

*Ismailov Roman Irikovich**lieutenant colonel, lecturer of the Academy of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan***FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

Annotation: The article highlights the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, the difficulties and specific tasks they performed in the initial period.

Keywords: troops, entry into the territory, tasks, opposition

Despite the fact that the operational decision to send a limited contingent of Soviet troops to Afghanistan was made just 13 days before it began, some units began to arrive there in early December 1979. However, the purpose of this action was not explained.

To coordinate the activities of representatives of all Soviet departments in Afghanistan, the Soviet apparatus and troops, an operational group of the USSR Ministry of Defense was formed on December 13, 1979, headed by First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Army General S.F. Akhromeev, who immediately left for Kabul. There, Soviet military representatives got acquainted with the situation in more detail and approved the commissioning plan.

His plan was to introduce a limited contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan via two land and one air routes, quickly occupy all vital areas of the country and ensure the success of another coup d'état.

The plan for the deployment of a limited contingent of Soviet troops to Afghanistan was brought to the commander of the 40th Army, Lieutenant General Yu.V. Tukharinov, on December 13 in the office of the commander of the troops of the Turkestan Military District, Colonel General Yu.P. Maksimov. By this time, the backbone of the army's management and staff had been formed from officers and generals of the staff and services of the Turkestan Military District. Without wasting time, they began intensive training of troops for the upcoming deployment, which took place almost openly. The mobilization of the assigned personnel was carried out. Combat coordination of units was continuously underway at the training grounds: crossings over the Amu Darya were being prepared in the Temrez area.

The general directive for mobilization and preparedness was not given. The troops were put on alert by separate orders after receiving the relevant oral instructions from the Ministry of Defense of the USSR. In total, about 100 formations, units and institutions were deployed and staffed to a full staff. For this purpose, more than 50 thousand officers, sergeants and soldiers were called up from the reserve. First of all, combat formations and units were completed; rear and repair units and organs of the 40th army were mobilized last, some already during the beginning of the entry of troops. For the Turkestan and Central Asian military districts, this was the largest mobilization deployment in all the post-war years. The time of crossing the state border by the Minister of Defense of the USSR was set at 15.00 Moscow time (16.30 Kabul time) on December 25, 1979.

Everything was ready by the appointed time. The day before, the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.L. Sokolov, arrived at the command post of the 40th Army from Moscow. Colonel-General Y.P. Maksimov, commander of the troops of the Turkestan Military District, was also there. They gave the commander a signal about the beginning of the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan.

In the evening twilight, an avant-garde battalion of a motorized rifle regiment on an infantry fighting vehicle of the 108th motorized Rifle Division approached the crossings over the Amu Darya, which almost immediately overcame the pontoon bridge and plunged into the territory of a neighboring state. The main forces of the division followed him during the night. Having completed the march, by the end of December 27, they concentrated in the areas of Baghlan, Kunduz, Puli-Khurmi, Deshi. At this time, unexpectedly, the compound was given a new task - to change the route and enter Kabul by 17.00 the next day. The main forces of the 103rd Guards Airborne Division were airlifted to the capital. A parachute regiment was sent to Bagram.

At 19.30, the paratroopers captured all key political and military facilities in Kabul and on its outskirts, thereby preventing the approach of troops loyal to Amin to the capital. The arriving Soviet troops strengthened the protection of important administrative facilities, airfields, radio and television centers. On the night of December 28, another 201st motorized rifle division entered Afghanistan in the Herat direction, parts of which took control of the highway connecting the cities of Herat and Shindad, and subsequently its area of responsibility expanded to Kandahar.

By mid-January 1980, the entry of the main forces of the 40th Army was largely completed. Two motorized infantry and one airborne divisions, airborne assault brigades and two separate regiments were fully concentrated on the territory of Afghanistan. They numbered up to about 52 thousand people. It was assumed that this amount would be enough to ensure the vital activity of Afghanistan. It was believed that during the entry and deployment of Soviet troops, they would not have to fight, since the very presence of Soviet troops would have a sobering effect on the rebels. At that time, Soviet military assistance was regarded as a moral factor in supporting the people's power.

The entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan served as a signal and ensured the successful implementation of the government coup. On December 27, Amin was overthrown and executed by a small group of conspirators. Babrak Karmal became Prime Minister of the Republic and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the PDPA. The first step of the new government was the release of 15,000 political prisoners from prisons and calls for refugees to return to their homeland. However, these measures did little to normalize the situation in the country, the majority of whose population did not enthusiastically accept the arrival of foreign troops. The opposition immediately took advantage of this, which in the person of B. Karmal saw not only a political opponent, but also a protege of Moscow. Linking two reasons together, the opposition intensified their activities almost throughout Afghanistan, bringing it soon to open armed demonstrations, primarily against Soviet troops.

According to the nature of the military-political tasks being solved and the peculiarities of the armed struggle, the fighting of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan can be conditionally divided into four periods. The first period (December 1979 - February 1980) included the introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, its deployment in garrisons, the organization of protection and defense of permanent deployment points and the most important military and economic facilities, as well as conducting combat operations to ensure the solution of these tasks.

Already during the commissioning and deployment, Soviet troops were forced to engage in combat with the enemy. A direct participant in those events, Lieutenant Colonel Nikolai Ivanovich Mamykin, recalls: "At the first stage of their stay in Afghanistan, Soviet troops were in garrisons, did not take part in hostilities. However, they were subjected to shelling by the opposition. Even without taking part in the fighting, the units suffered losses and were forced to return fire." The Afghan military believed that, given the presence of Soviet Armed Forces in the country, all responsibility for the fate of the revolution should fall on them. Such sentiments were also expressed by B. Karmal, who

from the very beginning asked the leadership of the Operational Group of the USSR Ministry of Defense to involve Soviet troops in active hostilities, since he did not rely on his army. These requests had their effect. The command of the Soviet troops was ordered to begin combat operations together with the Afghan units. It was believed that the main task in defeating the opposition should be solved by the Afghan army, and the Soviet troops should contribute to the fulfillment of this task.

The winter of 1980 was difficult for Soviet soldiers. The hopes that the main tasks of the armed struggle against the opposition will be solved by the Afghan army have not been justified. Despite a number of measures to increase its combat readiness, the Government army remained weak and ineffective. Therefore, the main burden of the struggle against the armed opposition units was borne by the Soviet troops. The rebel formations acted against the Soviet troops with relatively large forces, and did not shy away from a direct clash with them. This made it possible to defeat large counter-revolutionary groups in the areas of Faizabad, Talikan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jalalabad and other cities.

The leaders of the Afghan opposition, faced with a powerful real force, quickly came to the conclusion that if large groups remained unchanged, they would be defeated. Abandoning the tactics of large-scale action, they divided all their formations into groups and detachments of 20 to 100 people and switched to guerrilla operations. In this regard, the Soviet troops faced new questions about the use of forces and means in the fight against small, extremely mobile groups of dushmans who used maneuverable tactics. The attempts of the command to organize an offensive against the detachments of the Dushmans by large military formations according to the rules of classical warfare and persecution did not bring any effect.

Flaws in the training of Soviet troops on a number of issues affected. His own extensive experience in combating Basmatism in Central Asia was completely forgotten. The later rich experience of Nazi Germany during the 2nd World War and the armies of other countries in conducting counter-guerrilla actions in local wars has hardly been studied. Therefore, the Soviet soldiers sent to Afghanistan were forced, through trial and error, to form the military art of fighting an unusual enemy in a new way. This reduced the effectiveness of military operations, led to unjustified losses. So, according to the memoirs of the former assistant to the division's operations department, N.I. Antonov, during the operation in February 1980, the enemy skillfully used the miscalculations made by the Soviet command. Thus, the lack of side guards on the march in the mountains when advancing to the place of operation resulted in significant losses. The enemy, having let the reconnaissance group and one of the battalion's companies, which was moving after the reconnaissance group, attacked the company, which was in the center of the column. The shelling was carried out from two sides. According to the intensity of the fire, it was determined that the enemy group numbered 60-80 people. The enemy's actions were so unexpected that commanders of all degrees showed confusion and no command was given to open at least return fire. And then, when such a command was given, the enemy left their positions and left with impunity.

Nevertheless, in the first period, most of the forces and means of the Soviet troops were involved in solving tasks related to the protection of security zones and communications. Up to 35% of the ACS performed this task. The next task was related to the protection and defense of objects of Soviet-Afghan economic cooperation, the protection of airfields and convoy escort. As we can see, all the tasks were specific. The Soviet troops had neither the experience nor the knowledge to perform them, since in the process of training officers, the performance of such functions was not envisaged and is not envisaged. There are no recommendations in the statutes and manuals on these issues, so these tasks had to be solved practically by trial and error.

Great difficulties in solving various operational and tactical tasks arose due to the unsettled life of the Soviet troops. Due to the fact that the base for the deployment of a limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan was not prepared in advance, at the beginning of 1980 only a small part of the arrived units and units were able to settle in more or less well-maintained military camps. Most of the troops remained in the field in tent cities. To prevent a sudden attack by the enemy, sentry guards were set up and mining of threatened areas was carried out.

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