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## SOVIET TANK COMPANY TACTICS

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## CHAPTER 9

### RECONNAISSANCE

1. **COMMAND AND CONTROL.** A tank company may be tasked by division, regiment, or battalion to undertake local reconnaissance missions. A medium tank company is more likely to conduct reconnaissance tasks in the offensive than in the defensive. Regimental reconnaissance missions are planned up to 50 kms forward of the main body. At longer ranges these missions are executed by reconnaissance units. Reconnaissance patrols provided by medium tank companies on the flanks of the main body are likely to operate up to 10 kms ahead of the division and within range of artillery support.

2. **REINFORCEMENT FOR RECONNAISSANCE.** A tank company is normally reinforced for reconnaissance missions. A typical reconnaissance grouping would be:

- a. A tank company - 10 tanks
- b. A motorized rifle platoon - 3 APC's
- c. An engineer squad - 1 APC
- d. A chemical reconnaissance patrol of 3 or 4 chemical specialists - BRDM-2RKH

If the company is acting at long range, a high frequency radio link to battalion will be established. In these circumstances a suitable radio is mounted in a light truck to accompany the patrol.

3. **MISSIONS.** Reconnaissance missions can be divided into two main types; however, it should be noted these classifications are not Soviet terminology.

a. *Terrain and CBR Monitoring Tasks.* A tank company reinforced by chemical specialists and engineers may be tasked to carry out detailed reconnaissance of roads, bridges, water crossing areas, and obstacles on the division or regimental axis. These reconnaissance tasks can include CBR monitoring of contaminated or suspected areas.

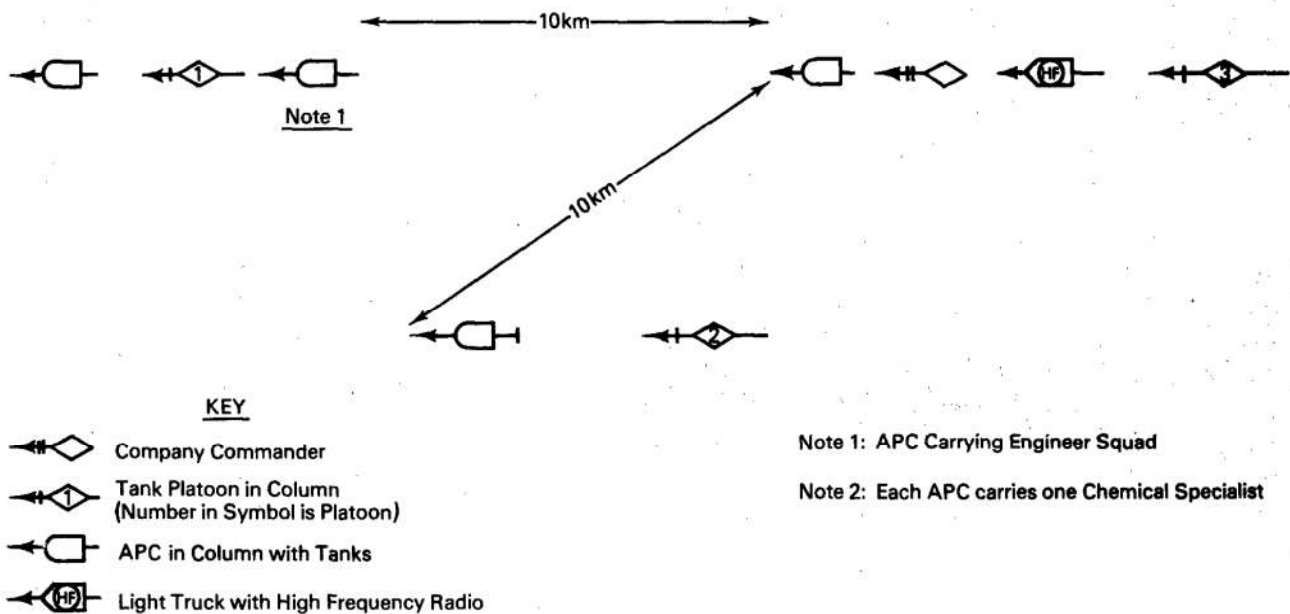
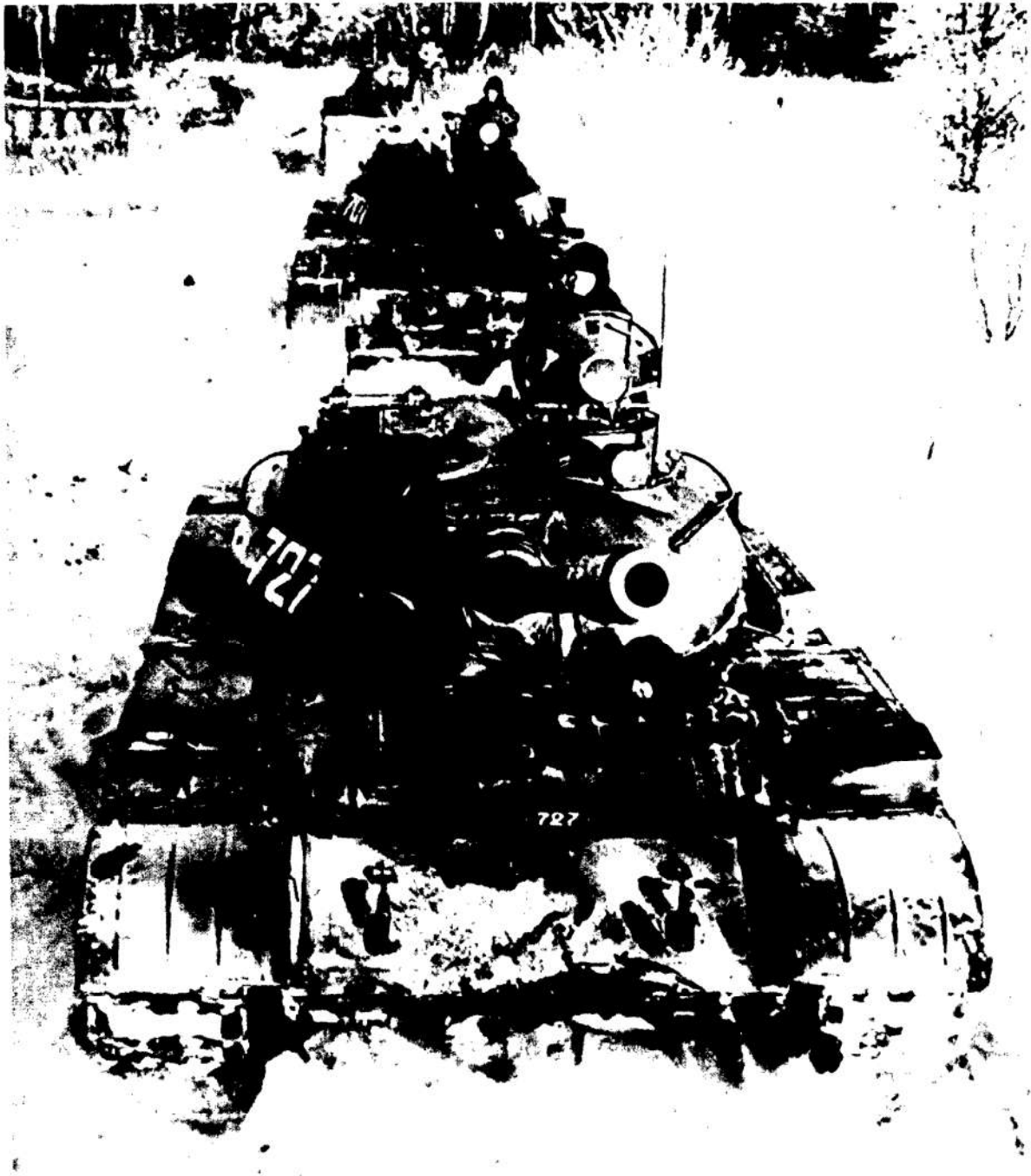


Figure 9. Representative Formation of a Tank Company in Reconnaissance Role.



*A four-tank reconnaissance in snow. During reconnaissance, tanks normally move in platoon column before reaching the point where they are likely to encounter the enemy.*

b. *Tactical Intelligence Collection.* The tank company is considered by the Soviets to be suitable for reconnaissance missions to gain information on the strength, disposition, organization and movement of enemy forces. Particular reconnaissance targets are:

- (1) Nuclear delivery means.
- (2) Artillery positions.
- (3) Communication centers.
- (4) Command Posts.
- (5) Reserve Formations.

4. **STRENGTHS AND GROUPING.** During reconnaissance a tank company usually operates as three patrols, up to 10 kms apart, depending on the mission and terrain. The organization of an intelligence collection patrol is shown in Figure 9.

5. **ORDERS.** In preparation for the reconnaissance, a tank company commander is given oral orders covering the following:

- a. Enemy forces - composition, operations, and known positions.
- b. Missions of adjacent reconnaissance units.
- c. Attachments to the company.
- d. Direction and objective of reconnaissance.
- e. Mission.
- f. Location and time of crossing the line of departure.
- g. Route to be followed.
- h. Point of return to friendly lines.
- i. Communication method and frequencies.
- j. Method of reporting.
- k. Casualty evacuation procedure.
- l. Vehicle recovery procedure.
- m. Method of contact with reconnaissance aircraft.

n. Recognition signals.

o. Procedure for delivering prisoners, captured equipment, and maps.

Tank company commanders are also given a brief outline of the schedule of operations by other friendly forces during his mission. After estimating the situation, the commander issues oral orders to patrol commanders in accordance with the above format. He also designates a second in command - probably the senior platoon commander.

#### 6. MOVEMENT AND OBSERVATION.

a. Movement is made by road at maximum speed in either company column or platoon columns to the point (or points) at which the enemy is likely to be encountered. Reports on terrain and roads are made by radio. Once enemy contact is likely, tanks move by bounds, covering each other; they remain on roads where possible. Populated areas and water obstacles are approached with caution, under cover where possible. If observation reveals no enemy positions, then populated areas are reconnoitered and water obstacles crossed.

b. During the reconnaissance, tank commanders normally will have their hatches open. At night IR devices are used. Listening posts may be set up in platoon strength. These posts are 1.5 kms from the main company patrol. Selected tank crewmen observe for enemy air activity throughout the reconnaissance operation.

7. **ACTION ON MEETING ENEMY.** The tank company attempts to avoid action during reconnaissance by bypassing enemy positions. Ambushes are planned to capture men and equipment for intelligence purposes.