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* POTENTIAL SOVIET INFLUENCES ON IRAQI ARMY OPERATIONS *
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Comment:

The Gulf crisis makes the attached paper by Colonel David Glantz, US Army, of particular relevance. Anyone interested in receiving a copy of some of the translations referred to by Colonel Glantz can obtain them from this office.

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POTENTIAL SOVIET INFLUENCES ON IRAQI ARMY OPERATIONS

Assessments of the Iraqi Army must address three questions: how is the army organized, how has it been trained to operate, and how will it actually operate in wartime.

The basic organization of Iraqi forces reflects both older Western European models from colonial times and newer influences of Soviet force structuring. Basic army organization accords with traditional European models used by Arab (and Israeli) forces throughout the Middle East, namely a corps, division, brigade, battalion structure. Soviet-type specialized units have been integrated into this structure (air assault, SCUD missile, etc). Foreign military officers attending Soviet military schools and academies receive instruction based on Soviet concepts applied to non-Soviet force structure models. As a consequence, a blending of approaches is sometimes evident in Soviet-trained foreign armies that have had other models to draw upon. As demonstrated by Egyptian and Syrian examples in earlier Middle Eastern wars, Soviet combat methods will be employed by these forces, although wide variations in approach and execution are likely as well.

Recent Iraqi combat methods are derived from Soviet experiences passed on by Soviet training manuals, regulations, and advisers. Known examples of Iraqi operations in the Iran-Iraq War in part seem to reflect that training base and combat methodology. Consequently Iraqi offensive or defensive operations will generally accord with Soviet concepts, in particular regarding techniques applicable to waging desert warfare.

Experiences of Soviet-trained and equipped armies in other Middle Eastern Wars (1973 for example) indicate that Arab nations will not always conform to the dictates of Soviet combat methodology, either due to existing local conditions, the unique experiences of the army involved, or sheer ineptitude. In 1973 Egyptian operations to cross the Suez Canal developed along Soviet lines. Thereafter, however, for political or other reasons, the Egyptians deviated from the Soviet model. More specifically, Soviet assessments of Egyptian plans and the initial execution of the Suez Canal crossing gave the Egyptians high marks in many areas (maskirovka, surprise, fire planning, engineer support, etc.). In regard to subsequent actions, however, a 1987 Soviet assessment indicated, "The indecisiveness and slowness of the Egyptian Command were combined with the laxity of the troops and staffs. The flanks, particularly of the armies, were poorly covered and reconnaissance was virtually idle" (VIZH, Oct 87).

Likewise, the Syrians in their attack on the Golan Heights ignored the advice of Soviet regulations and launched their armored brigades, unsupported by infantry and artillery, into the

teeth of Israeli defenses. More recently, Iraqi forces clearly employed Soviet tactics when reducing Iranian bridgeheads near Basra (employing carefully tailored shock groups supported by massive firepower to erode the bridgehead bit by bit). They did not, however, employ deep armored thrusts in their initial advance into Iran (per Soviet advice), although this was probably for good reason (see below).

The following is a short summary of Soviet principles for desert warfare -- principles to which Iraqi officers have been exposed and will, with variations, seek to translate into effective combat actions.

a. General:

(1) Desert combat is of a fragmented [ochagovyy], non-linear nature. Operations develop rapidly along multiple axes across a broad expanse of territory. Most combat assumes the nature of a meeting engagement. Prepared defenses of a linear, contiguous nature are easily penetrated and, hence, wasteful of precious resources. Both offensive and defensive formations are instead arrayed in depth and formed on the basis of population centers, water supply points, strong points, or tailored offensive shock groups and enveloping detachments.

(2) Adequate logistics and open lines of communications are essential for achieving success in desert operations. Water and fuel are strategic resources without which neither offensive nor defensive success can be achieved.

b. Strategic Operations:

(1) Strategic offensives seek to destroy major enemy force groupings and/or seize key political, economic, and military objectives whose possession will satisfy basic war aims of the state. Offensives must develop rapidly and achieve their objectives within a relatively short period (7-10 days). Strategic surprise is essential. Logistics is the chief limiting factor on the depth (range) and duration of operations.

(2) Offensives develop along several axes and involve extensive maneuvers (normally envelopment, deep cutting thrusts and outflanking movements). Attacking forces must achieve and maintain air superiority over their operating forces and supply lines throughout the duration of combat actions (which probably prevented deep Iraqi thrusts into Iran). Similarly, air defense coverage of advancing forces must be extensive. Creation and maintenance of a system of water supply points and fuel distribution to the final objective is essential.

(3) Strategic reconnaissance of enemy forces is critical to plan the advance route, launch attacks from the march, and

prepare to repel rapidly developing enemy counterstrokes. The size of the strategic shock force, in particular its armor and IFV strength, must be sufficient to absorb natural equipment attrition likely during the advance.

(4) Strategic defenses in desert regions cover principal population centers, economic objectives, water sources, and key communications routes and centers. Defenses are particularly strong around population centers, where all-round fortified positions are organized as anchors for the strategic defense. In open desert terrain defenses are strong point in nature and deeply echeloned. Strong points organized for all-round defense and small, tailored, mobile ambush units and subunits cover major enemy attack axes in an extended security zone. Subsequent defense lines, also organized in strong point configuration, deploy up to 50 kilometers to the rear. Small, mobile subunits, artillery fires and aviation strikes cover gaps between strong points, and stronger mobile tactical and operational reserves form in the tactical and operational depths to launch counterstrokes and counterattacks against penetrating enemy forces. Maximum effort is made to strike against enemy supply lines, in particular the fuel and water supply system.

c. Operational and Tactical Combat.

(1) Operational and tactical actions on the Soviet model are mobile and rapidly developing. Offensive forces advance along specific key axes of advance while paying particular attention to reconnaissance, air defense, and flank security. Force echelonment is shallow, but logistical support is deeply echeloned along the entire route of advance. Most movement is in pre-combat (column) formation. Force size and the amount of logistical and other support is tailored to secure objectives at specific depths within distinctly limited periods (3-5 days operational, 1-3 days tactical). Special attention is paid to water and fuel resupply, since consumption rates in the desert exceed those elsewhere (e.g., up to 2.5 times as much fuel as normal).

(2) Forces rely on extensive maneuver, long-range aviation and artillery strikes, and combat actions by tailored enveloping detachments and air assaults to strike key enemy forces and installations in the flanks and rear. Depths of force missions are greater than in normal combat because of the greater dispersal of enemy defenses and the necessity of avoiding undue strain on logistics. Reconnaissance is particularly important in open desert terrain to plan and conduct one's own attack, avoid costly engagement of enemy strong points, and protect against enemy counterattacks. Maintenance of tanks, all combat and support wheeled vehicles, and helicopters is difficult and critical.

(3) Among the many offensive considerations are the following:

- openness of terrain and deception [maskirovka] difficulties
- difficulties in land navigation and target designation
- poor terrain trafficability (sand dunes, wet or dry salt marshes and rocky desert)
- complexity of water resupply
- larger than normal contamination zones (if chemical or nuclear weapons have been employed)

(4) Operational and tactical defenses in desert regions are erected over a wider expanse than normal and are organized in deeply echeloned strong point fashion. Where population centers exist, defenses are erected in normal configuration, but with reserves deployed at a greater depth. Such defenses are all-round in nature: aviation strikes, long-range artillery, and specially detailed mobile forces cover secondary sectors between population centers. Reconnaissance and observation cover the intervals between defended positions.

(5) Water reconnaissance is organized to assist in water supply to all forces. Water and fuel supply and distribution points must be well protected, and water and fuel reserves are created in all subunits, units, and for individual vehicles and tanks. Rear service units and installations are located on main axes close to water sources.

SASO is translating more detailed operational and tactical information from Soviet sources concerning the following topics: general desert tactics; motorized rifle battalion desert tactics; artillery battalions in desert operations; reconnaissance under desert conditions; march and meeting engagements in the desert; engineer support of desert operations. This information will be provided under separate cover when translations have been completed.

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