

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Subject: Gen. Makhmut A. Gareev

Position: Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Scientific Work and Operational Readiness (1984-1989); Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff for Training and Readiness (1977-1984); Chief of the Tactical Training Directorate of the General Staff (1974-1977)

Location: Subject's home in Moscow

Interviewer: John G. Hines

Date/Time: June 20, 1993, 12:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Language: Russian

Prepared: Based on notes

Q: Why did the General Staff decide to put nuclear warheads on operational-tactical and tactical missiles?

A: Because it was possible. The General Staff thought that tactical nuclear weapons were a good idea once their yield was small enough to avoid friendly casualties. No serious disagreements regarding tactical nuclear weapons arose between defense industrialists and the operational military.

Q: Was the employment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe expected to slow down a Soviet advance?

A: The General Staff conducted quantitative analysis in the early 1970s on the effects of battlefield nuclear weapons and found that if those weapons were used, all significant movement would cease for several days. Before the 1970s, the GS expected the rate of advance to be 20 - 30 km per day with only conventional forces and 40 - 50 km employing nuclear weapons.

Q: East German NVA [National People's Army] documents describe nuclear use, including nuclear preemption, in Warsaw Pact exercises before 1981. Was this evidence of the Soviet intention to initiate nuclear use in the European theater?

A: No. The Soviet Armed Forces did not plan to use nuclear weapons first and were forbidden to exercise initiation of nuclear use. All exercises, tactical to operational-strategic, passed through my hands from 1974 to 1988. Before that I was assigned to high-level staff and command positions in various Western military districts, and I would almost certainly have known if such a scenario were used.

Soviet forces exercised for many reasons: (1) to train command, staff, and troops; (2) to test new operational concepts; and (3) to prepare forces for execution of war plans. In training, we often included nuclear strikes in scenarios because we assumed that NATO would employ nuclear weapons and that we must be prepared to respond and to continue operations under nuclear conditions. In most exercises we would train people in all possible requirements in the event of war and most armies of the world that I'm aware of do that.

Q: Was "dosage use" considered an option against the U.S. or only in Europe?

A: Intercontinental selective use might have been considered but would be very likely to lead to a general nuclear exchange. The level at which "dosage use" was given any serious thought was within the TVD.⁴⁷

Q: If the U.S. had launched a selective strike on one or two radars in the USSR, how would the Soviet High Command have reacted?

A: Any initial selective nuclear use by the U.S. against Soviet missile attack-detection radars as a signal to the Soviet leadership would be extremely dangerous. The Soviet military almost certainly would regard such an attack as a precursor strike against Soviet radars to be followed immediately by strikes against central systems. We very likely would assume we were under general attack and would launch massively.

Q: Are there specific examples of weapon systems that were developed despite objections from the General Staff or were produced in larger numbers than the GS wanted?

A: First, many in the GS opposed development of aircraft carriers. Second, the Ministry of Defense opposed the development and deployment of mobile ICBMs but ultimately was overruled by the defense industrialists. Third, in 1964, as a division commander, I had major problems with high failure rates of tank engines and demanded a program overhaul from the Ministry of Defense Industries, but to no avail.

Q: In what year was the "all or nothing" command and control system replaced by a system that allowed launches from individual sites?

A: In the early 1970s when MIRVs were deployed.

Q: In the 1960s, did Soviet plans for a preemptive strategic nuclear strike envisage participation of naval forces?

A: No. SLBMs only had accuracy for use against economic potential and industrial infrastructure and therefore were very poor weapons for anything but retaliatory strikes. Communications to SSBNs were not sufficiently responsive to rely on in an initial response or a retaliatory-meeting strike. Even in a retaliatory strike, there was a high enough probability that the control system to the submarines would be damaged that SSBNs were not a very reliable retaliatory system.

Q: In your written comments prepared in April you noted that the military was not represented in the final phase of key defense decisions such as, for example, the move into Afghanistan. You said that Ustinov was involved, but that he was not military. What effect did Ustinov have on the military's role and influence when he became Minister of Defense in 1976?

A: At first, for the first year to year and a half, the effect was positive in the sense that, as the most influential industrialist he was able to cut through the bureaucracy and disagreements between the MoD and the industrialists and get things done. After all, they were his people. Then we realized that we had been taken over by the enemy. He really wasn't representing the interests of the military.

⁴⁷ TVD — *Teatr voennykh deistvii* — Theater of (Strategic) Military Action, for example, Central Europe from Ukraine to the western shore of Ireland.

Q: Throughout the late 1960s, the 1970s and early 1980s several military and civilian military-industrial institutes, using quantitative analysis and models of various kinds, had carried out extensive analysis of the likely forms of warfare and the forces that would be needed to carry out such warfare. Did this analysis actually affect decisions taken at higher levels?

A: Not really, because nothing ever changed. The industrialists kept producing what they wanted to produce and the desires of the military customers [*zakazchiki*] continued to be ignored.