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MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SECURITY

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MOBILITY OF CORPS IN CAMPAIGNS DISCUSSED

Hanoi TAP CHI QUAN DOI NHAN DAN in Vietnamese Dec 83 pp 39-44

[Article by Sen Col Vu Dinh Thuoc: "The Mobility of Corps in Campaigns"]

[Text] Mobility is a basic activity of combined-arms corps [binh doan] in campaigns, especially modern campaigns. Moving at the right time, rapidly, and with secrecy and surprise is one of the decisive factors enabling the corps to victoriously fulfill their battle and campaign missions.

In campaigns, mobility is the organized movement of troops and units to new positions (areas or locations) in accordance with the intentions and orders of the person commanding the campaign or battle. Mobility is intended to attain many different objectives. The most common objective of mobility is taking more advantageous positions and creating a new deployment for forces and facilities, with highly concentrated efforts, to defeat the enemy in the key areas at the decisive times. In offensive campaigns, the mobility of corps can be intended to attain such specific objectives as changing the deployment (formation) of a campaign, concentrating forces in the main direction of attack, surrounding the enemy troops and attacking them from the rear, etc. In a defensive campaign, combined-arms corps can be moved to reinforce the forces and facilities in the main defensive areas, carry out counterattacks and counter-surprise attacks, taking a new defensive zone (or line), attacking enemy troops in the areas where they are off-guard or weak, attacking the enemy troops by carrying out boomerang attacks or airborne landings, etc. The mobility of combined-arms corps in campaigns can also be intended to attain other specific objectives, such as feints to mislead the enemy, replacing other corps, moving to the assembly area of forces and facilities which will participate in a new campaign, etc.

Our army accumulated much rich, unique experience in the movement of combined-arms corps, and infantry, artillery, tank, anti-aircraft, and other divisions and regiments in the recent patriotic wars. In the conflicts with aggressor armies and lackey armies with many modern mobility facilities and advanced reconnaissance facilities, our army moved promptly, rapidly, secretly, and safely on roads hundreds and thousand of kilometers long, on complicated jungles-and-mountains terrain, principally by means of the feet of the cadres and men, and won increasingly larger victories in the campaigns. Our army also gained experience regarding the organization and execution of mobility by relatively large and large forces, combined-arms corps, and infantry,

artillery, tank, anti-aircraft, and missile divisions, regiments, and brigades by combining mechanized facilities with the other mobility facilities in such offensive campaigns as those in Quang Tri, Thua Thien, the Central Highlands, and eastern Nam Bo in 1972, and especially in the General Offensive of the spring of 1975. In that historic strategic offensive, the offensive campaign in the Central Highlands was uniquely successful with regard to the movement of campaign forces. In order to ensure that the movement of campaign forces attained the factors of secrecy and surprise, the campaign command carried out a very intelligent feint campaign to deceive the enemy. The main forces of the campaign were concentrated and used to attack the city of Buon Ma Thuot, but we caused the enemy to think that we would use two main-force divisions to attack Pleiku. While moving the 320th and 10th divisions in the direction of Buon Ma Thuot, our troops built a road to use mechanized facilities in an attack on Pleiku, and maintained radio communications with the two divisions in that area. Therefore, even when we attacked the enemy at Buon Ma Thuot city they could not guess the campaign's main direction of attack and which forces would be used. Many other offensive and counteroffensive campaigns, such as the Route 9-Southern Laos campaign in 1971, the offensive campaign against the enemy troops in Quang Tri and An Loc in 1972, etc., were highly successful in achieving surprise because of the rapid, secret movement of units. Those experiences have great value when we know how to study and develop them so that they can be appropriate to the new conditions of people's war to defend the homeland.

In the campaigns, especially those combining combat arms and armed forces branches, of the war to defend the homeland against the Chinese expansionists and hegemonists there were many new developments in comparison to the past wars. They include new development with regard to the objectives, missions, operational goals, participating forces, operational methods, the scale of the campaign, the terrain on which it will take place, the time of the campaign, etc. Those developments strongly affect the entire process of preparing, organizing, and carrying out campaigns, including the movement of corps in the campaigns. The organization and carrying out of the movement of combined-arms units and the combat arms and armed forces branches include many new contents. The number of corps participating in campaigns has become increasingly large. The corps themselves, including the combined-arms corps and those of the combat arms and armed forces branches, have themselves undergone changes with regard to organization and equipment, with increases in the number of people, weapons, and technical facilities, and in the quantities of ammunition and fuel. The number of mechanized facilities and heavy weapons has increased notably. The mobility modes and facilities on land, on rivers, at sea, and in the air, and mobility by foot, by truck, by surface vessels, by railroad, and by airplane, have developed. The movement of corps can be carried out on many different kinds of terrain, especially in jungles-and-mountains terrain, under unstable meteorological-hydrological conditions, on a road network that has not been highly developed and is of poor quality, and with many rivers, streams, and natural barriers. In the process of moving units, sabotage and hindrance by the enemy on the land, in the air, and even on the water, especially at sea, can take place in a fierce, complicated manner. All of those things pose new requirements in organizing and carrying out the mobility of the corps in campaigns, in order to move forces and facilities promptly, rapidly, secretly, and safely, and make the greatest possible efforts to defeat the enemy troops and do a good job of fulfilling battle and campaign missions.

On the basis of experience in moving forces and facilities in the campaigns against the French colonialists, and especially in fighting the U.S. aggressor army during the recent period, and the initial experiences of the recent campaign maneuvers, it is possible to bring up the following problems regarding the organization and execution of corps movements in campaigns:

1. Drafting accurate force mobility plans.

We all know that no matter what kind of campaign is being organized and carried out, and no matter what the operational conditions, it is necessary to organize and carry out the movement of forces and facilities in campaigns. Therefore, the movement of corps in campaigns must be prepared and carried out actively and according to plan. Force mobility plans must be based on the intentions, decisions, and operational plan of the campaign. The plan must take place in two steps. In the first step, on the basis of the intentions and decisions of the campaign commander the staff organ must study, research, prepare, and calculate such aspects as the combat missions, operational zone, roads, participating forces, the number and quality of roads, the completion times, etc., in order to draft a map and determine problems in organizing and carrying out the movements, and routes along which the corps will be moved. In the second step, after an official order has been given by the campaign commander to implement the operational plan, it is necessary to immediately implement the plan to move the corps, in accordance with the order, the campaign operation plan, and the battle plan.

That is the result of all-round study of the situation of the corps participating in the campaign, including the missions, operational areas, routes, organization, TOE and technical equipment, the length of the route, the quality of the roads, the enemy's activities, the natural obstacles, etc., in order to determine appropriate mobility formations and times, the mobility mode, and the organization of mobility command. Under the conditions of increasingly larger numbers of units participating in campaigns, and more and more forces and technical equipment participating in campaigns, it is necessary to carefully calculate the number and qualities in the area, the main arteries, and each stretch of road, in order to rationally designate alternate routes along the main arteries, the temporary halting areas, and the assembly areas of the corps. Whether it is a short-range movement or a long-range movement, experience has shown that it is necessary to maintain the elements of secrecy and surprise, arrive at the correct location at the designated time, ensure absolute secrecy, and not become lost. The staff organ must organize tight coordination of the forces being moved and support their mobility. It must positively and actively ensure the necessary communications-liaison facilities in order to grasp the situation and provide timely command for the corps. If those mobility plans are to be carried out they must be based on the level and capabilities of the equipment of our army and state, the terrain, the road situation, and the meteorological-hydrological situation, in order to determine the most appropriate plans to move the corps during the campaign. That is a result of detailed, meticulous study and calculation by the campaign command organ.

Actual experience on the battlefields of our country shows that when war breaks out there are only a certain number of roads in a strategic area or on a certain battlefield. Those roads must serve both the movement of the army's forces and facilities and serve the transportation and travel activities of the state and people. The volume of people, facilities, and vehicles on such roads is very great. Therefore, the drafting of mobility plans must be very scientific and specific in order to ensure the mobility of the corps at the right time, rapidly change the comparison of forces between ourselves and the enemy in our favor in the main area of the campaign, contribute to creating a new status and strength for the campaign, and victoriously fulfill the missions posed by strategy.

2. Organizing and preparing roads for movement by the corps.

The road network is the most basic factor in the movement of corps in campaigns on land. The task of organizing and preparing the road network in a number of counteroffensive campaigns, offensive campaigns, and defensive campaigns in the first phase of war to defend the homeland can be carried out under peacetime conditions, and prepared and supplemented prior to and during the process of carrying out the campaign. The road networks of the other campaigns often must be prepared in a very brief period.

In order to have a sufficient number of roads to meet the force mobility requirements, in the present situation of our road network it is essential that we make preparations in wartime and combine the economy with national defense, in accordance with a defense plan for the entire nation. Those roads, and the channels of rivers and along the coast must be prepared gradually, in accordance with the requirements of modern combat, with regard to length and durability of road surfaces, bridges, submerged causeways, fords, embarkation points, roads crossing mountains, alternate routes, etc., in order to ensure mobility both day and night and in both rainy and sunny weather. These must be contingency plans for protecting, repairing, and improving the roads, opposing destruction by the enemy, and overcoming the consequences of destruction by the enemy and by nature, especially in the important areas. It is necessary to concentrate the forces and facilities of the army and state in building a road network in the important strategic areas and in applying many advanced construction methods and techniques in building a network of roads in accordance with the requirement of enabling a large volume of vehicles, people, ships, and facilities of the state and local sectors to move at the same time.

3. Organizing close cooperation in order to move corps promptly and rapidly.

The movement of corps in campaigns cannot be arbitrary and simplistic; all activities require close cooperation between the corps in movement and those engaged in combat, and between the forces in movement and those protecting and supporting mobility. Therefore the corps must move in accordance with a unified plan and with unified command. In plans to coordinate mobility, the corps must specifically determine the missions and actions of the forces and armed forces branches in the process of movement in the campaign area of operations and in each area and zone.

In accordance with such coordination plans, the campaign commander coordinates the actions of the corps and forces by means of unified orders, and promptly commands all actions of those forces, in order to move them at the right time and rapidly, without bottlenecks and piling up. He must concentrate on correct, resolute command at the key mobility points. Especially, it is necessary to cooperate closely with the localities and the relevant units in making specific speculations regarding the distances, stations, the adjustment stations, and the order and times of passage, in order to avoid "road stealing" and bottlenecks at the key junctions. He must provide timely command for the operational officers and the communications, military engineer, anti-aircraft, and MP detachments, and coordinate closely with the local public security and communications-transportation forces in order to move units in correct accordance with the intentions, secretly, safely, and rapidly.

The process of moving corps in campaigns takes place very urgently, with the participation of many combat arms and armed forces branches and with many complicated changes. Thus it is necessary to apply many measures and facilities, including command signals, and deploy communications personnel and facilities at key locations, especially at intersections, pontoon bridges, and submerged crossings, in order to deal promptly and rapidly with all adverse situations. It is necessary to closely coordinate the forces and facilities used to fight the enemy, and to repair, save, and pull vehicles on each road and road segment in order to be prepared for complicated situations created by the enemy, the facilities, and the weather.

In order to strictly implement the plans to coordinate the forces participating in movements, it is necessary to maintain good coordination discipline in order to properly fulfill the missions and decisions of the command commander.

4. Organizing rational mobility formations.

The highest requirements of mobility are ensuring secrecy, safety, and urgency, arriving at the correct locations at the right time, and being prepared to fight the enemy while on the move. An important factor in fulfilling those requirements is organizing rational mobility formations to facilitate the organization of command, ensure speed, time, and safety, and move formations rapidly when necessary. Actual combat experience has shown that the regiment may be made the basic unit in troop movement formations.

Because of the long distances it is necessary to move under fierce enemy attacks, so it is essential when moving to arrange the formations into many elements with rational distances between the elements, with the elements in the lead, the elements in the rear, the command element, and the repair and salvage elements (especially when troops are moved by mechanized means) being parts of the same tight, scientific communication-liaison system, and not allow carelessness and piling up to create an unsafe situation in the mobility process. When speaking of the movement of forces it is necessary to speak of ensuring secrecy and safety for people and facilities. That is also a requirement and content of troop movements. Only thereby is it possible to attain the slogan "to move forces is to change positions and create an advantageous position for our side." Only with such an advantageous status can we have conditions for concentrating superior forces with which to attack the enemy's main forces, organize and win the key, decisive battles, and win complete victory for the campaign.

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DEVELOPMENT OF AIR FORCE OFFICERS SCHOOL REVIEWED

Hanoi TAP CHI QUAN DOI NHAN DAN in Vietnamese No 12, Dec 83 pp 45-55

[Article by Sen Col Phan Hoang Chuong: "The Air Force Command-Technical Officers School on the Path of Development and Maturization"]

[Text] Our people's resistance war against the French colonialists concluded victoriously and the north was totally liberated. When the French Expeditionary Army was kicked out of North Vietnam it dismantled and very seriously damaged the Cat Bi air force base. They boastfully declared that "The Cat Bi airfield is dead. It will take at least 5 to 10 years to fully restore it."

Contrary to the insidious intention of the enemy, within a short period of time we repaired and fully restored the airfield. In October 1958, three Aero-45 aircraft were brought to Cat Bi. Comrades Dinh Ton and Hoang Lien, piloting those first aircraft, circled in the sky above Cat Bi-Hai Phong.

Carrying out a directive of the upper echelon, on 3 November 1958 there was organized a ceremony inaugurating the Air force Basic Training School, called the "Aviation Club," and the commencement of our air force's first pilot training class. On 6 October 1959, after a year of struggling to overcome many initial difficulties, the training class victoriously concluded. Twelve pilots graduated as pilots of trainer aircraft. Although the initial results were small, they contributed to creating great prospects for the later maturization and development of the Vietnamese air force.

Since then, 3 November has been the glorious tradition day of the Air Force Command-Technical Officers School.

The Air Force Command-Technical Officers School, the first training class of which was very small, has now become a full-fledged school in the system of schools of the army and state, a combined training school with two training departments:

-- A department to train technical command officers of the specialized branches and to train pilots in theory. It consists of student battalions and a technical support system consisting of many aircraft, specialized classrooms and modern pilot training equipment.