

Report of Major-General Igor Demyanovich Statsenko, Commander of the 51st Missile Division, about the Actions of the Division from 07.12.62 through 12.01.1962

Following the directive of the General Staff, in mid-June of 1962 the division was tasked with switching to a new operating structure (command – 6/322; R-12 regiments – 6/332; R-14 regiments – 6/334; RTB [missile technical base] –6/333), to take the regiments of Cdes. Bandilovsky and Sidorov into the division; to take one launch battalion and one RTB assembly brigade into Cde. Cherkesov's regiment. The division command is to be fully staffed with personnel and equipment, and to be ready to deploy abroad to carry out a special government task.

1. The work of reconnaissance groups to select deployment sites.

To carry out this assignment, the advance reconnaissance team arrived on the island of Cuba on 07.12.62 on a Tu-114 airplane. I was in the group together with the head of the data preparation unit [отделение подготовки данных (опд)] of the division.

The reconnaissance groups of the regiments arrived on the island of Cuba on an IL-18 airplane on 07.19.1962.

Based on the study of the reconnaissance assignment, described in directives from the General Staff, on 07.14.62 a work plan was developed for the advance reconnaissance teams, which stipulated:

- to begin reconnaissance by flying over first the western, then the central part of the island of Cuba;
- to choose two field deployment position areas for each regiment, stationing the command of the regiment with one of the battalions;
- to separate the reconnaissance teams into groups by region in order to expedite the work process;
- to include officers from the Headquarters of the Commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba in the regiments' reconnaissance groups;
- to organize the interaction of the reconnaissance groups with the group of General Dementiev [top Soviet military adviser in Cuba] and the General Staff of the Cuban Army to provide support and security for the reconnaissance groups during their work.

After the arrival of the reconnaissance groups of the division's regiments on the island of Cuba, i.e. on 07.20.1962, they studied the work plan, and carefully studied maps of the area where they would be working, particularly the network of roads. They were given special

instructions on camouflaging their activities. They learned the necessary minimum of Spanish words and were told the Cuban government's conditions for selecting the areas:

- each area submitted to expropriation must be no greater than 400-450 hectares, and have a maximum of 6-8 families subject to resettlement.

The conditions presented by the Cuban government eventually led to the crowding of equipment in the field deployment areas [*polevye pozitsionnye raiony, PPR*].

In the period from July 21-25, 1962, the areas identified by the directive of the General Staff for deployment of the regiments were studied four times via helicopter overflights.

Helicopter overflights were used to study the western and central parts of the island of Cuba. It was concluded that the areas designated to station the regiments of Cdes. Sidorov, Cherkosov, and Bandilovsky have highly broken terrain, poor vegetation and a poorly developed road network. Therefore, they were ill-suited to station missile regiments. At the same time, several new areas were identified:

- Mendoza, Jaruco;
- Aguacate, Madruga;
- Coliseo, Limonar;
- Consolacion del Norte;
- Colón, Los Arabos.

On 07.22.62 the regiments' reconnaissance groups departed for the areas designated by the directive.

Officers from Group headquarters, headed by Deputy Commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba for Combat Training Cde. General L.S. Garbuz, were part of the division regiments' reconnaissance groups.

The lack of an adequate number of interpreters affected the work of the reconnaissance groups, despite the officers' successful study of the Spanish language.

Reconnaissance showed that the central part of the island of Cuba (Cdes. Sidorov and Cherkosov's areas) has highly broken terrain, poor vegetation, and a lack of necessary platforms; the existing roads would not allow the passage of missile technology without a large amount of rock excavation; the aquifers lie at a depth of 150-200 meters; and counterrevolutionary gangs are active in the area. Thus, it was determined that it would be highly undesirable and inexpedient to station the regiments in these areas.

Hereafter, with the permission of the Commander of the Group of Forces, the main work of the reconnaissance groups was moved to newly identified and outlined areas.

In total, during the work in the central part of the island of Cuba (Matanzas, Santa Clara and Trinidad) 107 areas totaling 620 km² were inspected, of which 20 were reconnoitered with a total area of 110 km². From those, 4 areas were selected and approved:

- for Cde. Sidorov's regiment – the region of Sitiecito and Calabazar de Sagua;
- for Cde. Cherkesov's regiment – the region of Remedios and Zulueta.

In the western part of Cuba (Pinar del Rio, Artemisa and Guanajay) 44 areas were inspected, totaling 300 km², 15 areas were reconnoitered, totaling 65 km². From those, 6 areas were selected and approved:

- for Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment – both regions 10 km north of Los Palacios;
- for Cde. Solovyov's regiment – the Santa Cruz de los Pinos region and Candelaria;
- for Cde. Kovalenko's regiment – the Guanajay region (plateau Esperon).

Thus, to select 10 missile launching areas, it was necessary to conduct thorough reconnaissance on foot of 151 regions, totaling 900 km² stretched across the island from east to west for 650 km.

The question of stationing personnel in dugouts instead of tent camps was studied from the first days of arriving in Cuba.

After carefully studying the composition of the soil and climatic conditions, it was found that it was impossible to station the troops in dugouts in the tropics because of the large amount of precipitation and humidity.

Therefore, to accommodate the personnel we had to build tent cities, which later became one of the main telltale signs of troop locations in Cuba.

Simultaneously with area reconnaissance, preparatory activities were carried out for the arrival of the [military] units:

- All previously designated ports of debarkation were reconnoitered. Out of the previously designated ports of debarkation, the following were chosen: the Port of Mariel for the regiments of Cdes. Bandilovsky, Solovyov, and Kovalenko; the Port of Casilda for the regiments of Cdes. Sidorov and Cherkesov; the Port of Matanzas for the division command and as a backup port of debarkation for the regiments of Cdes. Sidorov and Cherkesov. The Ports of Mariel and Casilda were identified for the unloading of missiles;
- The routes to transfer missiles and missile equipment from the ports of debarkation to the missile deployment areas were reconnoitered and prepared;
- Because the road network in the central part of Cuba did not provide passage for the missiles and equipment, in a short period of time the joint forces of the Army and

- Ministry of Public Works of the Republic of Cuba laid two through-routes, bypassing the Escambray mountain range, 200 km each;
- Before the arrival of the troops, it was planned to block off the outer perimeter of all field deployment areas, but the Cuban Army command was able to complete only the fence around Cde. Kovalenko's deployment area (plateau Esperon);
 - The Cuban Army re-built and improved road access to all field deployment areas (total length of 52 km).

All the activities of the reconnaissance teams and their work were covered by general and specific cover stories. The general cover was: "Agricultural specialists."

The specific cover stories:

- for the construction of the R-14 complex (plateau Esperon) – "construction of a training center for the Cuban army by Soviet military specialists";
- the work of the geodesic groups – "geological survey parties."

The reconnaissance teams were transported on Cuban vehicles in small groups, often wearing Cuban uniforms.

The Cuban army command allocated three officers to support the work of the reconnaissance teams. Security for the teams was provided by the officers and soldiers of the reconnaissance battalion from Cde. Fidel Castro's personal guard.

The purpose of the operations was held in the strictest confidence. A strictly limited number of members of the Cuban Army knew about the missile forces arriving in Cuba. The people who knew in the beginning were Cdes. Fidel Castro and Raul Castro, and the Chief of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Cuban Army, Cde. Pedro Luis. Later on, that number increased to 10 people; by the time the work was completed, a total of 15 people were told about the mission.

The selfless work of the Cuban people and army in carrying out road work projects in the preparatory phase and while meeting the ships should be noted.

Conclusion:

1. The reconnaissance of the division's deployment sites and preparatory work was completed on time. Everything was ready for the arrival of the units and their rapid concentration in the deployment areas.

2. Our experience in Cuba showed that terrain dramatically affects the amount of reconnaissance work. To select one [usable] area, it was necessary to inspect 20-22 areas in the central part of the island, and 7-8 areas in the western part of the island.

3. The found and reconnoitered areas of Aguacate, Madruga and Mendoza were the most suitable as deployment areas for missile regiments, but they were not approved, which later on dramatically affected the organization of the arrival and preparations of Cde. Sidorov's regiment.

4. Our usual methods of entrenchment and construction of dugouts for shelter for personnel are impractical on the island of Cuba.

5. In Cuba, as in the U.S., electrical current is generated at 60 Hz, which makes it impossible to use local electricity for the technical needs of the Soviet troops. This should have been considered before the work of the reconnaissance groups began.

2. Deployment of the division on the island of Cuba

It was planned to use 35 ships to transfer the division to the island of Cuba.

The deployment of the division on the island of Cuba began only on 09.09.62 with the arrival of the motor ship [MS] "Omsk" in the Port of Casilda, the first ship of Cde. Sidorov's regiment. In the period from 09.09 through 10.22.62, 24 ships arrived and were unloaded, including missiles:

In the Port of Casilda:

6 [missiles arrived] on MS "Omsk" on 09.09.62;
8 on MS "Kimovsk" on 09.22.62;

In the Port of Mariel:

8 on MS "Poltava" on 09.16.62;
6 on MS "Krasnograd" on 10.02.62;
7 on MS "Orenburg" on 10.06.62;
7 on MS "Omsk" on 10.16.62 (second trip).

The missiles were unloaded from the ships only at night, under total blackout on the ships and in the ports. While the missiles were being unloaded, all external approaches to the ports were guarded by a specially assigned mountain rifle squadron consisting of 300 men, transferred from the Sierra Maestra.

From then on, people from this squadron ensured the external security of the field deployment areas.

Inside the enclosure of the ports, security was provided by the personnel of the arrived units, as well as by operatives designated by the General Staff. The approaches to the ships while being unloaded were guarded by war ships and motor boats, as well as specially tested and

selected fishermen from the local Cuban population. Every two hours, specially assigned scuba divers checked the underwater parts of the ships and the bottom of the harbor near the pier.

The missile equipment and parts were transported to the missile deployment areas only at night in small columns.

The deployment of missiles, launchers and fuelling equipment in missile deployment areas was organized and carried out in the following manner:

- missiles and large machinery were transported only at night between 00:00 and 05:00 hours;
- I planned the exact time when the missile convoys would start moving, but I did not announce it ahead of time;
- the entire length of the missile convoy transportation routes were blocked off ahead of time by the Cuban army and military police;
- when blocking off the routes, car accidents were staged and imitated, with evacuation of the “injured,” as well as “training” for Cuban army troops;
- About an hour to an hour-and-a-half before the missile convoy started moving, a decoy convoy of Cuban trailers or large trucks was sent down false routes;
- Generally, a missile convoy was organized as follows:
 1. Motorcyclists with radio equipment.
 2. A Cuban car with an operator , an interpreter, and a guard.
 3. Two cars with the convoy command.
 4. A convoy defense car.
 5. Missiles and trucks.
 6. One crane and reserve trucks.
 7. A guard car with Cuban guards.
 8. Motorcyclists with radio equipment.

At night all personnel involved in the preparation and transportation of the missiles changed into Cuban army uniforms.

Conversations and commands in Russian were strictly prohibited, all orders were given ahead of time; memorized Spanish words and phrases were widely used.

During transportation, the contours of launchers and fueling equipment were camouflaged to look like large loaded Cuban trucks.

In essence the deployment of the division on the island of Cuba ended on 10.22.62 with the announcement of the blockade and the return to the Soviet Union of some of the ships that were going to Cuba with the division’s equipment and personnel.

As of 10.22.62, the 51st missile division was deployed on the island of Cuba in the following composition:

- The division command, communications battalion, separate engineering-sapper battalion, Cde. Sidorov's regiment and Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment deployed in full;
- Cde. Solovyov's regiment was missing two transportation and refueling units; besides that the regiment's chief of staff, deputy regiment commander for the rear, and a large part of the regiment's command were on the MS "Yuri Gagarin," which was sent back to the Soviet Union;
- [From]Cde. Kovalenko's regiment – a part of the regiment command together with the commander of the regiment, the combat support battery, and one launch battery;
- [From]Cde. Cherkesov's regiment – combat support battery;
- Missile technical bases of Cdes. Shishchenko, Romanov, Krivstov and Korenets in full.

In total, the division arrived in Cuba comprised of:

Officers – 1404;

Soldiers and sergeants – 6462;

Civilian service personnel of the Soviet Army – 90;

Total: 7956 people.

Missiles: 42 (including training [missiles] – 6);

Warheads – 36;

One and a half amounts of fuel components;

Cars – 1695;

Radio transmitters – 72;

Construction materials and equipment – 9425 tons;

Food, equipment and clothing – over 1000 tons.

Conclusion

1. The division's experience in carrying out the special government task showed that the mass replacement of officers, sergeants, and soldiers dramatically affects the organization of the troops, the coordination between headquarters and combat units. It reduces the combat readiness of the regiments and of the division as a whole (the division commander knew the work skills of

only one regiment commander out of five, and around 500 officers and up to 1000 sergeants and soldiers were replaced).

Missile forces must always be fully equipped and ready to carry out any government assignment at any moment, even with deployment to any distance and any territory, and maintain their coherent work order.

2. When relocating forces it is necessary to make sure that the division command deploys on one of the first transports, leaving only a small task force in the previous location to ensure the dispatch of the division forces.

3. The division's deployment to Cuba took too long, which resulted in [the following]:

- the regiments armed with R-14 missiles did not reach Cuba, and Cde. Solovyov's regiment did not arrive in full;
- the dramatically increased intensity of traffic created a situation where at a given time only the missile regiments were being unloaded in all Cuban ports, which made disguise more difficult and could have led to premature discovery of the nature of the troops;
- the organization of command of the units was impeded because the division headquarters arrived in Cuba after the deployment of Cdes. Sidorov and Bandilovsky's regiments on the island;
- the tropical storm season was not taken into account at all.

In our view, the transfer of the division's troops to Cuba should have taken place in between deployment of units of the Air Defense Forces and should have started earlier, taking into consideration the fact that the months of September and October are a period of heavy tropical rains. The first ships should have brought the engineer-sapper platoons and geodesic teams, and part of the headquarters, as I had reported. It was inexpedient to send the missiles on the first ships.

3. The division assumes combat readiness

Following the decision of the command of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba, the division had the following schedule for achieving combat readiness:

- regiments armed with R-12 missiles – by 11.01.62;
- regiments armed with R-14 missiles – depending on the time of the completion of construction and installation works, in the period from 11.01.62 through 01.01.63.

Depending on when the R-14 complexes would become operational and when the troops would arrive, the division planned the following dates to assume combat readiness:

Cde. Sidorov's regiment – 10.20.62;

Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment – 10.25.62;

Cde. Solovyov's regiment – 11.01.62;

Cde. Kovalenko's regiment:

1st battalion by 11.07.62;

2nd battalion by 12.01.62;

Cde. Cherkesov's regiment:

1st battalion by 12.01.62;

2nd battalion by 01.01.63.

The combat readiness of the main deployment areas [*OPR*] of the regiments armed with R-14 missiles depended on the progress of construction work, the delivery of equipment, installation and testing, which were clearly delayed (the installation crews had no equipment for a whole month).

Following the General Staff's directive No. 76438 from September 8, 1962, to bring the troops into combat readiness as quickly as possible, engineering works were conducted at the field deployment areas around the clock. The testing of missile equipment and comprehensive training were conducted only at night in full compliance with all measures of camouflage. When the blockade of Cuba was announced, all work was conducted only at night. Simultaneously with the engineering works on the field deployment area equipment, the ground-based equipment was checked for operability and number of the missiles. By October 15, all the warheads stored at the group storage facility were thoroughly tested by the division's missile technical base.

By 10.20.62, the radio-relay communication system was prepared, tested, but not employed with the regiments of Cdes. Bandilovsky (100 km) and Solovyov (80 km). It was not possible to establish radio-relay communications with the regiment of Cde. Sidorov because of the large distance (250 km). By that same time, all radio facilities were deployed and operational. Due to the instability and unreliability of telephone communications, starting from 00:00 hours of 10.20.62, the radio networks operated on 24-hour listening reception. Thus, for all intents and purposes the command of the troops from the division's control post and control posts of individual units was ready by the end of the day of 10.20.62.

On 10.20.62, Cde. Sidorov's regiment achieved full combat readiness.

Continuous tropical rains delayed the completion of engineering work in the deployment areas of Cde. Bandilovsky's and Solovyov's regiments. Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment was in a

particularly adverse situation; from October 20-22 two companies of the division's engineering-sapper battalion were deployed to assist it.

At 18:00 hours on 10.22.62, the U.S. government announced the blockade of Cuba.

At 05:40 hours on 10.23.62, the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Cuba gave an order to bring all the Revolutionary Armed Forces to combat readiness. A state of military emergency was declared in the republic.

By 08:00 hours of 10.23.62, the division units were put on high alert. Cde. Sidorov's regiment, which achieved combat readiness on 10.20.62, was ready to carry out its assigned task. Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment and the 2nd battalion of Cde. Solovyov's regiment were in essence ready to carry out their assigned tasks, even though the engineering works on the field deployment areas were not completely finished.

At 11:30 hours on 10.23.62, two American fighter jets flying at an altitude of 100-150 meters entered Cuba's airspace and flew over the battle formations of Cdes. Solovyov and Bandilovsky's regiments.

At 11:32 hours two American airplanes flew over the battle formations of Cde. Sidorov's regiment, and at 12:00 hours over the battle formations of Cde. Cherkesov's regiment.

From that moment on, American airplanes began flying systematic, unimpeded reconnaissance flights over the territory of Cuba and the division's battle formations with impunity at altitudes of 50-100 m. These flights continued until 10.27.62, i.e. until the moment when the U-2 plane was shot down at the altitude of 21 km, and the F-106 aircraft at a low altitude by the air defense forces of the Cuban army.¹

It was later established that the U.S. Air Force had engaged with impunity in systematic reconnaissance and photography of Cuban territory starting from 08.01.62 while flying outside the range of the Cuban Army's air defense radars.

Thus, in August they made 60 sorties over Cuban territory, while the Cuban air defense forces registered only 10. In September they made 23 sorties, and 7 were discovered. Up until 10.22.62, U.S. airplanes made 71 flights over Cuba.

In these difficult conditions of a sharply deteriorating international situation, the realistic possibility of an outbreak of hostilities, and the return of part of our ships to the USSR, in order to ensure Cde. Solovyov's regiment's combat readiness, on the night of 10.24.62, I gave an order to withdraw the reserve and a part of the regular fueling equipment units from the regiments of Cdes. Sidorov and Bandilovsky and to transfer them to the regiment of Cde. Solovyov. Cde. Solovyov's regiment also received additional personnel from the same units and Cde.

¹ Information about shooting down a U.S. F-106 is not confirmed by the available U.S. records

Kovalenko's regiment to account for the missing personnel. Because of this arrangement, optimized schedules of preparation for the first launch were worked out for each regiment, taking into account the shortage of fueling equipment.

By the end of the day of 10.25.62, Cde. Solovyov's regiment was fully staffed and equipped. To equip the regiment, 20 officers, 203 sergeants and soldiers, 10 units 8G210 and 6 units 8G113, including 44 people, 5 units 8G131, 2 units 8G210 and 3 units 8G113 were transferred from Cde. Sidorov's regiment from a distance of 480 km.

On 10.24.62 the troops' headquarters were practically finished organizing interaction with motorized infantry regiments to defend the field deployment areas.

By the end the day of 10.25.62, Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment and the second battalion of Cde. Solovyov's regiment were brought to combat readiness.

Incessant U.S. aircraft flights over the location of our troops created the danger of revealing the division's deployment. In order to remove the troops from the danger of a possible attack, the division command made a decision on 10.24.62 to select new field deployment areas to maneuver.

The implementation of this decision was hindered by the lack of spare sets of SP-6 . On 10.25.62, the division engineers found a way to replace the SP-6 with available spare parts that could be used in field conditions.

On 10.26.62 the decision was reported to the Deputy Commander of the Soviet Group of Forces and the Deputy Commander of the Headquarters of the Missile Forces. Only the government's decision to withdraw the division from Cuba suspended the preparation and implementation of this maneuver.

Due to the threat of a bombing and striking attack by the U.S. aircraft on the division, early in the morning on 10.24.62, the command of the Cuban army decided to remove a significant part of Havana's air defense systems and transfer them to cover the missile regiments. At the same time, the troops were given an order to disperse all the equipment [from central storage] to the field deployment areas.

Every launch battalion was covered by one 57-mm and two 37-mm anti-aircraft batteries. Additionally, two 100-mm anti-aircraft batteries were used to cover the port of La Isabela, where at the time the MS "Aleksandrovsk" was stationed with warheads, and the battalions of Cde. Sidorov.

Thus, the total assigned number was:

37-mm batteries – 12;

57-mm batteries – 4;

100-mm batteries – 2.

The division control post was covered by two platoons of 23-mm guns, taken from the ships.

In order to reduce the amount of time to prepare for the first launch by Cde. Sidorov's regiment, on the night of the 26th-27th of October the warheads were moved over a distance of 500 km from the group storage facility to the field deployment area.

By the end of the day of 10.27.62, the first battalion of Cde. Solovyov's regiment was brought to combat readiness and the inspection of the missiles was completed.

Conclusion

1. In carrying out the special government task, the division personnel exhibited a high sense of responsibility for the task, selfless devotion to the Communist Party and the Soviet government.

2. In the adverse situation of a sharp escalation of tensions in the international arena, the blockade of Cuba and the immediate threat of an air strike, the personnel worked selflessly in uncustomary tropical conditions to bring the 51st missile division to combat readiness ahead of schedule:

- Cde. Sidorov's regiment deployed on the island of Cuba in the period from September 9 through October 8th, 1962, and 12 days after the arrival of the last ship, on October 20th it reached full combat readiness.
- Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment deployed on the island of Cuba from September 16th through October 15th, 1962, and 10 days after the arrival of the last ship, on October 25th it reached full combat readiness;
- Cde. Solovyov's regiment deployed on the island of Cuba in the period from October 6th through October 22nd, 1962. Three days after the last ship reached the port, before the blockade was announced, one battalion reached combat readiness by October 25th and the second battalion by October 27th despite the fact that some equipment did not arrive.

3. Therefore, the 51st missile division concentrated in Cuba and reached full combat readiness 48 days from the moment of arrival of the first ship; i.e. on October 27th, 1962, the division was able to deliver a strike from all 24 launchers.

Due to the fact that structure No. 20 was not completed and the warheads were stored at a group storage facility at a distance of 110 km from Cde. Solovyov's regiment, 150 km from Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment, and 480 km from Cde. Sidorov's regiment, as well as the deficiency of

fuel resources, the regiments' [combat]readiness was determined according to the [newly] prepared schedules:

- Cde. Solovyov's and Bandilovsky's regiments – 14-16 hours;
- Cde. Sidorov's regiment –24 hours, and after October 27th, 1962, when the warheads were dispersed to the field deployment area – 10 hours.

4. Relocation of the division to the Soviet Union

At 15:00 hours on October 28, 1962, the Commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Cuba gave me directive No. 7665 from October 28th, 1962, in which USSR Minister of Defense, on the basis of the decision of the Soviet government, ordered the dismantling of the launching sites, and the relocation of the division to the Soviet Union in full.

In the period from October 29th through October 31st, 1962, division units completed the dismantling of the launching sites in full.

At 15:30 hours on 10.31.62, at a meeting with Acting Secretary General U Thant, Ambassador to Cuba Cde. Alekseyev and I reported that the launching sites had been completely dismantled.

At 12:00 hours on 11.01.62, a directive of the USSR Ministry of Defense came through that ordered to load all the missiles on the available ships before November 7th, 1962, and send them to the Soviet Union no later than November 10th.

The missiles were to be loaded on the decks of the ships. In fulfillment of the directive, by 11.02.62 all missiles were concentrated in the ports of loading. The loading began on 11.03.62 and was completed on 11.08.62.

The shipping of the missiles took place in extremely complex and difficult circumstances. It so happened that by that time the ships available in Cuba were old models, their decks were cluttered with various add-ons; usually there were no heavy booms available, and the loading ports were poorly equipped with crane facilities. The loading work never stopped, day or night.

MS "Divnogorsk" was the first ship to leave Port of Mariel with four missiles on board at 15:30 hours on 11.05.62.

The last 8 missiles left Port Casilda on the MS "Leninsky Komsomol" at 08:30 hours on 11.09.62.

The Soviet government's decision and the order of the USSR Minister of Defense to withdraw the missiles from Cuba were fulfilled ahead of schedule.

In the period from November 1st through November 9th, 12 ships were loaded, including one passenger ship, and sent to the Soviet Union:

Personnel – 3239 people;

Missiles – 42;

Equipment – 1056 units.

In connection with the approach of the necessary ships from the Soviet Union, the division's relocation was divided into two stages.

The second stage started on November 18th, 1962, with the loading of the MS "Chernyakhovsk."

During the second stage the ships were loaded and sent off with the following:

Personnel – 3716 people;

Equipment – 985 units.

It should be noted that our ships arriving in Cuban ports with commercial cargo took a very long time to unload. Ships idled during unloading for 7-10 days and more, while loading took on average 2-3 days, maximum 4 days, even in the absence of crane facilities and with finding ballast and loading the ships with it.

In fulfillment of the directive of the USSR Minister of Defense, No. 76676 from November 1st, 1962, we transferred to the units of the Group and left in Cuba:

A motor company, a battalion motor repair workshop, the engineering-sapper battalion and the field bakery in full;

Radio transmitters – 18;

In total, we transferred to the Group:

Officers – 14;

Soldiers and sergeants – 937;

Automobiles – 402.

The loading of personnel and equipment on ships was completed on December 12, 1962.

Conclusion

1. Thus, a total of 24 ships were loaded, including 4 passenger ships, which took back to the Soviet Union:

Officers – 1390;

Sergeants and soldiers – 5225;

Civilian service personnel of the Soviet Army – 90;

Totaling 7005 [persons];

Missiles – 42;

Equipment – 2041 units;

Missiles and equipment were sent to the Soviet Union in proper working condition.

The morale of the personnel was healthy, military discipline was satisfactory.

The vast majority of the officers and sergeants and soldiers carried out the special government task with a high sense of responsibility and showed exceptional organization and discipline.

The personnel spared neither time nor effort in deploying the division in Cuba and bringing it to combat readiness, in order to become a formidable fighting force against the American aggressors as soon as possible. In the darkest days for the cause of the Cuban Revolution, they were ready to give their lives to carry out any order from the Communist Party and the Soviet government with honor.

High communist consciousness, unity, good combat training, dedication to communism and proletarian internationalism – these traits were instilled in our soldiers through the hard and purposeful work of the commanders, political workers, party and Komsomol organizations.

The regiments of Cdes. Solovyov and Sidorov were the best in organization, military discipline, and military and political training. In these regiments there were no emergencies or gross violations of military discipline.

However, regiment commander Cde. Bandilovsky was removed from his post, held responsible before the Party, and sent back to the Soviet Union for his irresponsible attitude to the task, low standards, carelessness and complacency in the most crucial period for the division.

[In Cde. Bandilovsky's] regiment, during the transportation of missile cranes, due to the unorganized nature of the march, Lieutenant Plisko and Corporal Boryushkin were killed and several people were injured. There were 14 unauthorized absences, cases of failure to follow orders, and drunkenness.

Cde. Kovalenko, who was temporarily assigned as commander of the regiment, was able to bring the unit to order in one week.

On November 5, 1962, there was an accident in Cde. Romanov's regiment – a Cuban citizen was killed in a collision with our vehicle, and his car burned down.

The division command and political department took strong measures to restore order in this unit. Cde. Romanov will face disciplinary measures and Party responsibility in the Soviet Union.

Unit commander Cde. Colonel Krivstov also displayed poor quality as a commander on the Cuban soil. He engaged in drinking, cronyism, and showed confusion and indecisiveness.

Division command raised the question of removing him from his post, and the Party commission gave him a severe reprimand that went into his party record.

General conclusions and recommendations

1. Carrying out a special and important government task, the 51st missile division worked selflessly to achieve combat readiness with three regiments and was able to make a full division launch within 16 hours of receiving an order from the Soviet government.

2. Experience has confirmed the possibility of transferring troops and strategic missile forces by rail and water for any distance and to bring them into combat readiness on a tight schedule.

The division's actions in Cuba showed that the forces armed with R-12 missiles can carry out a maneuver and attack from newly selected and poorly equipped field deployment areas in 15-20 days.

3. To enhance the maneuverability of regiments armed with R-14 missiles, it is necessary to create a mobile version of ground equipment and refine the SP-7. Mobility and invulnerability of missile forces can be achieved by having lightweight and compact ground equipment, and solid-fuel missiles.

4. In addition to a stationary command post in the division and regiments, it would be good to have a reserve mobile command center with reduced personnel and full equipment and controls, which would make it possible to deploy command and control immediately upon arrival, without waiting for full deployment of a stationary command post. After full deployment, the mobile command post could be used as a reserve command post, without being tied to one of the regiments' command posts.

5. The division's deployment positions in Cuba were overextended. Experience with organizing and securing command of the regiments showed that reliable command of the regiments located farther than 100-120 km becomes very difficult ([such as] Cde. Sidorov's regiment). The most expedient distance between the command post of the division and the regiment is 50-80 km.

At the same time, we should note one of the positive factors in our experience with command was the complete eradication of paper correspondence. All necessary instructions were given orally or through liaison officers, using short signals and code.

As an example of this, at home we received over 800 papers monthly, and sent out 500 papers. During our work in Cuba, during the most critical time we received only 10 papers and sent out 15. Consequently, we can live without a large flow of paper and unnecessary correspondence.

6. Experience has shown that it is necessary to resolutely change the organizational and staff structure of the missile forces. The division should consist of three-four battalion-size brigades with three separate launch battalions and missile technical brigades (the number of brigades based on the number of launchers). This would increase the mobility of the missile forces and allow the brigade to carry out independent tasks.

In the Soviet Union, each brigade should have 6-9 minimally prepared missile deployment areas (prepared access roads and on-site roads, established geodesic positioning, and installed SP-6s), which would be monitored by small guard units.

The battalions would enter these field deployment areas only when alert situation in the country was announced.

For the purposes of training and carrying out combat duty, there should be one division main deployment area at a distance of 5-10km from the main military base living quarters . The field deployment areas should be located far away from populated areas; the distance between the deployment areas should be within 20-40 km.

7. The current standard camouflage methods and techniques cannot completely disguise the location of missile forces with the modern development of photographic reconnaissance.

To ensure the full and absolute reliability of concealment of the missile forces it is necessary to create fundamentally new means of camouflage.

In my opinion, there should be a source of invisible rays capable of distorting a photograph or completely exposing the film.

8. Experience has shown that when the division is operating in isolation, it is necessary to add the following units to the composition of the division:

- a combat training unit that would be responsible first and foremost for planning and organization of special training; the unit should have a chain of instructors;
- an engineering-sapper battalion consisting of two-three engineering-sapper companies and one or two road and bridge companies;
- an air defense post and a chemical defense platoon;
- when acting on foreign territory, the division should have anti-aircraft systems to directly cover the battle formations from low altitudes.

Attachment to the main report

SOME ISSUES OF OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL CAMOUFLAGE DURING THE ACTIONS OF THE DIVISION IN CUBA

From the first days, when the advanced reconnaissance team arrived in Cuba, and later when the troops arrived, the question of operational and tactical camouflage was one of our utmost priorities. Even the initial investigation of the island of Cuba, its geographical and climatic conditions, population and lifestyle showed that it would be impossible to sustain a lengthy concealment of the large number of the deploying troops and the varied and oversized equipment of the missile forces under any cover story.

This position was later fully confirmed in practice. Let us discuss a number of issues that were not fully developed in the main report.

1. Namely, starting with the primary factor, which is that it would have been impossible to hide the landing and deployment of troops for long, considering the close proximity of U.S. borders, the large number of enemy agents, our overextended communications and Cuba's still insufficiently streamlined security of its borders from the air, land, and sea. This factor clearly shows that our first step should have been to make sure that Cuba's airspace was secure and all reconnaissance flights by American planes were forbidden. This would have allowed us a longer period of time to conceal the troop movements, their deployment in field deployment areas and bringing them to combat readiness.

Significantly, the Cuban air defense radar system allowed them to monitor U.S. reconnaissance aircraft at altitudes only up to 8-10 km. At altitudes above 8-10 km the U.S. reconnaissance aircraft were flying constantly with impunity and with no control over them.

Thus, for the period from August 1st through October 22nd, the Cuban air defense system discovered only 20% of all the American reconnaissance flights over the entire territory of the island.

The international fly zones for foreign aircraft over Cuba in practice went unobserved, which allowed the Americans to photograph the entire territory of the island not only from high altitudes, but from low altitudes as well (150-200 m).

The air defense system of the Group of Forces in Cuba was brought to combat readiness on 10.01.62 and was on combat duty, but for some reason it was allowed to turn on its radar tracking system only on 10.26.62, and already on October 27th the U-2 plane was shot down at an altitude of 21 km.

Thus, the debarkation of the troops in Cuba and their actions were constantly monitored from the air.

We believe that the air defense units of the Soviet Group of Forces in Cuba did not fulfill their mission in Cuba, which was to cover and secure the main strike force – the missile forces. Naturally, this allowed the U.S. to partially uncover the formation and location of our troops during the most demanding and stressful period.

2. In assessing the natural camouflage features available on the island of Cuba, it was mistakenly assumed that palm groves (forests) would be a suitable location to station the missiles. However, in reality it is almost impossible to use them to camouflage something from aerial surveillance, because their camouflage capabilities are extremely limited.

The measurements taken on the ground clearly show that on average there are 50 palms per hectare, i.e. the distance between the individual palm trees is 12-15 m. Palm crowns are small, around 3-4 m in diameter.

Thus, trees would cover only 1/16th of an area of a hectare. With this kind of camouflage capacity of palm groves, it would be impossible to covertly place large missile equipment in the groves without conducting a significant amount of additional camouflage work.

The deployment areas of the missile battalions were located on an area of 6-10 km². On this limited area it was necessary to conduct camouflage work to conceal not only the equipment and personnel, but also to hide the full range of engineering activities to equip the deployment areas and shelter for the personnel, to hide the battle formations and the combat activity of the launch battalion.

The timely completion of all planned camouflage work was made very difficult by the exceptionally large amount of engineering work that needed to be done on relatively small areas in a limited amount of time, as well as the accumulation of large quantities of equipment nearby.

From the standard camouflage equipment, the division had only camouflage nets, which could be used to disguise only individual pieces of equipment. The color of PVC film was absolutely inappropriate for the local conditions.

The camouflage work of launch positions was also complicated by the fact that in addition to installing the SP-6 sites, due to the nature of the soil and topography, as well as the weather conditions, we had to macadamize the sites and even make concrete platforms for the missile cranes and carts with the warheads. This kind of work on the deployment areas sharply increased the amount of camouflage work that needed to be done (in comparison to a regular installation of SP-6 on the ground) and changed the nature of the camouflage. It was no longer enough to camouflage individual units located on the launching pad. We had to disguise the entire launching site. The principle of the camouflage was no longer the disguise of certain types of equipment, but first and foremost the disguise of the launching site and approaches to it.

To conduct a full range of concealment measures to camouflage the deployment areas we would need a certain amount of time, which we absolutely did not have in the circumstances.

It is known that the missile forces had an extremely small amount of time to build their deployment areas and get to combat readiness, because the division deployed to Cuba last (later than other forces and units).

The amount of time allotted to us in the plan to get to combat readiness made it necessary for us to conduct construction work on deployment positions around the clock. In the circumstances of a deteriorating international situation, the missile forces reached combat readiness ahead of schedule, which did not allow us to complete the full range of engineering and camouflage works.

Thus, by the morning of 10.23.62, the division troops were put on high alert, all special equipment was deployed on the launch pads. The existing ground cable network limited our ability to disperse the special vehicles on launch sites and made their camouflage more difficult in some deployment areas, especially ones with poor vegetation.

The General Staff directive designated regions to select field deployment areas in difficult mountain ranges of Sierra del Rosario and Sierra del Escambray with poor vegetation and few naturally disguised areas to position the missiles.

As the result of the work of our reconnaissance groups, with the permission of the Commander of the Group of Forces, several new areas were designated and selected, which were not identified by the directive. The selected regions are the best and are located on hilly terrain with rich natural vegetation.

The flat areas, hidden from outside observation by high hills on all four sides, make it possible to easily position the launch pads and all the ground equipment of the division. The regions are sparsely populated, the areas of cultivated land are insignificant.

Twice the selected areas were not approved: the first time – the regions of Aguacate, Ceiba Mocha, and Mendoza, because they did not correspond with the directive of the General

Staff. The second time – the regions of Coliseo, Limonar, Argamonte, and Haguey Grande, because they were located in the area of an international air corridor, *even though according to the General Staff's initial operational directive the entire regiment of Cde. Petrov was [supposed to be] located north-east of the Escambray in the international air route corridor. At the same time, it should be noted that when we received our instructions in Moscow, we were directed to more independent work in selecting the areas, and to evaluate our capabilities on the ground.*

Given the situation that developed and our capabilities, and under the continuing U.S. reconnaissance overflights, all debarkation of missiles in the Ports of Mariel and Casilda and their transportation to the field deployment areas were exceptionally carefully planned and organized ahead of time. All missiles were unloaded only at night. The transportation of missiles and large equipment to the deployment areas was done using various cover stories and only at night (from 01:00 to 05:00 hours).

This and only this, it seems, made it possible in the period from 09.09.62 through 10.22.62 to covertly unload and transport all our missiles and parts and the large-sized equipment, shelter them in deployment areas and prepare for combat in a short amount of time.

Without exception, all the work at the deployment areas related to transportation, lifting and installation of the missiles on the launch pads was done only in [conditions of] limited visibility (at night) following all the camouflage measures.

3. The island of Cuba itself is an island of volcanic origin, predominantly made up of rocky ground, covered in some places by a small layer of red soil. Due to the special climatic conditions (tropical storms) and the nature of the soil, the possibility of building log-and-dirt structures on the island of Cuba is quite limited. The division and headquarters personnel were housed in (tent) camps.

A directive from the General Staff of the Armed Forces ordered us to use the guidelines of the USSR Armed Forces when housing the troops in tent cities.

One of the telltale signs of the location of our troops were these tent cities, which were impossible to hide from the aerial surveillance.

Another telltale characteristic that revealed the affiliation of the missile forces was the transfer of concrete constructions (arches to build structures No. 20 and others) from the USSR to Cuba. There was no need to make this transfer. Cuban plants for production of reinforced concrete were capable of filling all orders for our missile forces that had to do with building the launch pads, plus the constructions themselves should have been replaced.

During the building of the R-14 missile positions by the construction units of the Group, the camouflage efforts during construction were clearly insufficient. Construction sites for the production of structural elements were deployed near the launching sites, the storage places for

construction materials were in the open and not sufficiently disguised. Construction work was done mostly only during daylight hours.

4. The advance reconnaissance team was sent from Moscow on the first scheduled flight as “experts of civil aviation,” which was officially announced in the Soviet press (“Pravda” from 07.14.62).

When they arrived in Cuba, the reconnaissance team was introduced as “agricultural specialists.” Participants of the “technical flight of the Tu-114 airplane” were not informed en route that they had to switch to a new cover story.

The relevant Cuban authorities and the Soviet embassy in Cuba were not informed in advance of the arrival of the advance reconnaissance team. Because of this, a proper meeting of the “experts” was not arranged beforehand, and they had to wait for three hours in the Havana airport. Following this, the decision was made with some difficulty to house them in the buildings for air defense specialists. In a little while, these “agricultural specialists” were transferred and housed in Havana – “Punto Uno” (reserve command post of the Cuban army), in a group of buildings that belong to the military organizations of the Cuban army, which was well known to the local population.

We think that in these questions operational disguise was not carefully thought out and completed.

5. In our opinion, the very decision to deploy the division’s units after almost all forces of the Group of Forces were already in Cuba was not sufficiently substantiated. Subsequently, this led to the situation where in the period of September-October the ships arriving in Cuban ports carried mostly units and equipment of the missile forces. The large concentration of special vehicles and large equipment in the ports of debarkation inevitably attracted the attention of the local population, and consequently, of intelligence agents.

The climatic conditions of the island of Cuba were not sufficiently considered during the planning of the division’s deployment. The missile forces disembarked, deployed in the field deployment areas and did construction work during the height of the tropical rains, which naturally delayed the timeframe for reaching combat readiness, affected the secrecy and put the troops in very difficult conditions. It is known that missile forces need much more time to reach combat readiness than other units of the Armed Forces.

We believe that the division units should have been deployed much earlier (August-September), together with other types of forces and services of the Armed Forces (with the missile defense units [ZURS] and others).

All construction materials (wood, metal, cement) should have been transported separately from military transport, as commercial cargo, which would have considerably lightened the burden of the troops and thereby sharply reduced the amount of preparation time.

The amount of work the personnel spent in unloading and receiving construction materials and transporting them was unreasonable and detrimental to their main task; a great deal of the personnel's time and effort was consumed with that.

6. A careful study of the aerial photographs published in the American magazine "Time" No. 18 from October [sic] 2, 1962,² confirms:

- the total impunity of the unimpeded flights of American spy planes and the imperfection of the Cuban air defense system. All the photographs published in the magazine were taken on dates when the air defense system reported no airplanes over Cuban territory;

- the systematic photography and monitoring of the entire territory of the island began long before the missile forces arrived in Cuba.

However, the images taken from high altitude give only a general picture of the location of the troops and the typical local objects without interpreting the disguised special equipment and weapons.

Only after October 22, 1962, while flying over the combat positions after all the major works were completed and the units were practically combat-ready, after repeated photography from low altitudes (150-200 m), the Americans got indirect confirmation of the presence of missile forces in Cuba.

The pictures taken at these altitudes can be fully decoded to determine the nature and identity of all, even the camouflaged, missiles and sites (the photo of the field deployment area of Cde. Bandilovsky's regiment).

It should be noted that our camouflage nets, tailored to mid-latitude vegetation, presented as a completely different tone amid the firm and shiny tropical foliage when seen from an altitude of 100-150 m. Even the squares on the nets can be easily deciphered on a photo with resolution of 100 or more lines per millimeter.

However, despite all the sophistication of modern photography, the Americans failed to get shots of our missiles during their transfer from the ports of debarkation, and in field deployment areas.

Conclusion:

² Mistake in the original, the author means Time Magazine no. 18 from November 2, 1962

In our view, the strategic operation of landing troops in Cuba with the missile forces should have been planned [to be carried out] in a shorter time frame and probably with fewer troops; it should have been more mobile and sudden.

The deployment of the missile forces themselves should have been carried out in two phases: during the first phase the units armed with R-12 missiles should have deployed and brought to combat readiness. Then, only after a public military agreement with the Cuban government was signed, during the second stage units armed with R-14 missiles should have been deployed and brought to combat readiness.

The entire operation should have been preceded by at least a minimal introduction to and study of the economic potential of the state, the local physiographic conditions and military-political situation in the country [Cuba] by the people who were supposed to carry out this task. This would have made it possible to solve some critical problems and questions more quickly and easily, starting with the deployment of the troops and up to bringing them to combat readiness.

The issue of resolutely searching for an entirely new technical means to camouflage from aerial photography should be given immediate and adequate attention.

All of the above in no way detracts from the outcome of the operation and the truly heroic efforts of all of the division personnel.

Commander of the 51st Missile Division, Major General I.D. Statsenko

[Source: *Strategicheskaiia Operatsiia Anadyr: Kak eto bylo* [Strategic Operation Anadyr: How It Was], (Moscow: MOOVIK-Poligrafresursy, 2000), ed. by V.I. Yesin. Translated by Anna Melyakova and Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive.]