

Aerosleds: Soviet Combat Snowmobiles

(from: www.battlefield.ru)



The Red Army had several aerosled detachments that were employed with relative success in winter operations against the Finns during the Winter War. They were used primarily for maintaining communications between units and formations, and ferrying ammunition, provisions, and petroleum products to forces operating at great distances from their supply bases. These sleds also evacuated the wounded from the battlefield. Sometimes aerosled detachments executed combat missions; launching surprise attacks against the enemy. All this taken together was a first test case. The Soviet leadership soon recognized the possibilities of the aerosled as a combat asset.



With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, all the aerosleds that existed in the country were mobilized into the Red Army. The designers developed new vehicles for operational use: transport-assault aerosleds NKL-16/41 and NKL-16/42, combat aerosled NKL-26 with armor plate and machine-gun mount, the heavy assault aerosled ASD-400, and also the RF-8-GAZ-98 aerosled.

The first aerosled units appeared in January 1942 in the Northwest Front, on many sectors of the fronts in the Moscow area, and in the area of Staraya Russa.

The greatest employment of aerosleds occurred in the winter campaign of 1942-43. In this period they were used for the first time in significant numbers as combat assets. Practice proved that the most successful aerosled units operated on open terrain: on frozen lakes such as Ladoga, Ilmen, and Seliger, on frozen rivers, in coastal regions of the sea, and on the Gulf of Finland (Baltic Sea).

During the transport of cargo, each aerosled could move up to 500 kg of fuel, ammunition, a machine-gun, medium mortar or 45mm AT gun.

Because of their great vulnerability, in combat actions the aerosled was most effectively employed only in surprise raids and attacks against an unprepared and unfortified enemy. Utilizing its speed and high mobility across snow-covered road-less terrain, the aerosleds suddenly attacked an enemy caught off guard. Short-duration but frequent raids from various directions, the conduct of intensive fire from the march - these factors normally permitted them to achieve decisive success in their actions. The overwhelming advantage of combat aerosled units was the fact that their movement was executed off roads that were controlled by the enemy. Thus a number of successful raids into the enemy's rear succeeded in destroying his rear area installations and capturing ammunition and equipment.

Aerosleds in FoW

Soviet Motostrelkovy Batalon may replace all its vehicles in:

- Transport Platoon with NKL-16s at no costs.
- Light Armoured Car Platoon with NKL-26s for -10 points per BA64 replaced.
- Light Armoured Transporter Platoon with
 - A] One NKL-26 per Rifle/MG team for -5 points per Rifle Squad.
 - B] One NKL-16 per vehicle for -10 points.

| Mobility | Road | Cross-Country | Rough Terrain |
|----------|---------|---------------|---------------|
| Sled | 8"/30cm | 8"/30cm | 6"/15cm |

Aerosleds can be used only when the "General Winter" effect is in play. Their mobility is not impaired in snow. Treat all roads, cross-country, swamps and water courses invariably as a cross-country terrain. Aerosleds do not need to perform Bogging check while crossing frozen areas. On the other hand Woods are Very Difficult Going terrain for them and they cannot cross Balkas, trenches or similar deep terrain features.

| Name | Mobility | Front | Side | Top | Equipment and Notes |
|--------|----------|-------|------|-----|---------------------|
| NKL-16 | Sled | - | - | - | |
| NKL-26 | Sled | 0 | - | - | Hull MG |

NKL-16 is a transport sled. Each one can transport up to two infantry teams or one man-packed/light gun. While moving a gun, the sled is slowed down to 6"/15cm and cannot move At the Double.

NKL-26 is designed for patrolling and surprise attacks, but can also carry one bold Rifle/MG team externally on its skis.

