

**Chapter 7**

**Soviet Responses to FOFA**

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# Soviet Responses to FOFA

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Soviet writings suggest that FOFA has become an important issue in the U. S. S. R., one that might generate important political and military responses. Soviet planners are clearly concerned about FOFA, both as a strategy for the West, and as a reflection of a new set of NATO capabilities they call reconnaissance ("recce") strike complexes, or RSCs. The Soviets have launched a propaganda campaign, at home and abroad, to counter FOFA and to use the controversy FOFA has generated to drive a wedge into NATO. They have also discussed changes in military operations that could well change the threat that FOFA is responding to.

This chapter examines what the Soviets are now saying about FOFA, what Soviet political and military responses to FOFA may already have been, and what possible responses we might see in the future. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the Soviets view FOFA primarily against the backdrop of a bigger whole, as another piece in the overall U. S./NATO military strategy. Soviet responses to FOFA, therefore, should be viewed as responses to the whole changing nature of a possible East-West confrontation, and not necessarily just to FOFA per se.

## POLITICAL RESPONSES

The Soviet political response to FOFA has been strong since the U.S. Army's adoption of AirLand Battle in 1982 and the approval of FOFA by the NATO Defense Planning Committee in 1984. Although FOFA has not become as big a political issue in the U.S.S.R. as arms control or SDI, the Soviet press, both domestic and foreign, has been replete with articles and statements about the destabilizing effects of FOFA and its dangers for all mankind.

This portrayal addresses several Soviet goals both abroad and at home. Abroad, it allows the Soviets to play on already existing European apprehensions about the feasibility and cost of FOFA and the possible negative impact of FOFA for deterrence and arms control. By so doing, it works toward two ends: to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe; and, by painting the United States as the clear aggressor threatening world peace, to present a more peace-loving image of the U.S.S.R. This "peace offensive" is laced with threats that, should such a clearly offensive and aggressive NATO strategy be adopted, the U.S.S.R. unfortunately would be forced to build yet more

military systems in response. Ultimately, the Soviets hope to use these arguments to delay or prevent NATO from acquiring FOFA systems. Within the U. S. S. R., these arguments justify further military buildup as a necessary defensive response to U.S. aggression, and aim to rally domestic support behind the current Soviet leadership.

Thus, the Soviet press consistently depicts FOFA as offensive and aggressive; as representing an attempt by the United States to gain conventional superiority and give NATO forces a "first strike" capability; and as having the potential to lower rather than raise the nuclear threshold by bordering on the capabilities of theater nuclear weapons. As discussed in the Soviet military newspaper *Red Star*, for example:

In a word, this weapon [recce strike complex] relates to the offensive with the goal of achieving military superiority over governments of the socialist commonwealth, and securing with military strength a one-sided superiority by the application of sudden strikes and the conduct of protracted military activities.

The arguments of NATO leaders, that with the application of a new concept they would diminish the danger of nuclear war in Europe, lack any basis and are deliberate lies. As shown by the press, the new forms and systems of common types of weapons . . . approach the destructive potential of low-yield nuclear munitions. Moreover, with the acceptance of these concepts, Pentagon and NATO strategies do not at all reject the possibility of applying nuclear weapons first. Witness the deployment in Europe of American first-strike missiles.<sup>1</sup>

FOFA is also painted as a “provocative escalation, creating a new and expensive arms race:

Hiding behind false references to a “Soviet military threat,” the U.S. administration is initiating a new, dangerous spiral in the arms race, of which the illusory objective is to achieve superiority over the armed forces of the socialist fraternity. This is why the Pentagon foresees creating qualitatively new resources of armed conflict, besides improving nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup>

It is painted as militarily dangerous and destabilizing, in that the Warsaw Pact would be unable to distinguish between a conventional and nuclear strike and would be forced to respond with a nuclear barrage:

. . . But the main danger with which the implementation of this concept is fraught for Europe lies somewhere else: It is utterly impossible to tell the difference between cruise missiles with conventional warheads and cruise missiles with nuclear warheads. Therefore, with the approach of these missiles to “second-echelon targets,” the side subjected to an attack will have no other option than to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike necessitating a switchover to automatic well in advance.<sup>3</sup>

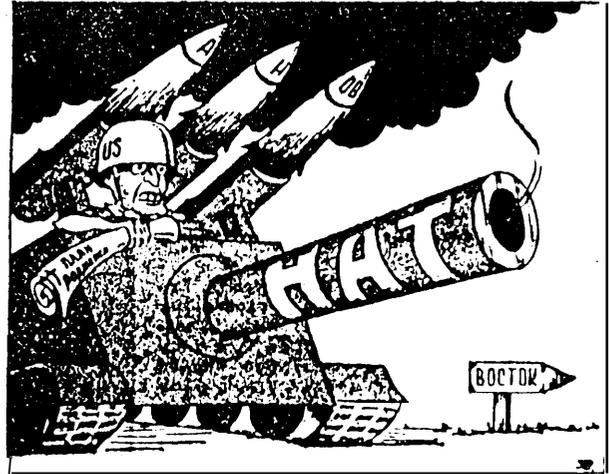
And in economic terms, FOFA is painted as clearly American, an attempt by the United

<sup>1</sup>Lt. Col. A. Sergeev, “Pazvedyvatel’no-udarnye komplekсы: Rasskazyvaem po pros’be chitatelei” (“Reconnaissance Strike Complexes: Discussion at the Request of Readers”), *Krasnaia Zvezda*, Feb. 14, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Maj. Gen. M. Belov and Lt. Col. V. Shchukin, “Razvedyvatel’no-porazhaiushchie komplekсы armii S. Sh.A.” (“Reconnaissance-Fire Complexes of the U.S. Army”), *Voennyi Vestnik*, No. 1, January 1985, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Nikolai Portugalov, “FOFA and Other Atlantic Monsters,” *Moscow News*, Dec. 30, 1984, p. 5.

#### Soviet Cartoon Depiction of the “Rogers Plan”



“They are taking aim . . .”

A caption with the cartoon reads: “In Brussels, the Military Planning Committee of NATO has embraced a new aggressive concept—the so-called ‘Rogers Plan’. The plan foresees a strategy of striking deep into the territory of the enemy—i.e., the territory of the socialist countries—in the event of a ‘crisis situation’.”

SOURCE *Krasnaia Zvezda (Red Star)*, Nov. 13, 1984, p. 3 Reprinted with permission of the Embassy of the U.S.S.R., Washington, DC

States to manipulate its NATO Allies into being tied not only to a U.S. strategy, but to U.S. technology:

Europe has been allotted the role of a figure intended to be sacrificed in another project . . . Rogers declares that this [equipping NATO with FOFA weapon systems] will require from the European countries an additional military spending of 30 billion dollars . . . The USA will naturally be the chief purveyor of the new weapons systems.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, FOFA is presented as not just militarily destabilizing, but politically counterproductive to the overall East/West relationship. According to Mr. A. Kokoshin, of the USA-Canada Institute in Moscow, “the implementation of the Rogers Plan can undermine all chances for success of the negotiations on the reduction of armed forces and arms in central Europe and seriously hinder a constructive solution to the problem of confidence building measures . . .”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>A. Kokoshin, “The Rogers Plan: Alternative Defense Concepts and Security in Europe,” *Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya*, Aug. 13, 1985, pp. 3-14.

## MILITARY RESPONSES

Beyond politics, the Soviets view FOFA as presenting real, if not potentially “revolutionary” military challenges. “Such a qualitative leap in the development of conventional weapons,” Marshal Ogarkov writes, “inevitably entails a change in the nature of preparing and conducting operations.”<sup>6</sup>

Soviet concerns with FOFA are twofold: the concept itself, and the development of new weapons systems associated with, *but not necessarily restricted to implementing those concepts*. The Soviet press indicates that Soviet responses are also twofold: to modify their tactics and field new weapons to lessen the vulnerability of their follow-on forces to attack—i.e., by increasing the combat power of the first echelon, increasing protection of the rear troops, and focusing more attention on speeding up the command and control process; and to develop the capability to preemptively attack these NATO reconnaissance (“recces”) strike complexes, or RSCs.

As a concept, the Soviets are concerned that FOFA will extend the battle into their rear:

The emergence in the armies of the developed capitalist countries of new, and especially high-precision weapons, is greatly changing the “face” of modern combat by constantly raising the intensity of the fire struggle. Whereas in past wars the predominant place belonged to a close exchange of fire, present conditions have seen a sharp increase in the significance not only of the close exchange of fire, but also of the long-range exchange of fire—that is, simultaneous fire against practically the entire depth of the enemy’s combat formation.<sup>7</sup>

One Soviet response might be to increase the combat power of the first echelons by reallocating units from the second to the first echelons, such as by bringing more divisions forward.

<sup>6</sup>Marshal of the Soviet Union N. V. Ogarkov, “Zashchita sotsializma: opyt istorii i sovremennosti” (“The Defense of Socialism: The Experience of History and the Present Day”), *Krasnaia Zvezda*, May 9, 1984, pp 2-3.

<sup>7</sup>Maj. Gen. I. Vorob’yev, “Sovremennoe oruzhie i taktika” (“Modern Weapons and Tactics”), *Krasnaia Zvezda*, June 20, 1984, p. 2.

Indeed, FOFA might well force the Soviets to mobilize earlier and more overtly. If the Soviets were convinced that the West had the capability to attack their forces on roads and/or railroads, it would force the Soviets to choose between surprise and an assured ability to bring their forces forward. Should they decide to bring them forward before the war starts, the West would be provided with a more unambiguous warning of their mobilization and intentions.

Alternatively, the Soviets could attempt to increase the strength of existing units already forward, such as through changes in organization and equipment, or by placing more Soviet (as opposed to East European) divisions up front.<sup>8</sup> According to some Western observers, the Soviets have already been doing the former over the past several years and might well increase their efforts. The U.S.S.R. has had a continuing program to modernize ground forces in Central Europe, apparently adding a new generation of tanks and fielding new artillery, infantry combat vehicles, anti-tank weapons, and close support aircraft and helicopter gunships. Some believe this indicates that the Soviet Union already “has quite significantly downgraded the strategic importance of follow-

<sup>8</sup>See Boyd D. Sutton, “Deep Attack Concepts and the Defence of Central Europe,” *Survival*, March/April 1984, pp. 64-65.





Photo credit: U S Department of Defense

Example of a camouflaged military vehicle.

on conventional forces precisely at the moment when some in the West are trying to persuade us that we should divert large resources to attacking them."<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Soviet writings emphasize the need for "significant changes in tactics"<sup>10</sup> and increased protection of forces in the rear through increased air defense and camouflage. Previously, Soviet combat forces moving up in the rear were not in a combat environment. With FOFA, they would have to deal with being in a combat situation possibly from the beginning:

High-precision weapons considerably increase troop vulnerability and, accordingly, generate increased requirements for ensuring

the survivability and reliable protection of units . . . <sup>11</sup>

Soviet doctrine and writings consistently emphasize the importance of maskirovka—a term encompassing the concepts of deception, camouflage, and the masking effects of ground, smoke, dazzling light, etc. Commanders in the rear must devote greater efforts to "the skillful utilization . . . of natural features of the local terrain, the careful preparation of field defenses, the implementation of deception measures, and to misleading the enemy with regard to the unit true location."<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the Soviets may also change timing, spacing, modes of transportation, or build more redun-

<sup>9</sup>Col. Jonathon Alford, "NATO, ET and New Conventional Strategy," *Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. II, No. 4, winter 1984, p. 297.  
<sup>10</sup>Major Gen. I. Vorob'yev, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Major General I. Vorob'yev, "Sovremennoe oruzhie i tak-tika," op cit.  
<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

dancy or mobility into their system. They may well have to operate with troops highly dispersed and camouflaged—as if in a nuclear environment—so as not to present easily destroyable targets, even though operating this way might significantly slow down their rate of advance.<sup>13</sup> And the Soviets continually discuss the need for increased protection of their rear forces through improved air defense and counter-air capabilities.<sup>14</sup>

Soviet writings, however, suggest that the Soviets may be less concerned about FOFA as a concept than they are about the weapons systems themselves, and in particular, the potential ability of quick-reacting and precision-guided weapons to act more quickly than their command and control cycle can respond:

The introduction of super-accurate self-guiding systems combining recce and strike functions allows for very short times to acquire the target, prepare and fire the weapon, and hit the target. Systems such as Assault Breaker, self-homing and laser-guided, infrared or radio-seeking projectiles coupled with automated artillery fire control systems . . . allow engagement times to be reduced by a factor of 10-15.

The general speeding up of the battlefield has sharply curtailed the time available to commanders and staff for making and implementing decisions. This has made it most important to speed up the collection of intelligence, its analysis, making a decision, giving orders, organizing cooperation and so on. The guidelines of the past are no longer appropriate. In the Great Patriotic War, a regiment and a battalion often had up to 3-4 days to prepare for an offensive—now it is *much* less.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Gen. V. G. Reznichenko, *Taktika*, Moscow, 1984, and Michael J. Sterling, *Soviet Reactions to NATO's Emerging Technologies for Deep Attack*, The Rand Corp., N-2294-AF, August 1985.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Col. Gen. I. Golushko, "Tyl v usloviakh primeneniya protivnikom vysokotochnogo oruzhita" ("The Rear Area Under Conditions of the Enemy's Use of High-Precision Weapons"), *Tyl i Snaabzheniy*, No. 7, 1984, pp. 13-17.

<sup>15</sup>Maj Gen I. Vorob'yev, "Vremia v boiu" ("Time in Battle"), *Krasnaia Zvezda*, Nov. 9, 1985, p. 2. According to Vorob'yev, "six to ten minutes are needed for the 'search and destroy' cycle of the RSC Assault Breaker to be performed. This amount of time limits troop operations. Troops must be able to move out from under a strike or use other defensive measures during this short time period."

As discussed in chapter 4, the Soviet C\* structure was designed according to certain norms, and in such a way that the nature of the process itself would be somewhat adaptive to the time available. But if decision time becomes too short, the Soviets emphasize, the quality of decisions will greatly erode. Perhaps the greatest challenge from FOFA, therefore, is that it cuts down on the time available for decisionmaking, leading to a reduction in cycle time for planning and replanning an operation. This may be viewed as only exacerbating what the Soviets have seen as a long-standing challenge of improving their troop control system so that it can operate within the time available and still allow for sound decisions.

Soviet writings suggest that the Soviets see possible responses to this problem in two directions. The first includes "technical" responses, in terms of further automation of command and control systems. A great deal of effort is being devoted to streamlining and automating C<sup>2</sup> procedures both to speed the pace of decisionmaking and to improve the quality of decisions. In addition, the Soviets have emphasized "operational-tactical" responses, "relating to the methods of work of commanders and staffs, their training and the way they use C<sup>2</sup> means." This may indicate a rethinking of some of the methods used to make decisions and plan, so that reactions can take place much faster.

Included here is the long-standing problem of initiative. For some time now, the Soviet system has been pulling in two directions. In principle, the Soviet military system requires that a soldier be able to perform simple battlefield tasks in any conditions on the battlefield. These are learned by drill, so that when "initiative" may be asked of soldiers, it is generally restricted to initiating the appropriate drill under whatever circumstances he may find himself.

With the sharp reduction in time which the Soviets see for making and executing these decisions, however, Soviet writings are now reflecting an apparent encouragement of greater initiative at lower levels, for example, for junior officers at the platoon, company, and bat-

talion level. For example, in addition to the concept of “initsiativa”—which suggests selecting the right drill in the right circumstances—two concepts have received renewed emphasis in Soviet parlance: “smekalka,” which implies doing something unconventional in those situations where no drill may apply; and “tvorchestvo,” connoting a longer term solution, an imaginative choice of the correct drill.<sup>16</sup>

This not only complicates Soviet planning, but Soviet commanders must also deal with subordinates who are the products of a society where initiative has always been discouraged, if not penalized, and where reluctance to take on responsibility is strong. There will be major social and cultural hurdles to jump over, not only for reconciling the notion of initiative itself with Soviet command and control, but also to effectively imbue their fighting force with fundamentally new attitudes.

Finally, the Soviets are discussing the need to preemptively attack the weapons systems associated with FOFA, or Western recce-strike complexes (RSCs), and allege that they may be forced into developing their own “recce-strike” and “recce-fire” complexes<sup>17</sup> should

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Kh. Grishchenko, “Proiavliaia smekalku i smelost’ (‘Displaying Native Wit and Boldness’), *Voennyi Istoricheskie Zhurnal*, February 1986, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup>The Soviets make a distinction between recce-strike and recce-fire complexes. According to Maj. Gen. Belov, “if the strike element annihilates the target by fire (for example with conventional artillery or rockets) the complex is called a reconnaissance-fire complex, while if it does so by a missile strike (tactical and army aviation, tactical and operational tactical missile launchers, ) it is called a reconnaissance-strike complex. Therefore reconnaissance-fire complexes are more of a tactical resource while reconnaissance-strike complexes are operational resources.” See Maj Gen A. Belov, op. cit.

FOFA be implemented. As Vorob’yev has noted:

It is believed that the use of high-precision weapons will call for significant changes in tactics. . . . It will be more important to deliver preemptive fire strikes to destroy high-precision weapons systems . . .

Success in a battle being waged with quick-reacting, long-range, high-precision combat complexes demands active reconnaissance in order to detect the enemy’s preparations in time to inflict fire attacks, the maintenance of units in constant readiness to repulse the enemy’s employment of new weapons systems, and the concealment of measures undertaken in preparation for the battle. It is important to ensure reliable air cover for the units, to undertake protective measures in a timely fashion, and to preempt the enemy in the opening fire to immediately destroy his weapons . . .<sup>18</sup>

As of now, the Soviets are apparently focusing on using existing force elements for these kinds of missions, combining existing reconnaissance assets with target assessment centers and then having a group of weapons “on call” to attack the targets as soon as they are identified. Although apparently less sophisticated than Western efforts, Soviet capabilities in this area would undoubtedly grow as new technology becomes available. Although the Soviets have said that their RSCs are a direct response to FOFA, evidence suggests that they are an important part of Soviet military planning as it assesses the overall context of a potential East-West military confrontation.

<sup>18</sup>Maj. Gen I. Vorob’yev, op. cit.