, or the existence of a system for battlefield illumination. Reconnaissance will also attempt to ascertain if the enemy has made any changes in his deployment or defensive positions after the coming of darkness but prior to the initiation of the attack.

The defense is employed by Soviet forces only under those conditions when offensive operations are not possible or are not expedient. The purpose of defense, as a type of combat action, is to repel an attack by superior forces of the enemy, to inflict substantial losses and thereby create the conditions

for the transition to a decisive offense.<sup>33</sup> The principal tasks of reconnaissance in support of defense are: to provide early warning of the enemy's approach; to determine his strength and composition; and to learn the direction of his main attack.

These tasks become immeasurably more difficult if the enemy initiates his attack at night. Despite the achievements of technical methods of observation and reconnaissance, the limitations of visibility at night still favors those who advance by concealed routes and suddenly attack defensive positions.<sup>34</sup> In addition, conditions of darkness hinder the effective employment of nuclear weapons, air strikes, artillery, anti-tank weapons and of course, infantry weapons. In order to lessen the influence of negative night-time factors on the operations of defensive forces, it is necessary to strengthen the overall reconnaissance effort.

The primary collection methods of reconnaissance units supporting defensive operations are patrolling and observation. Other methods such as ambushes and raids are also employed when necessary to obtain needed information. All of the technical methods of reconnaissance are used when applicable. Radio intercept is emphasized, particularly during night defensive operations, to provide early indications of an impending enemy attack. Also at night, observation posts are increased in number and furnished with special instruments for night vision such as infrared devices. Observers are also moved closer to known enemy positions to establish "eavesdropping" posts.

A meeting engagement (vstrechnyi бой), as defined in Soviet tactical references, is a type of combat operation which occurs when the Soviet forces are advancing on an enemy which is simultaneously advancing from another direction. A meeting engagement can arise during the course of a march or maneuver, or during the development of an attack when an enemy counter-attack is being repelled, or even during the defense when reserves or second echelon forces are being moved forward to conduct a counterattack.<sup>35</sup> A meeting engagement is characterized by utter confusion as to the actual situation which, in any case, quickly

changes. Changes in the combat situation are brought about by the rapid maneuverings of units attempting to seize and retain the initiative while, at the same time, covering exposed flanks.

Intelligence about the enemy at the beginning of a meeting engagement is usually far from being complete, and time for reconnaissance to clarify the situation is extremely limited. In addition, the task of collecting information is hindered, even when modern technical methods are employed, by frequent changes in the disposition of forces and the direction of their movement. Also, in the highly dynamic meeting engagement, intelligence information about the enemy, while it may be reliable and complete, quickly becomes obsolete and loses its value. And yet one of the most important requisites for achieving success in a meeting engagement is knowledge of the enemy. For a combat force, which lacks intelligence information, can be hit from any direction by surprise attacks which cause the defender's actions to become spontaneous, disorganized and indecisive. As a consequence he loses the initiative and is defeated.<sup>56</sup>

To acknowledge the importance of intelligence to the achievement of success in a meeting engagement is to understand the necessity for the prior organization of the reconnaissance effort. It is the reconnaissance effort which can, in a timely manner, detect the enemy's movement out of his positions, and determine his disposition, and intentions. Reconnaissance can learn the direction of his movement and can constantly follow him through the course of his maneuverings.

Consequently, reconnaissance can collect the information necessary to forecast the possibility of the beginning of a meeting engagement, and the place and time of its occurrence. This will provide the commander with the information needed to plan forestalling nuclear and non-nuclear strikes and to organize his forces for the engagement before they actually meet.

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on board reconnaissance and combat aircraft and helicopters. And during a meeting engagement, the commander's personal observation of the combat operation acquires special significance. But in the final analysis the commander who wants to guarantee success in a meeting engagement must rely on his own reconnaissance unit to provide him with timely information of an approaching enemy. By continuously reconnoitering both the route along which the main force is moving, and its flanks in anticipation of a meeting engagement, a reconnaissance unit is in the best position to provide the commander with positive assurance that the enemy's approach will be detected.

To accomplish this mission, a reconnaissance group can be reinforced with a motorized rifle or tank company and with engineer and chemical intelligence personnel. It can also be furnished additional communications equipment to insure that needed information is reported to higher headquarters without delay. Reconnaissance patrols, both motorized and foot, are dispatched from the group to survey the terrain and points of interest along the route of march and the flanks. These patrols usually consist of a platoon and may be reinforced, just as the group itself can be, by additional elements.

The distance from the main force which a patrol normally operates is determined by the terrain, the patrol's mission and composition, and the possibility of maintaining communication. The distance would usually not exceed 10 kilometers.

Patrols coming into contact with enemy reconnaissance or security units which are screening enemy activity, usually attempt not to be drawn into battle, but try to bypass them to penetrate deeper into the enemy forces. There the patrols can determine the enemy's disposition, composition, direction of movement, intervals, flanks and the general character of his operations. Under favorable conditions and when necessary, reconnaissance patrols may attack individual forward units of the enemy to capture prisoners, disrupt movement, and attempt to disorganize the enemy's order of march.

## VI. AN EVALUATION OF SOVIET COMBAT INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE

Attempting to arrive at a cogent evaluation of Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance solely on the basis of openly published Russian language sources can quickly become an exercise in frustration. For Soviet textbooks on tactics and articles which discuss reconnaissance doctrine reveal little that can be regarded as critical and are, in the final analysis, merely words which may not correspond to actual practice. The books and articles written to explain the lessons learned from the Second World War may mislead a foreign observer from the current status of Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance. Even descriptions of recent training exercises may misrepresent the actual performance capabilities of Soviet tactical reconnaissance. However, it is possible in the opinion of this writer, to gain some insights into doctrinal strengths and weaknesses and to provide some general, albeit tentative, assessments of Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance.

With respect to the six principles of combat intelligence described above, it can be stated that Soviet doctrine furnishes valid and useful guidance to commanders, staffs and reconnaissance units. The principles are not only similar to those included in U.S. doctrine but probably have universal applicability in the field of intelligence. It is particularly interesting to note the stress which has been placed on the principles of aggressiveness and continuity. That emphasis may be an attempt to overcome deficiencies of Soviet reconnaissance units operating against the Germans during the Second World War. In a U.S. Army study, which was based on German commanders' assessments of Russian methods, Soviet reconnaissance was described as being "very hesitant, groping and cautious" and activity was "not especially intense."<sup>36</sup> Articles, which describe recently completed field training exercises, indicate that reconnaissance operations are currently being conducted both continuously and aggressively.

Articles which have been published in the recent past also reveal that Soviet doctrine places heavy emphasis on patrolling as a primary method of collecting intelligence information. Patrolling activity, both foot and motorized, conducted by Soviet reconnaissance units during the Second World War was in general considered to be good by opposing German commanders. Soviet units took proper action in adverse situations and skillfully adapted themselves to the prevailing conditions.<sup>37</sup> Descriptions of recent training exercises indicate that patrols, especially motorized, still play a prominent part in the gathering of information by Soviet reconnaissance units.

Another aspect of combat intelligence and reconnaissance which appears to concern Soviet military writers is the role commanders occupy in the initial stages of the process. Commanders, according to Soviet doctrine, must envision the course that an on-going battle will take in order to foresee the intelligence that will be required to accomplish the mission. Once this is accomplished the intelligence collection effort can be organized and deployed beforehand. Although this certainly appears to be good doctrine, the means for its practical application are not discussed. Nor are there any suggestions as to how commanders can develop the all-important ability to foresee the course of battle. Perhaps by emphasizing commanders' responsibilities with regard to combat intelligence and reconnaissance, Soviet military writers are responding to deficiencies which became apparent during the Winter War against Finland. Intelligence at the outbreak of that war, according to Malcolm Mackintosh, was "below standard" both on the battlefield and at the general staff level.<sup>38</sup> However, a doctrine which merely assigns responsibilities without providing a means for their fulfillment has an obvious weakness.

Another possible weak point in the functioning of the combat intelligence process may be caused by the Soviet penchant for strict security measures to prevent unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information. Although it would be difficult to estimate

the adverse effects of over-protection during actual combat, security measures could certainly delay the processing and severely limit the distribution of Intelligence Information collected by sensitive means. Soviet military writers also appear to have an abnormal fear of being deceived or provoked by the enemy. This fear may lead to the rejection of accurate information about the enemy or the combat situation merely because it has not been confirmed by other sources. The Soviet emphasis on proven reliability, while normally admirable, may result in unnecessary, time consuming, and redundant employment of resources attempting to gain confirmation of previously gathered data.

It is apparent that Soviet doctrine on tactical reconnaissance and combat intelligence is rather solidly founded on the experience gained from combat operations of the Second World War. As was noted previously, that war represents the most recent comprehensive combat experience that is available to Soviet tacticians and writers. Certainly, to ignore the lessons of that war would be to invite repetition of the same or similar mistakes in a future war. Perhaps, for this reason, several books have recently been published which present excellent analyses of a wide variety of reconnaissance operations conducted during the Second World War -- both successful and unsuccessful.<sup>39</sup>

However, it can be argued that the lessons of the Second World War, at least to the extent and in the manner emphasized by Soviet writers, are of questionable value in the contemporary military situation. For technological innovations introduced since 1945 have necessarily diminished the applicability of previous combat experience. In the first place, the possibility that tactical nuclear weapons will be employed on the battlefield has required significant alteration of tactical doctrine used during the Second World War. Second, the increased mobility of forces on the battlefield has also required a change in the tactics of land warfare. And if helicopters are to be employed as extensively by both combatants as they were by the U.S. Army in Vietnam, the change brought about by rapid mobility will be even

more drastic. The third reason is that technology has vastly improved the quality and quantity of mechanical, electronic, and other aids for the collection of intelligence information since 1945. Thus technology has brought substantial change to tactical doctrines which were applicable during the Second World War.

Although Soviet tacticians generally acknowledge the importance of these technological advances, they have not, in the view of this writer, adjusted their doctrinal concepts of combat intelligence to the era of modern technology. They appear, at least from the open press, to be primarily concerned with tactical reconnaissance units on the ground and with improving the performance of these units while operating in an environment similar to that of the Second World War. As a result of this interest, it is reasonable to conclude that Soviet combat intelligence and reconnaissance is well prepared, at least doctrinally, for operations of the kind executed during the Second World War. However, Soviet writers appear to be ignoring the more technically advanced systems for collecting intelligence information. For instance, little attention is given to the employment, or even to the existence, of aerial platforms equipped with visual, optical, electronic, and other sensory devices.

While it is difficult to judge the extent of Soviet technological advances in the field of reconnaissance from the open press, it is certain that technical means of reconnaissance will play a substantially greater role in a future war than they did in the Second World War. Intelligence operations, to be fully effective on the modern battlefield, require sophisticated equipment for the collection, transmission, and processing of information. Although such equipment is not described in open Soviet sources, it should not be construed from the lack of evidence that the Soviet Ground Forces have not obtained sophisticated equipment, or that reconnaissance units are not utilizing the equipment during the conduct of their training.

It can only be concluded that Soviet writers do not discuss technically advanced equipment and the doctrine for its employment in the open press.

#### FOOTNOTES

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7. Major General V. Stakhoev, "Razvedka dolzhna byt' nepreryvnoi i aktivnoi," ("Reconnaissance Must be Continuous and Aggressive"), Voennyi vestnik, No. 8 (August 1970), p. 13.
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16. M. P. Dukachev, Pekhota v boiu (Infantry in Battle) (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1959), pp. 147-148.
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18. Reznichenko, p. 134.
19. Major N. Sadykov, "Rota v razvedyvatel'noi gruppe," ("Company In a Reconnaissance Group"), Voennyi vestnik, No. 3 (March 1972), p. 25.

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26. Reznichenko, pp. 134-135.
27. Tolkovyi slovar', p. 375.
28. Reznichenko, pp. 134-135.
29. Ibid., p. 135.
30. Slovar', pp. 124-125.
31. Reznichenko, p. 174.
32. Tolkovyi slovar', p. 259.
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39. For example: R. G. Simonian, et al, Razvedka v boevykh primerakh (Reconnaissance in Combat Examples) (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1972); R. G. Simonian, et al, Takticheskaya razvedka (Tactical Reconnaissance) (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1968); Perminov, S. I., Voiskovye razvedki v boiu (Military Reconnaissance in Battle) (Moskva: Voenizdatel'stvo, 1969).

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