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## **FEATURES OF THE USE OF FORCES AND MEANS OF A BORDER OUTPOST DURING COMBAT OPERATIONS IN A RIVER**

*The article examines the experience of employing a border outpost as the principal combat unit of a border detachment tasked with carrying out the missions of military command authorities within its designated defensive sector. It analyzes the specific features of employing the forces and means of a border outpost in accordance with the prevailing operational situation, as well as the particularities of fulfilling combat tasks in a riverine area, where the water obstacle lies directly along the line of contact between opposing forces.*

*The study highlights the operational environment in which the border outpost conducts defensive actions. It identifies the influence of the physical and geographical characteristics of the terrain on the tactics of both the adversary and the units of the border outpost. The main tasks assigned to the outpost for resolution are defined. The article devotes considerable attention to the organization of the operational and service activities of the border outpost, with due regard to the requirements of regulatory and administrative acts issued by both the Administration of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.*

*The general procedure of command and control at the border outpost is defined from the moment a combat order is received from the commander of the border detachment for the conduct of defensive operations, to the assignment of tasks to elements of the combat formation. It is noted that the commander of the border outpost must determine the content of their decision regarding defensive combat actions, and outlines the structure of a combat order for the subordinate unit. The article analyzes the specific features of constructing a combat formation, taking into account the available forces and means of the border outpost, the physical and geographical conditions, and the size of the area of task execution. It also outlines the particularities of employing elements of the combat formation during the execution of defensive actions. The summarized combat experience may be applied in subsequent research.*

**Keywords:** *operational and service activity; defensive combat; defensive operations; border outpost; combat formation structure; planning; command and control.*

**Statement of the Problem.** In accordance with the Law of Ukraine *"On the Defense of Ukraine"* [1], the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (hereinafter – SBGSU) and its units, during the period of martial law, shall be involved, by decision of the relevant military command authorities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereinafter – AFU), in the repulsion of armed aggression against Ukraine in the manner prescribed by law.

The tasks assigned to the SBGSU in the course of repelling armed aggression by another state are defined by the Law of Ukraine *"On the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine"* [2], namely:

- participation, in coordination with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations, in the elimination (neutralization) of an armed conflict at the state border of Ukraine, in an international armed conflict, and in the repulsion of armed aggression against Ukraine through direct engagement in combat operations;

- participation in measures aimed at ensuring national security and defense, repelling and deterring armed aggression against Ukraine, conducting mine action activities, as well as in efforts to restore territorial integrity within the internationally recognized state border of Ukraine;

- participation in the implementation of territorial defense measures, as well as in actions aimed at maintaining the legal regime of martial law and the state of emergency.

This same Law stipulates that the specified tasks are carried out by border detachments, which may include, among others, border service departments, border outposts, inspector sections of the border service, and other units.

Before the full-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, the participation of SBGSU units in the resolution of armed conflict directly on the line of contact was mainly regarded as a means of reinforcing the main units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or of carrying out separate tasks. Additionally, tasks characteristic specifically of SBGSU units were performed such as the control of the passage of individuals to and from temporarily occupied territories at entry-exit checkpoints, the implementation of regime measures at control posts in areas adjacent to the line of contact, and similar activities.

With the beginning of the full-scale invasion,

SBGSU units began performing tasks independently in designated areas and sectors, in cooperation with and with the support of other defense force units. It should be noted that these tasks are assigned not by the central executive authority (the SBGSU Administration), but by the relevant military command authorities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Considering that SBGSU units as a law enforcement agency with special status are inherently oriented toward law enforcement functions, they do not possess the combat experience held by the units of the Armed Forces. Therefore, the issue of studying the specific features of SBGSU unit operations, as well as identifying ways to improve their effectiveness in the course of repelling armed aggression through combat operations, becomes particularly urgent.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Has shown that the issue of participation by SBGSU units in the resolution of armed conflict and the repulsion of armed aggression against Ukraine through direct combat operations has been studied by scholars such as V. Mazur, P. Simchuk [3], A. Maltsev, V. Zalozh [4], D. Karasyov [5], Yu. Ivashkov [6], A. Bratko [7], V. Lemeshko [8], O. Mykhailenko, and L. Balahur [9]. However, it should be noted that these studies do not address the specific features of employing border detachment units during the independent conduct of combat operations within their assigned area. Moreover, they do not examine the particularities of performing tasks under specific physical and geographical conditions.

Given the constantly evolving tactics of combat operations employed by Ukraine's defense forces and Russian occupation troops, along with the continuous advancement of weaponry and military equipment, there arises a clear need to study and generalize the combat experience of border detachment units and to identify ways of improving and enhancing the effectiveness of their deployment. Considering that border detachment units operate under varying physical and geographical conditions, this study focuses on the procedure for employing a border outpost as the primary unit of a border detachment in a riverine section of the terrain, specifically the Kakhovka Reservoir area.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze the procedure for organizing the operational and service activities of a border outpost in a riverine section and

to identify directions for improving the effectiveness of the use of its forces and means.

**Presentation of the Main Material.** Border guard units involved in the execution of combat missions under the defense operation plan are subordinated to the relevant military command authorities, the planning and organization of their operational-service activities are carried out on the basis of corresponding combat orders (combat directives) issued by these authorities [10].

Taking into account the combat personnel strength, organizational and staffing structure, and command structure, it is recognized that a border guard detachment corresponds, by these indicators, to a general military unit such as a brigade. Therefore, in accordance with the combat directives of the military command authorities, the border guard detachment performs tasks within the defense zone of the first echelon. Accordingly, a border outpost, in terms of its structure and combat personnel, is equivalent to a company and, during defensive operations, performs tasks within a company strongpoint. A border service inspector squad is equivalent to a platoon and operates within a platoon strongpoint (hereinafter referred to as PSP).

It is important to note that the presence of a water obstacle, such as a river, affects the determination of the combat formation of units as well as the width of the defensive zone and the defensive areas of border guard detachments and outposts. The defensive zone of a border guard detachment may extend from 60 to 70 km, while the frontage of a company strongpoint of a border outpost may reach up to 15–20 km, with a depth of 5–10 km. These figures may increase depending on the specific features of the area in which the defense is being conducted (such as physical and geographical conditions, or regional population density). Accordingly, when constructing a defense, considerations must include the enemy's capabilities, their tactical approach, and the specific physical and geographical features of the area, particularly the characteristics of the river and its shoreline.

At the time of the study, the enemy (russian occupation forces) had ceased active offensive operations, abandoned attempts to cross the water obstacle, and transitioned to positional defense, consisting of airborne assault and motorized rifle units. Their defense was organized along the

shoreline in a single echelon through the establishment of company strongpoints. Given the presence of nuclear energy infrastructure within the enemy's defensive zone, units of the federal service of the national guard troops were deployed to secure and defend these facilities.

The presence of high-precision weapons and modern electronic warfare systems in the enemy's arsenal; numerical superiority in personnel, armaments, and military equipment; an established air defense system; significant stockpiles of rocket and artillery weapons; a developed military-industrial complex; the presence of long-range strike unmanned aerial systems; a significant quantity and stable supply of FPV drones — all determine its strengths and advantage in conducting defense. Its weakness lies in: significant losses in both personnel and equipment; the superiority of our forces' weapons and equipment over russian (soviet-made) counterparts; favorable terrain for conducting defense by our forces and the inability of the enemy to conduct offensive actions; the absence of armored vehicles in motorized rifle units.

These factors determine the enemy's tactics, which consist of:

- conducting aerial reconnaissance using unmanned systems (hereinafter – UAS);
- delivering fire strikes on the positions of border outpost units, supporting units, and civilian and critical infrastructure facilities by means of rocket and artillery shelling, the use of FPV drones and other types of strike unmanned aerial vehicles (hereinafter – UAVs), dropping explosive devices, chemical and poisonous substances from UAVs;
- conducting remote mining of terrain using various types of anti-personnel mines;
- possible landing of airborne troops, use of sabotage and reconnaissance groups for the purpose of reconnaissance, sabotage-demolition activities, and creating a foothold for future actions on the opposite bank of the river.

The area of task execution by the border outposts is characterized by the fact that between the forward edge of the defense of our units and the enemy, the natural obstacle is the riverbed; the shore, due to a significant decrease in water level, has numerous shrubs, lakes, and swampy areas, which are almost inaccessible to vehicles without additional engineering equipment. In the rear of the enemy's

defense, there is a moderately populated area and critical infrastructure facilities – the Zaporizhzhia TPP and NPP. The terrain is moderately dissected, with forest belts and a developed system of logistical routes. In the rear of our units' defense, there is a moderately populated area with industrial infrastructure, forest plantations, river features, and hard-to-reach areas.

Given the current situation and the combat directives of the head of the border guard detachment, the following tasks are assigned to the border outpost:

in the event of enemy offensive actions, to constrain its forces in front of the forward edge of the defense, to deliver fire strikes during its movement, deployment, landing, and attack on the forward edge, to prevent penetration into the depth of the defense by inflicting maximum losses, to hold strongpoints and create favorable conditions for counteroffensive or the conduct of other actions through the sequential execution of tactical tasks;

participation in the implementation of counter-sabotage measures, delivering fire strikes using artillery and strike UAVs on identified and planned targets;

countering various types of enemy UAS using available fire and technical means;

conducting surveillance of the airspace, the area adjacent to the forward edge of the defense, and the water surface using available technical means.

Additional tasks include:

improving the engineering fortification and camouflage of positions and deployment lines for reserves;

increasing the number of explosive and non-explosive barriers;

establishing decoy positions;

equipping protective and countermeasure systems against UAS, including FPV drones.

The planning and organization of operational-service activities are carried out by the head of the border outpost for the period of the relevant combat directives (orders), monthly and daily [10].

Upon receiving the combat directive from the head of the border guard detachment, the head of the border outpost must [11]: understand the task; assess the situation; determine the concept and make a decision on conducting a defensive battle (defensive actions); based on this, develop a combat order (combat directive) and communicate it to the commanders

(chiefs) of units (elements of the established combat formation); organize coordination, command and control, and comprehensive support of the unit's actions.

In the concept of the defensive battle, the head of the border outpost must determine: the direction of the main effort and the areas (sectors) of terrain (objects), the retention of which ensures the stability of the defense; the method of conducting the defensive battle (the procedure for repelling the offensive and striking the enemy during its deployment, transition to the attack, retention of the defensive area (strongpoint), and destruction of the enemy that has penetrated the defense), with a defined procedure for fire engagement and deception measures; the combat formation and the system of strongpoints and fire positions.

In the combat order (combat directive) for the defensive battle, the head of the border outpost specifies:

1. The situation in the area of task execution:

– information about the enemy (composition, disposition, probable nature of actions, locations of fire assets, possible routes of advance and deployment lines, fire and barrier systems);

– information about adjacent units, attached and supporting units, and their tasks;

– information on the capabilities of own forces, combat personnel strength, and reinforcement means;

– characteristics of the area of task execution (terrain, weather conditions, civilian environment).

2. The task assigned to the border outpost:

– the purpose of the battle, the combat task of the border outpost as indicated by the head of the border guard detachment;

– tasks performed by the forces and means of the senior commander (chief) in support of the unit's actions.

3. The procedure for executing the combat task:

– the concept of the battle (direction of main effort, combat formation, procedure of actions, procedure for delivering fire strikes on the enemy).

4. Combat tasks for the elements of the combat formation:

– tasks for the elements of the combat formation and reinforcement assets;

– combat support tasks (reconnaissance, security, tactical camouflage, engineering support, radiological, chemical, and biological protection);

- organization of air defense, electronic warfare, reconnaissance;

- coordination indicators (time and location of tactical task execution by battle phases, readiness timelines, procedure for reporting);

- evacuation procedure for the wounded.

5. Expenditure of rockets and ammunition for the execution of the combat task (restrictions on the use of weapons, conduct of operations).

6. Command and control, readiness timelines:

- location of the command-observation post;

- control and alert signals, recognition and identification procedures;

- procedure for the use of communication means;

- own position and that of the deputy (person responsible for command in the event of loss of the command-observation post).

Each month, taking into account the activities provided in the calendar plan of the border guard detachment, the head of the border outpost develops a calendar plan for the corresponding month. Planning is conducted considering the forecast of the situation's development and the capabilities of the unit. The plan also specifies the procedure for task execution, the use (deployment) of personnel, weapons, equipment, and technical means.

In the event of changes in the situation within the area of responsibility and the urgent need to involve additional forces and means for the protection of the state border, or a change in the existing procedure for task execution, a shift in the direction of the main effort, or the conduct of special actions to search for and eliminate enemy sabotage and reconnaissance forces, the head of the border outpost refines the existing decision or makes a separate decision. The refined or newly adopted decision is formalized in the form of a combat order (directive).

During the preparation and conduct of combat operations, a diagram of the strongpoint and the working map of the head of the border outpost are prepared. The strongpoint diagram must include: the system of strongpoints and fire positions, the fire system, and the system of engineering barriers. The working map reflects: the composition and combat task; the position of the enemy and own forces; neighboring and cooperating units; the tasks of artillery and aviation; fire initiation lines for primary fire assets; areas of aerial reconnaissance; sectors for the employment of electronic warfare means

(hereinafter – EW); and other information necessary for managing the unit's operations.

Control of subordinate forces and means is carried out from the command-observation post (hereinafter – COP) of the border outpost. The following personnel are assigned to the COP: the “COP Duty Officer” (from among the officers), the “Unit Duty Officer,” and the “Assistant to the Unit Duty Officer.” Other individuals may be assigned to the COP as needed to fulfill designated tasks and ensure continuous duty and security.

Daily, the head of the border outpost carries out planning for the deployment of available and attached forces and means for a 24-hour period. Based on this daily deployment plan, a force allocation for the elements of the combat formation is prepared for actions based on respective commands (signals). The force allocation by elements of the service (combat) formation is communicated to the personnel and kept at the COP of the border outpost.

The accounting of results from the use of the forces and means of the border outpost is maintained in the Combat Log. This log also records all orders, directives, and instructions received from higher command (staff) and those issued by the head of the border outpost. When organizing the execution of complex tasks, a coordination table and other necessary documents may be developed.

Typically, when constructing the combat formation of a border outpost for defense, the following main elements are designated:

- squad positions within the platoon strongpoint (PSP);

- observation posts;

- aerial reconnaissance posts;

- electronic (radar) reconnaissance posts;

- reconnaissance and search groups;

- mobile fire groups;

- reconnaissance-fire complexes;

- checkpoints;

- reserves.

Given the significant length of the border outposts' area of responsibility and the available forces and means, the most dangerous sectors are identified during the formation of the combat formation, those where enemy airborne landings, incursions by sabotage and reconnaissance forces, or offensive operations are most likely. In these directions, squad positions within the platoon

strongpoint (PSP) are established, which serve as the main element of the border outpost's combat formation. It should be noted immediately that the size of the PSP also depends on the characteristics of the area and is generally larger than what is prescribed by the Combat Regulations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The classical structure of the combat formation within a PSP, as outlined in those same regulations, is also absent. The inter-positional space between PSPs is covered through the use of reconnaissance-search groups and continuous aerial reconnaissance using UAVs.

The combat formation of the PSP includes: the command-observation post (COP); squad positions; observation post; primary and alternate positions for fire assets; a system of engineering and mine-explosive barriers. A fire system is established. Within or near the PSP, a deployment line for second-echelon reserves is also designated. Technically, the PSP is supported by various types of communication systems (internet, radio, wired), industrial and backup power supply, video surveillance systems (including bispectral cameras), enemy UAV signal frequency analyzers, video signal interception equipment, and various types of electronic warfare (EW) systems. Depending on the assigned tasks, other additional enemy counteraction means may be added.

The primary tasks of the PSP are:

conducting surveillance of the airspace, terrain adjacent to the forward edge of the defense, and the water surface;

delivering fire strikes against the enemy during its movement, deployment, landing, and attack on the forward edge, preventing a breakthrough into the depth of the defense;

countering enemy UAS, including various types of strike UAVs, by suppressing them through EW means or fire engagement.

Personnel in the PSP perform tasks in accordance with the combat order issued by the commander of the border service inspector squad. To manage combat operations, a PSP diagram is developed in accordance with the requirements of the Combat Regulations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, along with an encrypted table of call signs and covert control signals.

In the absence of fire contact with the enemy, 1/3 of the total personnel of the border service inspector squad are on combat duty at the PSP positions. The

rest remain in the first-echelon reserve, usually at a short distance, with a readiness time of up to 20 minutes. The reserve is located in equipped, protected positions. To prevent sudden attacks and to detect and destroy aerial threats (reconnaissance and strike UAVs), a fire group (on-duty fire asset) is assigned daily to the squad's position.

During a defensive battle, the combat formation is constructed in accordance with the PSP diagram, based on the daily fire calculation conducted by 20:00, which must include the assignment of calculations for primary fire assets.

For each PSP and every fire asset, a sector and strip of fire are designated (considering their fire capabilities), along with the direction and areas of concentrated fire, the procedure for fire engagement and destruction of the enemy, all in coordination with a system of combined engineering and mine-explosive barriers.

In the areas of detailed reconnaissance along the directions of the main effort, aerial reconnaissance posts are set up to conduct tactical and analytical reconnaissance and monitor changes in the enemy's condition and disposition. A UAV crew is mandatorily assigned to each post. Service locations are equipped with additional radio-technical reconnaissance equipment. Additionally, areas of special attention may be designated.

The primary task of the electronic (radar) reconnaissance post is to detect enemy aerial targets using more specific and therefore more effective radar observation (detection) systems, to guide UAV interceptor crews and mobile fire groups toward enemy aerial targets, and to support and monitor their operations.

Mobile fire groups from the border outpost perform tasks within the air defense system. They may operate independently but are usually employed under the concept of a senior commander, in coordination with other forces and means. Their primary role is the direct detection and fire engagement of aerial threats—typically strike and reconnaissance UAVs, guided munitions, and other aerial reconnaissance means. They may operate from designated positions or areas, conducting visual, acoustic, and technical surveillance of the air situation, or by patrolling a defined route. Tasks are performed in coordination with aerial and radio-technical reconnaissance posts.

The reconnaissance-fire complex (hereinafter – RFC) is an integrated system that combines artillery means (mortars, tube artillery, multiple launch rocket systems) with reconnaissance, targeting, and command and control assets that ensure their effective fire employment. UAV crews primarily serve as the reconnaissance and targeting element. The RFC is positioned in engineering-prepared locations, with special attention given to camouflage and frequent relocation to alternate or backup positions. The RFC is employed for reconnaissance and engagement of designated targets as they are detected. Its primary targets include enemy artillery and mortar units in firing positions, transport vehicles, personnel concentrations, and electronic warfare assets of command and control systems. Particular attention is paid to detecting and subsequently striking UAV control points. The RFC is generally employed by decision of the head of the border guard detachment.

Checkpoints are established along key communication routes in the rear area of the border outpost sector, where personnel of the National Police of Ukraine carry out duties. The task of the border outpost military personnel is to provide fire support to these positions.

#### **Conclusions and prospects for further research.**

Thus, this article has examined the specifics of employing the forces and means of a border outpost, as the main subunit of the border guard detachment, during combat operations against Russian occupation forces. The exposition focused primarily on the construction of the combat formation of the border outpost. Consideration was given to the particular operational and physical-geographical conditions under which the unit performs its assigned tasks. The article addressed the organization of operational-service activity and the sequence of command functions within the unit's leadership. In the course of the exposition, combat experience from border guard subunits was generalized with the aim of applying it in future research.

Future research may focus on improving the methodology of command and control at the border outpost level in the preparation and conduct of combat operations, as well as in decision-making processes.

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