

**THE ROLE OF AVIATION IN THE LIQUIDATION
OF THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT**

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On the night of April 26, 1986, a reactor exploded at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. This disaster is one of the largest man-made disasters of the 20th century and the largest in the history of nuclear energy. Many people did not understand how terrible a man-made and ecological disaster it was at the time of the accident, and they did not fully realize the consequences for everybody and the environment in the following years. The Soviet Army showed particular heroism in eliminating the consequences of the emergency. As a result of the explosion, the nuclear reactor was completely destroyed, which led to the release of a huge amount of radioactive substances into the environment. Many people suffered from radiation sickness. However, there could have been much more victims, but thanks to the professionalism of the liquidators, its scale was reduced.

A large number of people were evacuated from the affected area and nearby areas. In the first 20 years since the disaster, a significant increase in thyroid cancer has been noted among people who were children and adolescents at the time of the accident and lived in the areas most affected by the release of radioactive substances.

Over 600 thousand people and a large amount of special equipment took part in the liquidation of the consequences of the disaster. Military pilots played a major role in the liquidation of the consequences of the accident. The role of the USSR Air Force cannot be overestimated. Thus, the first crews of military aircraft and helicopters flew out to extinguish the nuclear fire in the spring of 1986. Pilots from all over the Soviet Union took part in extinguishing the fire, conducting reconnaissance to assess the consequences of the accident, and taking radiation measurements. Formally the accident occurred on the territory of the Ukrainian

SSR, but at that time there was no division into republics, so crews from all over the country took part in extinguishing. The fire was localized, but work on studying the consequences of the accident continued.

But in the autumn of the same year, a new disaster arose. Seasonal cyclones drove dust from the "dirty" territories to the east. Densely populated areas were under threat of radioactive contamination: from the Caspian Sea to Moscow, including the capital itself. Therefore, military aircraft, which were called meteorological laboratories, were equipped with special cartridges filled with silver iodide, which made a "hole" in the clouds with a radius of one and a half kilometers. And this threat was also stopped.

This accident directly affected my family. In 1986 my grandfather Nikolai Antonovich served in the ranks of the USSR Air Force in a military unit based in the city of Chernivtsi in the Ukrainian SSR. When the accident occurred, my grandfather, as part of a military crew, carried out flights from April 27 till May 10. Their flights were connected with photographic recording of the immediate source of fire, carrying out reconnaissance activities: measuring the outside air temperature and some other parameters.

Of course, at that moment he was following orders and could not think about the possible consequences for his health, but I think he understood that thanks to his work people would be saved.

After finishing his service in 1989, my grandfather and his family returned to his homeland in the city of Zhodino. At first, health problems caused by irradiation and radiation damage were not fully realized. In 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and in order to obtain the status of a Chernobyl liquidator, he had to put in a lot of effort, because the military unit in which he served was already in another country - in Ukraine.

And they did not really want to declassify information about what the military crews were doing at that time.

My grandfather died at the age of 50 from diseases caused by the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Unfortunately, I didn't see him, but my mother and grandmother tell me about his service to the extent that he dedicated them.

I am proud of my grandfather! I would like to say that being a military student, I hope that I will fully dedicate myself to the most noble profession - to defend the Motherland!