

**PART TWO**

# **Offensive Operations**

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**Chapter 3**

## **The Basics of the Offense**

*To move swiftly, strike vigorously, and secure all the fruits of victory, is the secret of successful war.*

Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, 1863

*Offensive operations* aim at destroying or defeating an enemy. Their purpose is to impose US will on the enemy and achieve decisive victory (FM 3-0). A commander may also conduct offensive operations to deprive the enemy of resources, seize decisive terrain, deceive or divert the enemy, develop intelligence, or hold an enemy in position. This chapter discusses the basics of the offense. The basics discussed in this chapter apply to all types of offensive operations.

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3-1. The commander seizes, retains, and exploits the initiative when conducting offensive operations. Even in the defense, wresting the initiative from the enemy requires offensive operations.

3-2. Offensive operations are either force- or terrain-oriented. Force-oriented operations focus on the enemy. Terrain-oriented operations focus on seizing and retaining control of terrain and facilities.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

3-3. Surprise, concentration, tempo, and audacity characterize the offense. Effective offensive operations capitalize on accurate intelligence and other relevant information regarding enemy forces, weather, and terrain.

The commander maneuvers his forces to advantageous positions before contact. Security operations and defensive information operations keep or inhibit the enemy from acquiring accurate information about friendly forces. Contact with enemy forces before the decisive operation is deliberate, designed to shape the optimum situation for the decisive operation.

The decisive operation is a sudden, shattering action that capitalizes on subordinate initiative and a common operational picture (COP) to expand throughout the area of operations (AO). The commander executes violently without hesitation to break the enemy's will or destroy him. FM 3-0 discusses the four characteristics of offensive operations.

### Characteristics of Offensive Operations

- Surprise
- Concentration
- Tempo
- Audacity

## HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

3-4. The following vignette discusses the offensive operations of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) during OPERATION DESERT STORM. The actions of the 101st Airborne Division between 24 and 28 February 1991 were a shaping operation for the XVIII Airborne Corps.

### The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 24–28 February 1991

The 101st attacked on 24 February 1991 to interdict, block, and defeat enemy forces operating in or moving through AO Eagle. On order, they were to attack to the east to assist in defeating the Iraqi Republican Guard Forces Command (RGFC). As part of that attack, the 101st conducted an air assault to establish forward operating base (FOB) Cobra. The FOB was approximately halfway between tactical assembly area (TAA) Campbell and the Euphrates River and Highway 8 (the main road between Basrah and Baghdad). In the FOB, the 101st would build up supplies and forces by both land and air. That FOB would support a further air assault by the division's remaining uncommitted brigade into AO Eagle. This second air assault would cut both Iraqi lines of communication (LOC) and retreat routes of Iraqi forces in Kuwait. From FOB Cobra, the 101st, with two brigades, could launch air assault operations to support other operations.

The operation was scheduled to begin at 0400 on 24 February. The 1st Brigade's ground column departed the TAA at 0700. However, weather delayed the air assault into FOB Cobra, approximately 150 kilometers north of the TAA, until

0730. The assault elements of the brigade cleared the area within the FOB of Iraqi soldiers by 1030, making it secure enough for AH-64 operations. Attack helicopter operations from FOB Cobra into AO Eagle began by 1330 with patrols along Highway 8. The CG, MG J.H. Binford Peay III, decided to bring in 2nd Brigade to FOB Cobra that day while the weather permitted. However, he delayed 3rd Brigade's assault into AO Eagle until 25 February.

That night, reconnaissance assets found an alternative route for the vehicles to use from LZ Sand, in AO Eagle, to Highway 8. The first air assault on 25 February landed three antiarmor companies, two infantry companies, and an artillery battalion into the LZ, but these units were unable to link up with their parent battalions until the next day. The 3rd Brigade's main

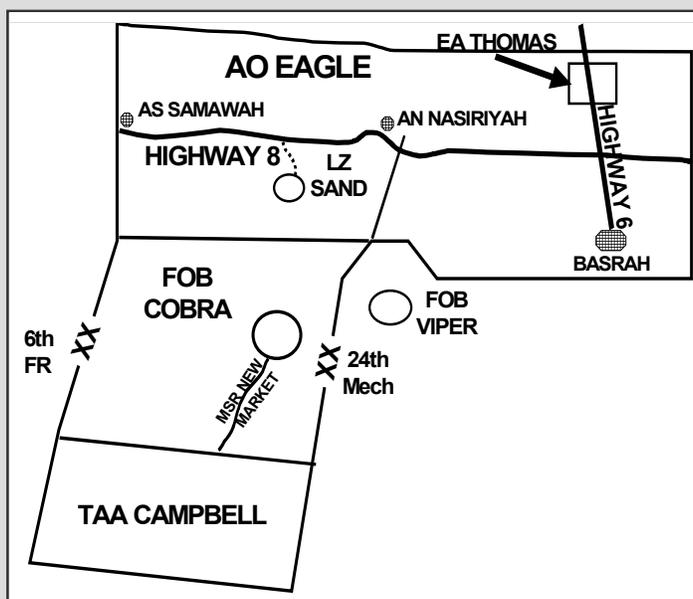


Figure 3-1. Initial Objectives

body cut Highway 8 at 1508 and secured the area by 1848. This later air assault covered 156 miles and cut Highway 8 only 145 miles from Baghdad. Meanwhile, the buildup of FOB Cobra continued, with 3rd Brigade's second lift spending the night there due to weather. The 101st also established contact with 24th Infantry Division (ID) to its east. Farther north in AO Eagle, 3rd Brigade made sporadic contact with Iraqi forces along Highway 8 during the night. With this, the 101st Airborne achieved all of its initial objectives and began planning for subsequent missions. It had pressed the fight, never let the enemy recover from the initial blow, and exploited success at FOB Cobra and AO Eagle. (See Figure 3-1.)

A continuing sandstorm intensified on 26 February, limiting aerial operations. However, the remaining 3rd Brigade lifts were ferried from FOB Cobra to AO Eagle, and 2nd Brigade closed into FOB Cobra and began planning for subsequent operations. Although the sandstorm curtailed aerial operations, the division continued ground operations. The 3rd Brigade kept Highway 8 closed from ground battle positions supported by DS artillery despite Iraqi attempts to bypass. The 1st Brigade continued the buildup of FOB Cobra by ground transport and established contact with the 82nd Airborne Division. The 24th ID reached the Euphrates that night and cut Highway 8 farther to the east with heavy forces. The tempo was such that planned contingencies were overtaken by events; XVIII Corps had accomplished its initial objectives and issued new orders orienting the corps' main effort eastward. As part of this reorientation, MG Peay decided to establish FOB Viper, 150 kilometers to the east of Cobra, for aerial operations

against EA Thomas, 200 kilometers northeast of Viper, to destroy Iraqi forces fleeing north from Basrah. Corps assets, including the 12th Aviation Brigade and the 5th Battalion, 8th Artillery (155, T), reinforced the 101st Division.

The 101st launched its third major air assault at 0830, 27 February. The 2nd Brigade assaulted into FOB Viper with an infantry battalion and a reinforced artillery battalion augmented by engineers and air defense forces. By 1400, four attack helicopter battalions began operations against EA Thomas. The 2nd Brigade continued to close into FOB Viper. The division's attack helicopters cut the last escape route north out of Kuwait and destroyed 14 APCs, eight BM-21 MRLs, four MI-6 helicopters, and two SA-6 units. The Iraqi forces, unable to escape north, lay in the paths of VII Corps and 24th ID. The 1st Brigade had orders to air assault into EA Thomas on 28 February, but the cease-fire precluded this operation. Although the actions of the 101st during these 100 hours were a shaping operation, they illustrate the tactical application of all of the characteristics of offensive operations.

## TYPES OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

3-5. The four types of offensive operations are movement to contact, attack, exploitation, and pursuit. Entry operations, while offensive in nature, are one of the six subordinate forms of force-projection operations. Force-projection operations are operational level tasks and fall outside the scope of this manual. Joint doctrine addresses force-projection operations. [Appendix C](#) addresses tactical airborne and air assault operations as vertical envelopments.

### Types of Offensive Operations

- Movement to contact
- Attack
- Exploitation
- Pursuit

## MOVEMENT TO CONTACT

3-6. *Movement to contact* is a type of offensive operation designed to develop the situation and establish or regain contact (FM 3-0). The commander conducts a movement to contact (MTC) when the enemy situation is vague or not specific enough to conduct an attack. A search and attack is a specialized technique of conducting a movement to contact in an environment of noncontiguous AOs. Chapter 4 discusses MTC.

## ATTACK

3-7. An *attack* is an offensive operation that destroys or defeats enemy forces, seizes and secures terrain, or both (FM 3-0). Movement, supported by fires, characterizes the conduct of an attack. However, based on his analysis of the factors of METT-TC, the commander may decide to conduct an attack using only fires. An attack differs from a MTC because enemy main body dispositions are at least partially known,

### Forms of the Attack

- Ambush
- Spoiling attack
- Counterattack
- Raid
- Feint
- Demonstration

which allows the commander to achieve greater synchronization. This enables him to mass the effects of the attacking force's combat power more effectively in an attack than in a MTC.

3-8. Special purpose attacks are ambush, spoiling attack, counterattack, raid, feint, and demonstration. The commander's intent and the factors of METT-TC determine which of these forms of attack are employed. He can conduct each of these forms of attack, except for a raid, as either a hasty or a deliberate operation. [Chapter 6](#) discusses the attack and its subordinate forms.

## EXPLOITATION

3-9. *Exploitation* is a type of offensive operation that rapidly follows a successful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth (FM 3-0). The objective of an exploitation is to complete the enemy's disintegration. [Chapter 6](#) discusses exploitation.

## PURSUIT

3-10. A *pursuit* is an offensive operation designed to catch or cut off a hostile force attempting to escape, with the aim of destroying it (JP 1-02). A pursuit normally follows a successful exploitation. However, if it is apparent that enemy resistance has broken down entirely and the enemy is fleeing the battlefield, any other type or subordinate form of offensive operation can transition into a pursuit. [Chapter 7](#) discusses the pursuit.

## COMMON OFFENSIVE CONTROL MEASURES

3-11. This section defines in alphabetical order those common offensive control measures that a commander uses to synchronize the effects of his combat power. The commander uses the minimum control measures required to successfully complete the mission while providing the flexibility needed to respond to changes in the situation.

## ASSAULT POSITION

3-12. **An *assault position* is a covered and concealed position short of the objective from which final preparations are made to assault the objective.** Ideally, it offers both cover and concealment. These final preparations can involve tactical considerations, such as a short halt to coordinate the final assault, reorganize to adjust to combat losses, or make necessary adjustments in the attacking force's dispositions. These preparations can also involve technical items, such as engineers conducting their final prepare-to-fire checks on obstacle clearing systems and the crews of plow- and roller-equipped tanks removing their locking pins. It may be located near to either a final coordination line (FCL) or a probable line of deployment (PLD). ([Paragraphs 3-18](#) and [3-23](#) define a FCL and a PLD respectively.)

## ASSAULT TIME

3-13. **The *assault time* establishes the moment to attack the initial objectives throughout the geographical scope of the operation.** It is imposed by the higher headquarters in operations to achieve simultaneous

results by several different units. It synchronizes the moment the enemy feels the effects of friendly combat power. It is similar to the time-on-target control method for fire mission processing used by the field artillery. A commander uses it instead of a time of attack (defined in paragraph 3-26) because of the different distances that elements of his force must traverse, known obstacles, and differences in each unit's tactical mobility.

### ATTACK-BY-FIRE POSITION

3-14. An *attack-by-fire position* designates the general position from which a unit conducts the tactical task of attack by fire. (Appendix B defines the tactical mission task of attack by fire.) The purpose of these positions is to mass the effects of direct fire systems for one or multiple locations toward the enemy. An attack-by-fire position does not indicate the specific site. Attack-by-fire positions are rarely applicable to units larger than company size. Figure 3-2 depicts attack-by-fire position BRANDON.

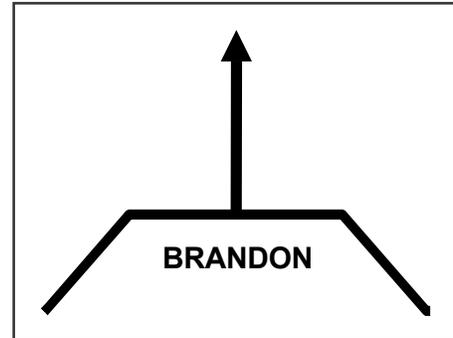


Figure 3-2. Attack-by-Fire Position BRANDON

### ATTACK POSITION

3-15. The *attack position* is the last position an attacking force occupies or passes through before crossing the line of departure. An attack position facilitates the deployment and last-minute coordination of the attacking force before it crosses the LD. It is located on the friendly side of the LD and offers cover and concealment for the attacking force. It is used primarily at battalion level and below. Whenever possible, units move through the attack position without stopping. An attacking unit occupies an attack position for a variety of reasons; for example, when the unit is waiting for specific results from preparatory fires or when it is necessary to conduct additional coordination, such as a forward passage of lines. If the attacking unit occupies the attack position, it stays there for the shortest amount of time possible to avoid offering the enemy a lucrative target. (Figure 3-3 on page 3-6 shows attack positions BLUE and GOLD used in conjunction with other common offensive control measures.)

### AXIS OF ADVANCE

3-16. An *axis of advance* designates the general area through which the bulk of a unit's combat power must move. There are three primary reasons why a commander uses an axis of advance. First, to direct the bypass of locations that could delay the progress of the advancing force, such as known contaminated areas. Second, to indicate that he does not require the force to clear the AO as it advances. His force will be required to clear the axis in accordance with specified bypass criteria. The third primary reason is to indicate to a unit involved in offensive encirclement, exploitation, or

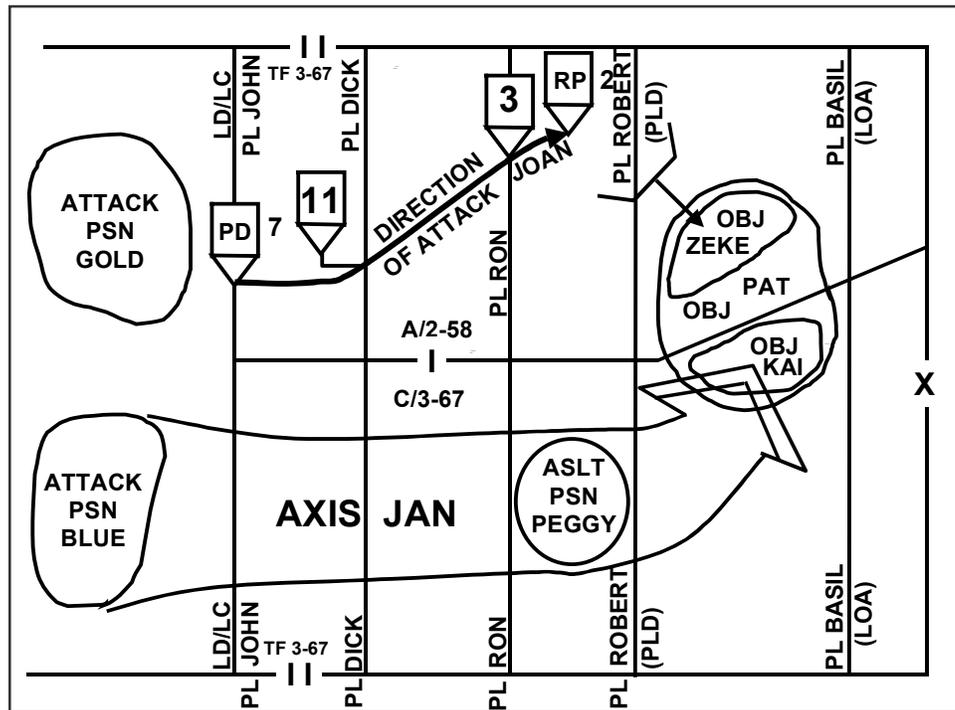


Figure 3-3. Attack Positions Used with Other Common Offensive Control Measures

pursuit operations the need to move rapidly toward an objective. Figure 3-4 depicts axis of advance DEBRA.

**DIRECTION OF ATTACK**

3-17. The *direction of attack* is a specific direction or assigned route a force uses and does not deviate from when attacking. It is a restrictive control measure. The commander's use of a direction of attack maximizes his control over the movement of his unit, and he often uses it during night attacks, infiltrations, and when attacking through smoke. The commander establishes a direction of attack through a variety of means, such as target reference points, checkpoints, global positioning system (GPS) way points, using ground surveillance radar to track the attack force, and the impact of artillery shells. Target reference points placed on recognizable terrain provide the commander with the capability to rapidly shift fires and reorient his maneuver forces. When using a direction of attack, the commander designates a point of departure (PD). (Figure 3-5 depicts direction of attack JOAN and PD 6.)



Figure 3-4. Axis of Advance

**FINAL COORDINATION LINE**

3-18. The *final coordination line* (FCL) is a phase line (PL) close to the enemy position used to coordinate the lifting or shifting of supporting fires with the final deployment of maneuver elements. Final

adjustments to supporting fires necessary to reflect the actual versus the planned tactical situation take place prior to crossing this line. It should be easily recognizable on the ground. The FCL is not a fire support coordinating measure. (Figure 3-6 shows PL ROBERT as the FCL for the 4th Brigade.)

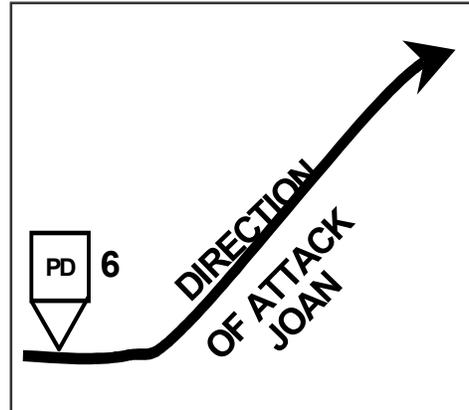


Figure 3-5. Direction of Attack JOAN

**LIMIT OF ADVANCE**

3-19. The *limit of advance (LOA)* is a phase line used to control forward progress of the attack. The attacking unit does not advance any of its elements or assets beyond the LOA, but the attacking unit can push its security forces to that limit. A commander usually selects a linear terrain feature, perpendicular to the direction of attack, on the far side of the objective as the LOA because such a terrain feature is easily identifiable. The commander employs a LOA to prevent overextending the attacking force and reduce the possibility of fratricide by fires supporting the attack. The commander positions a LOA far enough beyond the objective to allow the unit to defend the objective. An LOA prevents units from exploiting success and launching a pursuit; therefore, a commander should only use it if he does not want the unit to conduct an exploitation or pursuit. A forward boundary is always a LOA, but a LOA is not necessarily a forward boundary. In fact, a

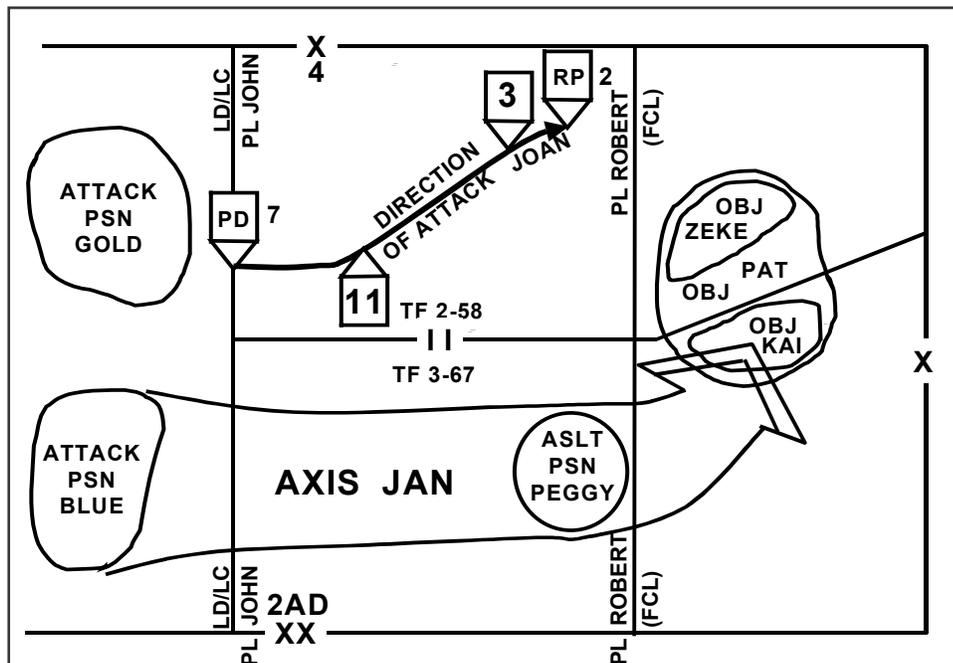


Figure 3-6. Final Coordination Line (FCL) ROBERT Used in Conjunction with Other Offensive Control Measures

LOA and the unit's forward boundary should rarely coincide because of the resulting limitations that a forward boundary places on supporting fires beyond the forward boundary. Figure 3-7 shows PL BASIL used as 4th Brigade's LOA.

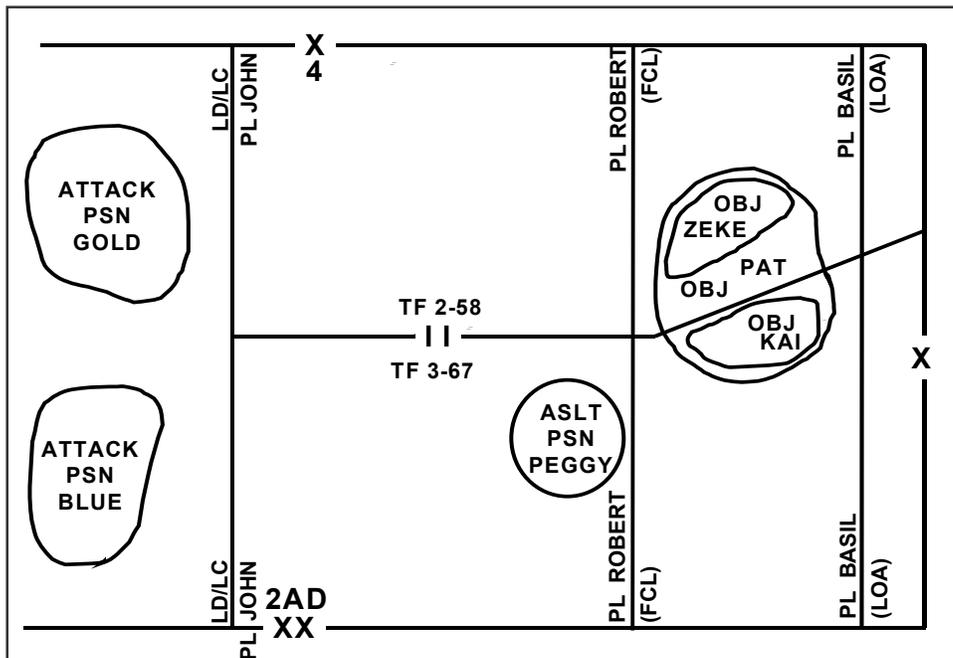


Figure 3-7. Limit of Advance Used with Other Common Control Measures

### LINE OF DEPARTURE

3-20. The *line of departure* is a phase line crossed at a prescribed time by troops initiating an offensive operation. The purpose of the LD is to coordinate the advance of the attacking force so that its elements strike the enemy in the order and at the time desired. The LD also marks where the unit transitions from movement to maneuver. The commander can also use it to facilitate the coordination of fires. Generally, it should be

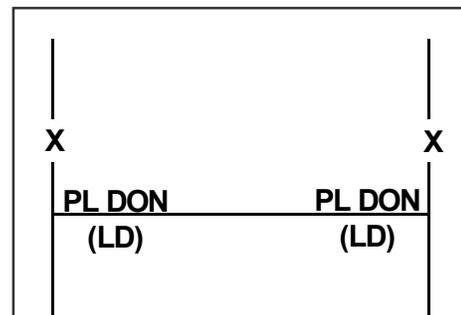


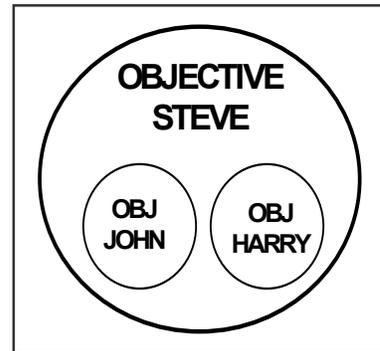
Figure 3-8. PL DON as a LD

be perpendicular to the direction the attacking force will take on its way to the objective. Friendly forces should control the LD. The commander analyzes the terrain before designating his LD. Different units have different movement rates on leaving their assembly areas (AAs) based on their inherent mobility characteristics and the terrain being crossed. The commander considers these different characteristics when establishing the LD to prevent these differences from affecting the synchronization of the operation. When possible, the commander selects the LD so that the terrain the attack unit traverses before crossing the LD provides sufficient cover for the attacking unit's final

deployment into a combat formation before crossing the LD. In many cases the LD is also the line of contact because the unit in contact is conducting the attack from its current positions. Figure 3-8 depicts PL DON as the LD. (Chapter 2 contains a definition for a line of contact.)

**OBJECTIVE**

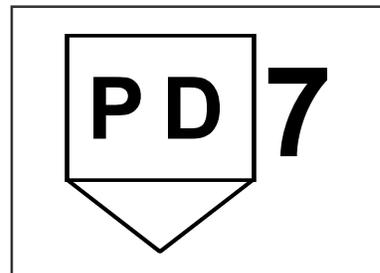
3-21. An *objective* is a location on the ground used to orient operations, phase operations, facilitate changes of direction, and provide for unity of effort. An objective can be either terrain- or force-oriented. Terrain objectives should be easily identifiable on the ground to facilitate their recognition. The commander determines his force-oriented objectives based on known enemy positions. The commander normally assigns his subordinate commanders only their final objectives, but can assign intermediate objectives as necessary. Figure 3-9 depicts objective STEVE. Objective STEVE is further broken down into two subordinate objectives, objective JOHN and objective HARRY.



**Figure 3-9. Objective STEVE**

**POINT OF DEPARTURE**

3-22. The *point of departure* is the point where the unit crosses the LD and begins moving along a direction of attack. Units conducting reconnaissance and security patrols and other operations in a low-visibility environment commonly use a PD as a control measure. Like a LD, it marks the point where the unit transitions from movement to maneuver under conditions of limited visibility. Figure 3-10 depicts PD 7.



**Figure 3-10. Point of Departure 7**

**PROBABLE LINE OF DEPLOYMENT**

3-23. A *probable line of deployment* is a phase line that a commander designates as the location where he intends to completely deploy his unit into assault formation before beginning the assault. The PLD is used primarily at battalion level and below when the unit does not cross the LD in its assault formation. It is usually a linear terrain feature perpendicular to the direction of attack and recognizable under conditions of limited visibility. The PLD should be located outside the range where the enemy can place the attacking force under effective direct fire. It has no use except as it relates to the enemy. In Figure 3-11, page 3-10, PL ROBERT is also the PLD.

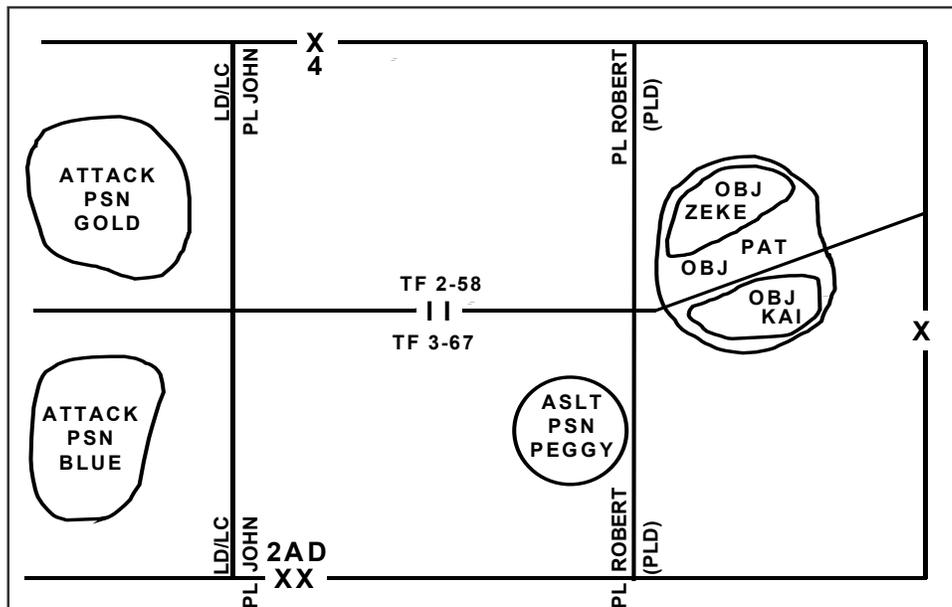


Figure 3-11. Probable Line of Deployment ROBERT Used with Other Control Measures

### RALLY POINT

3-24. A *rally point* is an easily identifiable point on the ground at which units can reassemble and reorganize if they become dispersed. Alternatively it is an easily identifiable point on the ground at which aircrews and passengers can assemble and reorganize following an incident requiring a forced landing. Forces conducting a patrol or an infiltration commonly use this control measure. The *objective rally point (ORP)* is a rally point established on an easily identifiable point on the ground where all elements of the infiltrating unit assemble and prepare to attack the objective. It is typically near the infiltrating unit's objective; however, there is no standard distance from the objective to the ORP. It should be far enough away from the objective so that the enemy will not detect the infiltrating unit's attack preparations. Figure 3-12 depicts Rally Point 14.

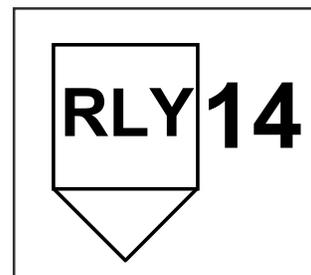
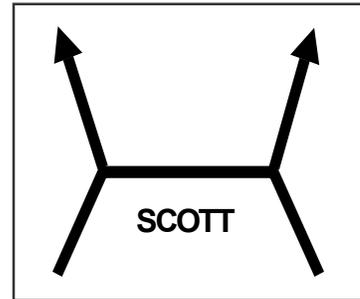


Figure 3-12. Rally Point 14

### SUPPORT-BY-FIRE POSITION

3-25. A *support-by-fire position* designates the general position from which a unit conducts the tactical mission task of support by fire. (Appendix B defines the tactical mission task of support by fire.) The purpose of these positions is to increase the supported force's freedom of maneuver by placing direct fires on an objective that is going to be assaulted by a friendly force. Support-by-fire positions are located within the maximum friendly direct-fire range of the enemy positions. The commander selects them so that the moving assault force does not mask its supporting fires. For this reason,

support-by-fire positions are normally located on the flank of the assault force, elevated above the objective if possible. Support-by-fire positions are rarely applicable to units larger than company size. The support-by-fire position graphic depicted in Figure 3-13 indicates the general location and direction from which the unit provides fires; it does not indicate a specific site.



**Figure 3-13. Support-by-Fire Position SCOTT**

## TIME OF ATTACK

3-26. **The *time of attack* is the moment the leading elements of the main body cross the LD, or in a night attack, the PD.** A commander uses it when conducting simultaneous operation where a shaping operation must accomplish its mission to set the conditions for the success of the decisive operation. When determining the time of attack, the commander considers the time required for his subordinate to—

- Conduct necessary reconnaissance, prepare plans, and issue orders.
- Synchronize plans between all subordinate units.
- Complete attack preparations, such as precombat inspections.
- Move to the LD or PD.

3-27. Orders normally designate the time of attack as H-hour. This is normally when the main body crosses the LD. However, H-hour can also designate the time to implement a phase of an operation, such as an airborne or air assault. The headquarters planning the offensive operation specifies the term's exact meaning. This is usually a part of the unit's standing operating procedures (SOP).

## FORMS OF MANEUVER

3-28. The forms of maneuver are envelopment, turning movement, frontal attack, penetration, and infiltration. Combined arms organizations seeking to accomplish their assigned mission synchronize the contributions of all battlefield operating systems (BOS) to execute these forms of maneuver. The commander generally chooses one form on which he builds a course of action

(COA). The higher commander rarely specifies the specific form of offensive maneuver. However, his guidance and intent, along with the mission that includes implied tasks, may impose constraints such as time, security, and direction of attack that narrow the forms of offensive maneuver to one alternative. Additionally, the AO's characteristics and the enemy's dispositions also help determine the form of offensive maneuver selected. A single operation may contain several forms of offensive maneuver, such as a frontal attack to clear a security area followed by a penetration to create a gap in enemy defenses. An envelopment would follow to destroy the enemy's first line of defense.

### Forms of Maneuver

- Envelopment
- Turning movement
- Frontal attack
- Penetration
- Infiltration



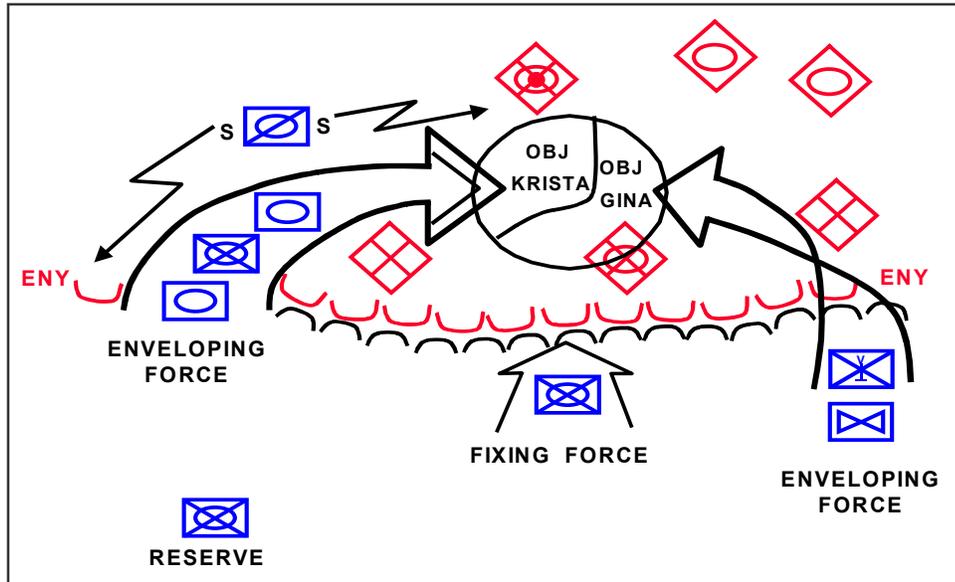


Figure 3-15. Double Envelopment

### Organization of Forces

3-31. The commander envisioning a single envelopment organizes his forces into the enveloping force and the fixing force. He also allocates forces to conduct reconnaissance, security, reserve, and sustaining operations. The enveloping force, conducting the decisive operation, attacks an assailable enemy flank and avoids his main strength en route to the objective. The fixing force conducts a frontal attack as a shaping operation to fix the enemy in his current positions to prevent his escape and reduce his capability to react against the enveloping force. A commander executing a double envelopment organizes his forces into two enveloping forces and a fixing force in addition to reconnaissance, security, reserve, and sustaining forces. The commander typically designates the more important of the two enveloping forces as the main effort for resources. That enveloping force will also be the commander's decisive operation if its action accomplishes the mission.

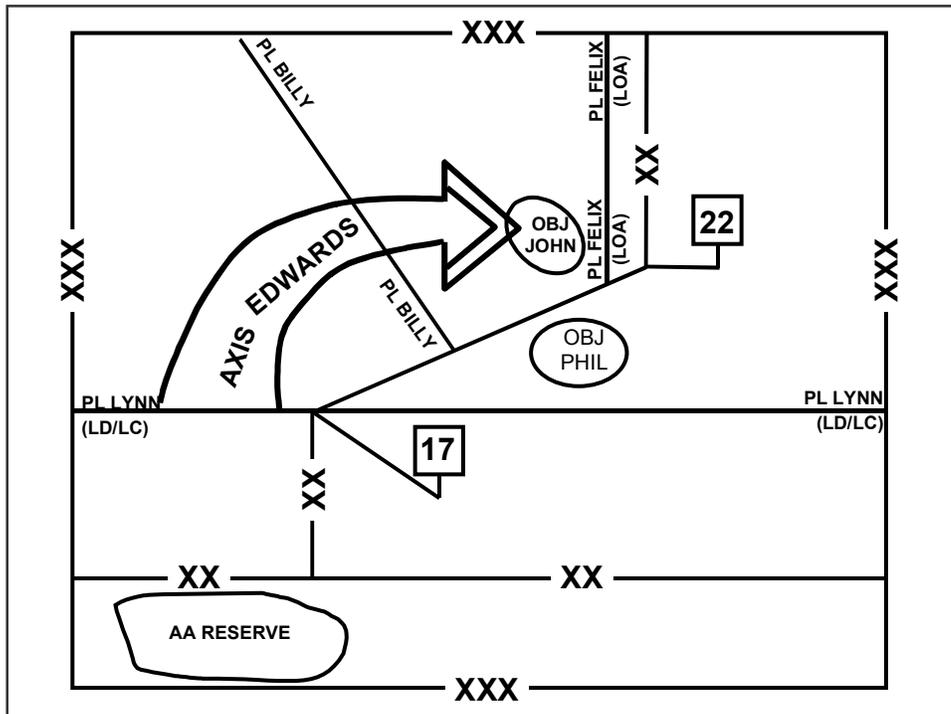
### Control Measures

3-32. The commander, at a minimum, designates AOs for each unit participating in the envelopment by using boundaries. He also designates PLs, support-by-fire and attack-by-fire positions, contact points, and appropriate fire coordination measures, such as a restricted fire line or boundary between converging forces, and any other control measures he feels are necessary to control the envelopment. Figure 3-16 on page 3-14 is an example of control measures used when conducting a single envelopment.

### Planning an Envelopment

3-33. Successful planning for an envelopment depends on knowing and understanding the enemy and his capabilities. The commander wants to maneuver his enveloping force around or over the enemy's main defenses to secure objectives on the enemy's flank or rear. From those objectives the enveloping force can use its positional advantage to employ superior combat power

against a defending enemy oriented in the wrong direction. The commander uses his intelligence assets and personnel to determine the disposition and capabilities of enemy forces to detect and react to their operations.



**Figure 3-16. Control Measures for Conducting an Envelopment**

3-34. The commander plans for the force conducting the envelopment to remain within supporting distance of the fixing force. (If the enveloping force is going outside of supporting distance, it is probably conducting a turning movement, not an envelopment.)

3-35. Sustaining the enveloping force requires deliberate planning because only intermittent ground lines of communication (LOCs) between the rear area and the enveloping force may exist. A *line of communication* is a route, either land, water, and/or air that connects an operating military force with a base of operations and along which supplies and military forces move (JP 1-02).

3-36. The commander plans how he will exploit the success of his envelopment as he encircles the enemy or transitions to a pursuit to complete the destruction of the enemy force. These plans are developed as branches and sequels to the envelopment operation.

### Executing an Envelopment

3-37. A successful envelopment depends largely on the degree of surprise the commander achieves against his opponent or the presence of overwhelming combat power. The envelopment's probability of success also increases when the commander's forces have superior tactical mobility, possess air and

information superiority, and his shaping operations fix the bulk of the enemy's forces in their current positions. The commander uses his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems to provide continuous intelligence and combat information to identify changes in enemy COAs throughout the execution of the envelopment.

3-38. Normally, a unit orients the majority of its combat power toward where it expects to engage enemy forces, while placing less combat power on its own flanks. Thus the flanks of most units are more vulnerable to attack. The commander creates an assailable flank using whatever means necessary. The enveloping force then moves rapidly to exploit the situation before the enemy strengthens an assailable flank by preparing positions in depth and by holding mobile forces in reserve. When faced with the threat of envelopment, the enemy commander might move his reserves to meet the enveloping force. Thus, rapid movement around the enemy's flank is essential to prevent him from occupying previously prepared positions. Vigorous shaping operations conducted by ground and air assets aim to prevent him from reconstituting reserves from other portions of his front.

3-39. The enemy may attempt to cut off the enveloping force and extend his flank beyond the area that the enveloping force is attempting to attack through. If the encircling force attempts to outflank such hostile extension, it may become overextended by moving outside of supporting distance from the fixing force. Therefore, it is usually better for the encircling force to take advantage of the enemy's extension and subsequent weakness by penetrating a thinly held area of the enemy's front rather than overextending itself in an attempt to completely outflank the enemy's position.

3-40. The enemy may attempt a frontal counterattack in response to an attempted envelopment. In this case, the fixing force defends itself or conducts a delay while the enveloping force continues the envelopment.

3-41. After the initial envelopment of one flank—which places the enemy at a disadvantage—the commander has many options. He may choose to establish favorable conditions for passing to a double envelopment by using reserves or exploit success by generating additional combat power along the same axis. Alternatively, he can destroy or defeat the enveloped enemy force in place, or transition to another type of operation, such as exploitation or pursuit.

## TURNING MOVEMENT

3-42. A *turning movement* is a form of maneuver in which the attacking force seeks to avoid the enemy's principle defensive positions by seizing objectives to the enemy rear and causing the enemy to move out of his current positions or divert major forces to meet the threat (FM 3-0). However, a commander can employ a vertical envelopment using airborne or air assault forces to effect a turning movement. (Appendix C discusses airborne and air assault operations.) A commander uses this form of offensive maneuver to seize vital areas in the enemy's rear before the main enemy force can withdraw or receive support or reinforcements. See [Figure 3-17](#) on page 3-16 for a graphic depiction of a turning movement. This form of offensive maneuver frequently transitions from the attack into an exploitation or pursuit. A turning movement differs from an envelopment because the force conducting a turning

movement seeks to make the enemy displace from his current locations, whereas an enveloping force seeks to engage the enemy in his current location from an unexpected direction.

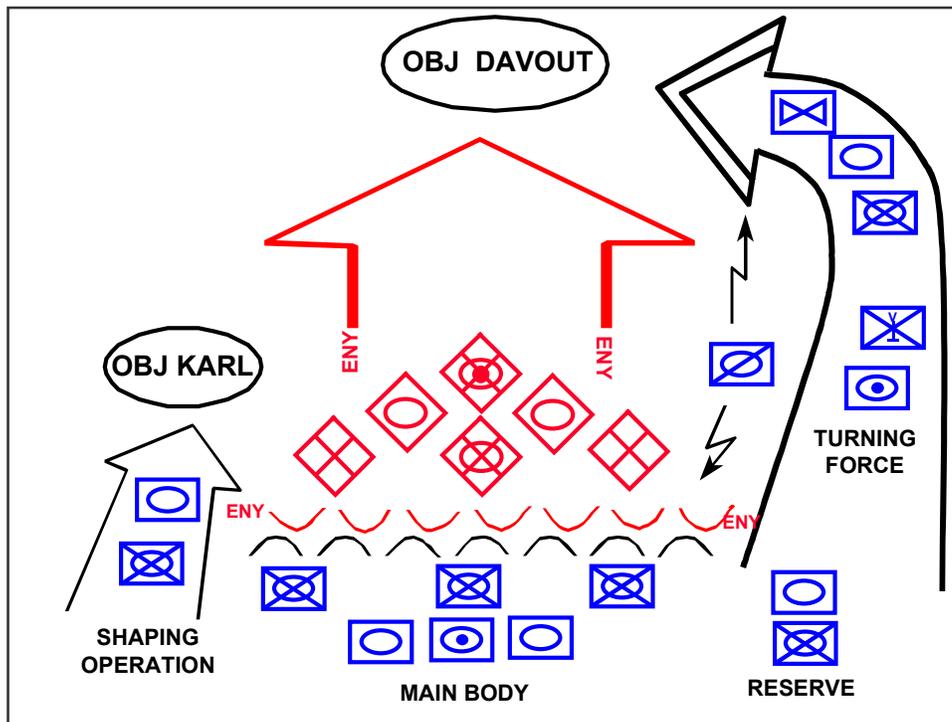


Figure 3-17. Turning Movement—Turning Force Conducting the Decisive Operation

### Organization of Forces

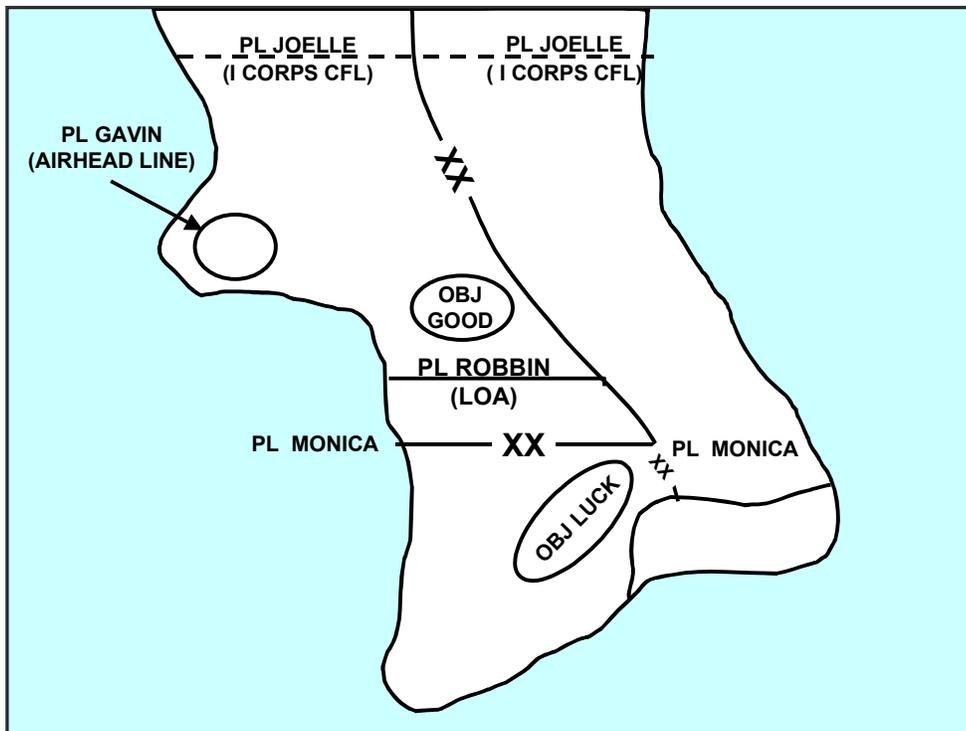
3-43. The commander directing a turning movement task organizes his resources into a turning force, a main body, and a reserve. Each of these forces conducts security and reconnaissance operations. Either the turning force or the main body can conduct the echelon's decisive operation given the appropriate factors of METT-TC. A turning movement is particularly suited for division-size or larger forces possessing a high degree of tactical mobility. It is not until a commander has access to the resources of these echelons that he has the combat power to resource a turning force that can operate outside supporting range of his main body to allow the turning force to force enemy units out of their current positions. He bases the exact task organization of these forces on the factors of METT-TC and his concept of operations for the turning movement.

3-44. The maneuver of the turning force is what causes the enemy to leave his position. A turning force normally conducts the majority of its operations outside of the supporting range of the main body and possibly outside its supporting distance. Thus, the turning force must contain sufficient combat, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) capabilities to operate independently of the main body for a specific period of time. This normally requires at least a division-size element.

3-45. The commander task organizes his main body to ensure the success of the turning force. The main body conducts operations, such as attacks designed to divert the enemy’s attention away from the area where the turning force conducts its operations. The operations of the main body can be either the echelon’s decisive or shaping operations. The commander organizes his reserve to exploit success by either the turning force or the main body. The reserve also provides the commander insurance against unexpected enemy actions.

**Control Measures**

3-46. The commander designates the AOs for each unit participating in the turning movement by establishing boundaries. He also designates additional control measures as necessary to synchronize the operations of his subordinates. These additional control measures include: phase lines (PLs), contact points, objectives, LOA, and appropriate fire coordination measures. Figure 3-18 depicts these control measures used to synchronize a turning movement that employs an airborne division as the turning force. (Appendix C discusses control measures associated with airborne and air assault operations.)



**Figure 3-18. Control Measures for a Turning Movement**

**Planning a Turning Movement**

3-47. Selecting the geographic objective of the turning movement is of major importance to the success of the operation. The commander’s scheme of maneuver in a turning movement may vary, depending on the specific situation and the factors of METT-TC. In addition to common offensive planning considerations addressed on pages 3-33 through 3-50, the commander conducting

a turning movement pays special attention to planning branches and sequels to the turning movement, including—

- Defensive operations by the turning force.
- Link-up operations between the turning force and the main body.
- Retrograde operations for the turning force.

Essential to the planning of the branches and sequels is the linkage between the branch or sequel and specific decision points supported by situation development.

3-48. After developing his tactical plan, the commander plans how the turning force maneuvers to its objective. The commander develops his movement, loading, and staging plans if outside transportation assets are required. He can plan to occupy key terrain that will threaten the enemy's survival or remain mobile and seek ways to exploit the turning force's success. Before initiating the operation, the commander plans how the turning force can exploit success.

3-49. In a turning movement that envisions an early linkup with the main body, the turning force normally plans to defend only that terrain required to protect itself. Once reinforcement or linkup with the main body occurs, the commander plans how to use the turning force to continue the attack or relieve it so it can prepare for subsequent missions.

3-50. The distances between forces and the existence of intermittent LOCs magnify the problems inherent in providing CSS to a combat force during a turning movement. Therefore, in the planning of a turning movement, the commander emphasizes resupply, equipment maintenance, casualty evacuation, graves registration, and prisoner of war handling to deal with these likely problems. Prepackaging company- and battalion-size resupply sets can ease the execution of sustaining operations during periods when CSS units must push supplies to the combat units.

3-51. Planners must consider the provision of all supplies and equipment required for mission accomplishment as an integral part of tactical planning. The commander plans and organizes his CSS operations to support a rapid tempo of highly mobile and widely dispersed operations. Traditional doctrinal supporting distances and responsibilities do not always apply to turning movements. CSS planners recognize this and adjust their plans using available resources. Only supplies required to meet the force's immediate needs are carried into the operation. Excess supplies and equipment can burden the force. Staffs establish and maintain required supply levels in the objective area by phasing supplies into the objective area on an accompanying, follow-up (automatic and on-call), and routine basis. Medical evacuation, resupply, and reinforcement airlifts may be necessary to sustain the force's combat operations. Ammunition and petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) normally constitute the major tonnage items. Lift restrictions affect what can be supplied using helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.

### **Executing a Turning Movement**

3-52. The primary prerequisites of a successful turning movement are moving the turning force to the objective area without incurring unacceptable losses and providing the force with the required combat power and

sustainment. A commander can reduce his losses by operating under conditions of friendly air and information superiority, suppressing enemy fires, and having a mobility advantage over the enemy.

3-53. Major sources of firepower to suppress enemy fires are fixed-wing aircraft, attack helicopters, jammers, and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems that cover the entire route taken by the turning force. Other sources include naval surface fire support and artillery units accompanying the turning force.

3-54. When threatened with a turning movement, the enemy commander is in a dilemma. His original defense is misplaced. He must move forces from their original position in meeting the new threat. Often he must commit his available reserves against the new threat. He exposes those forces to friendly fires as he weakens his defense and moves his forces. He must now engage friendly forces on ground he has not chosen or prepared. Whenever possible, the commander tries to reach the decisive location without encountering the enemy. Techniques to accomplish this include outflanking the enemy or using airborne, air assault, and amphibious means to avoid his prepared positions. Once friendly forces find a way deep into the enemy's rear area, the turning force moves rapidly to exploit the situation. It seeks to achieve its mission before the enemy can reposition his committed or uncommitted forces to react. Rapid movement is essential to prevent the enemy from occupying previously prepared positions in his rear. Vigorous shaping operations prevent the enemy from reconstituting reserves from other portions of the enemy front.

3-55. The enemy may counterattack in an attempt to cut off and destroy the turning force and prevent the successful completion of the turning movement. In this case, the turning force's security elements conduct an area or mobile defense or engage in delaying actions while the rest of the turning force continues its mission. Alternatively, the enemy may try to withdraw his forces to a position where his LOCs are not threatened.

## INFILTRATION

3-56. An *infiltration* is a form of maneuver in which an attacking force conducts undetected movement through or into an area occupied by enemy forces to occupy a position of advantage in the enemy rear while exposing only small elements to enemy defensive fires (FM 3-0). Infiltration is also a march technique used within friendly territory to move forces in small groups at extended or irregular intervals. (See [Chapter 14](#) for a discussion of infiltration as a movement technique.)

3-57. Infiltration occurs by land, water, air, or a combination of means. Moving and assembling forces covertly through enemy positions takes a considerable amount of time. To successfully infiltrate, the force must avoid detection and engagement. Since this requirement limits the size and strength of the infiltrating force—and infiltrated forces alone can rarely defeat an enemy force—infiltration is normally used in conjunction with and in support of the other forms of offensive maneuver. Historically, the scope of the mission for the infiltrating force has been limited.

3-58. The commander orders an infiltration to move all or a portion of a unit through gaps in the enemy's defenses to—

- Reconnoiter known or templated enemy positions and conduct surveillance of named areas of interest and targeted areas of interest.
- Attack enemy-held positions from an unexpected direction.
- Occupy a support-by-fire position to support the decisive operation.
- Secure key terrain.
- Conduct ambushes and raids to destroy vital facilities and disrupt the enemy's defensive structure by attacking his reserves, fire support and air defense systems, communication nodes, and logistic support.
- Conduct a covert breach of an obstacle or obstacle complex.

3-59. Special operations forces and light infantry units up to brigade size are best suited to conduct an infiltration. In some circumstances, heavy forces operating in small units can conduct an infiltration. However, as the proliferation of technology leads to increased situational understanding, this should increase the ability of heavy forces to avoid enemy contact and move undetected through enemy positions. In the future a commander may conduct an infiltration with heavy forces in coordination with precision fires as a prelude to an attack.

### Organization of Forces

3-60. Normally, to be successful, the infiltrating force must avoid detection at least until it reaches its ORP. Thus, the infiltrating force's size, strength, and composition is usually limited. The infiltrating unit commander organizes his main body into one or more infiltrating elements. The largest size element possible, compatible with the requirement for stealth and ease of movement, conducts the infiltration. This increases the commander's control, speeds the execution of the infiltration, and provides responsive combat power. The exact size and number of infiltrating elements are situationally dependent.

3-61. The commander considers the following factors when determining how to organize his forces. Smaller infiltrating elements are not as easy to detect and can get through smaller defensive gaps. Even the detection of one or two small elements by the enemy will not prevent the unit from accomplishing its mission in most cases. Larger infiltrating elements are easier to detect and their discovery is more apt to endanger the success of the mission. Also, they require larger gaps to move through. A unit with many smaller infiltrating elements requires more time to complete the infiltration and needs more link-up points than a similar size unit with only a few infiltrating elements. Many infiltrating elements are also harder to control than fewer, larger elements.

3-62. The commander resources a security force that moves ahead of, to the flanks of, and to the rear of each infiltrating element's main body. These security forces can be given either a screen or a guard mission. ([Chapter 12](#) discusses screen and guard missions.) The sizes and orientations of security elements are also situationally dependent. Each infiltrating element is responsible for its own reconnaissance effort.

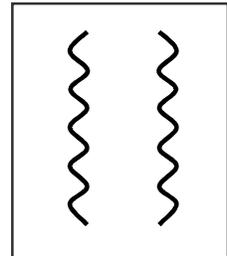
3-63. Sustainment of an infiltrating force normally depends on the force's basic load of supplies and those medical and maintenance assets accompanying the infiltrating force. After completing the mission, the commander reopens LOCs to conduct normal sustaining operations.

## Control Measures

- 3-64. Control measures for an infiltration include, as a minimum—
- An AO for the infiltrating unit.
  - One or more infiltration lanes.
  - A LD or point of departure.
  - Movement routes with their associated start and release points, or a direction or axis of attack.
  - Linkup or rally points, including ORPs.
  - Assault positions.
  - One or more objectives.
  - A LOA.

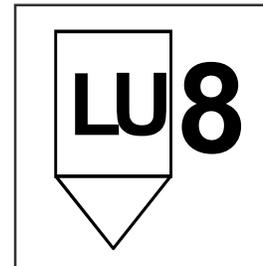
The commander can impose other measures to control the infiltration including checkpoints, PLs, and assault positions on the flank or rear of enemy positions. If it is not necessary for the entire infiltrating unit to reassemble to accomplish its mission, the objective may be broken into smaller objectives. Each infiltrating element would then move directly to its objective to conduct operations. (Most of these control measures have been previously described.) The following paragraphs describe using an infiltration lane and a linkup point.

3-65. **An *infiltration lane* is a control measure that coordinates forward and lateral movement of infiltrating units and fixes fire planning responsibilities.** The commander selects infiltration lanes that avoid the enemy, provide cover and concealment, and facilitate navigation. Figure 3-19 depicts the graphic for an infiltration lane. Each unit assigned an infiltration lane picks its own routes within the lane and switches routes as necessary. The left and right limits of the infiltration lane act as lateral boundaries for the unit conducting the infiltration. Attacks by rotary- or fixed-wing aircraft, indirect fires, or munitions effects that impact the lane must be coordinated with the infiltrating unit. Units leaving their assigned lane run the risk of being hit by friendly fires. Company-size units are normally assigned a single infiltration lane, although they can use more than one lane. Larger organizations, battalion and above, are always assigned more than one infiltration lane.



**Figure 3-19.**  
**Infiltration Lane**

3-66. **A *linkup point* is where two infiltrating elements in the same or different infiltration lanes are scheduled to meet to consolidate before proceeding on with their missions.** Figure 3-20 depicts Linkup Point 8. A linkup point is normally positioned in the enemy's rear or along one of his flanks. It should be large enough for all infiltrating elements to assemble and should offer cover and concealment for these elements. It should be an easily identifiable point on the ground. The commander should position his linkup points on defensible terrain located away from normal enemy troop movement routes.



**Figure 3-20. Linkup Point 8**

## Planning an Infiltration

3-67. The activities and functions associated with the process of planning an infiltration are the same as with any other combat operation. That planning takes advantage of that unit's stealth capabilities to surprise the enemy. The planning process synchronizes the BOS that support the infiltrating unit, especially precise, high-resolution intelligence. Without precise, detailed intelligence, infiltration maneuvers become high-risk probing operations, that can be costly and time-consuming. Careful planning, full ISR integration, detailed analysis, and aggressive operations security can permit an infiltrating force to avoid an enemy force, minimize direct contact, and maximize surprise according to the commander's intent.

3-68. After identifying gaps or weaknesses in the enemy's defensive positions, the commander assigns infiltration lanes, contact points, and objectives to subordinate units. These objectives afford the infiltrating force positions of greatest advantage over the enemy and are not required to be to the geographic rear of the targeted enemy force. Each subordinate unit commander picks one or more routes within his assigned lane and establishes additional contact points, rally points, assault points, and other control measures as required. The commander wants each of the routes within an infiltration lane to be far enough apart to prevent an infiltrating element on one route from seeing other infiltrating elements, but close enough so that an infiltrating element could switch quickly to another route if required by the situation. The commander wants each route to provide his infiltrating elements cover and concealment while avoiding known enemy and civilian locations and movement routes to the maximum extent possible. If possible, the subordinate unit commander selects his exact routes during the preparation phase after reconnoitering each infiltration lane. He decides whether his unit will infiltrate as a unit, in smaller elements, or even as two-man buddy teams, depending on the density and strength of the enemy.

3-69. The commander may use single or multiple infiltration lanes depending on the infiltrating force's size, the amount of detailed information on enemy dispositions and terrain accessible, time allowed, and number of lanes available. A single infiltration lane—

- Facilitates navigation, control, and reassembly.
- Requires the existence or creation of only one gap in the enemy's position.
- Reduces the area for which detailed intelligence is required.

3-70. Multiple infiltration lanes—

- Require the existence or creation of more gaps in the enemy's security area.
- Reduce the possibility of compromising the entire force.
- Increase difficulty with maintaining control.

3-71. The sizes and numbers of infiltrating elements are major considerations for the commander when he is deciding whether to use a single lane or multiple infiltration lanes. If the infiltration takes place using multiple elements, contingency plans must address the following situations:

- A lead element, possibly the advance guard, makes contact, but the trail elements have not started infiltrating.
- A lead element infiltrates successfully, but compromises one or more trailing elements.
- A compromised linkup point.

3-72. The commander uses available technology to assist in planning the infiltration and avoiding unintended enemy and civilian contact during the infiltration. This can be as simple as all units using the same infiltrating lane being on the same frequency to facilitate the avoidance of enemy contact. An accurate depiction of enemy systems and locations, tied to rapid terrain analysis, can graphically depict dead spots in the enemy's battlefield surveillance. The commander can then plan how to expand those existing dead spots into infiltration lanes through a precision attack of selected enemy elements and systems.

3-73. The plan also addresses the following considerations:

- Availability of supporting fires, including rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft and offensive information operations—especially electronic attack, throughout the operation, during infiltration and the attack on the objective.
- Linkup or extraction of the infiltrating unit after mission completion.
- Sustainment of the infiltrating force during the operation, to include casualty evacuation.
- Deception operations, such as actions by other units designed to divert enemy attention from the area selected for the infiltration.
- Linkup of the various infiltrating elements.
- Command and control (C2), to include recognition signals.
- Positioning of combat vehicles to support the infiltrating elements.
- Using limited visibility and rough terrain to mask movement and reduce the chance of detection.
- Infiltration of the largest elements possible to maintain control.
- Rehearsals.
- Specially required preparations, such as modifying the unit's SOP regarding the soldier's combat load for the mission. When infiltrating on foot, units carry only required equipment. For example, in close terrain and in the absence of an armor threat, heavy antiarmor missile systems may be a liability.
- Abort criteria.
- Critical friendly zones.

3-74. Planned recognition signals and linkup procedures for the infiltration should be simple and quick. If there has not been any firing or any other noises, signals should not violate noise and light discipline. However, if there have already been assaults, artillery, and small-arms fire, signals, such as whistles and flares, can be used as linkup aids. A lack of time and the short distance involved in many infiltration operations may make conducting formal linkup procedures unnecessary.

### Preparing an Infiltration

3-75. Once the commander selects the objective, infiltration lanes, and linkup or rally points, he directs ISR operations to update and confirm the details on which he bases his plan. He identifies enemy sensors and surveillance systems. He then revises the plan to reflect current conditions within the AO.

### Executing an Infiltration

3-76. Moving undetected during an infiltration requires a considerable amount of time. The infiltrating unit moves from its AA or current position through the start point and then continues moving along the infiltration route to a release point. If buddy teams or small elements are conducting the infiltration, the unit uses a series of linkup points to reassemble into a coherent unit. Units can use a variety of navigation aids, such as GPS, to remain within the planned infiltration lane, which minimizes their chances of detection by the enemy. At the same time, they report their progress and status using communication systems that provide this information automatically to all command nodes which require this information.

3-77. If the complete unit is conducting the infiltration, the forward security force begins its movement first, followed by the main body. The distance between the forward security force and the main body depends on the factors of METT-TC. The advance guard must be far enough ahead of the main body so that it can either deploy or move to another route if the forward security force discovers the enemy. The forward security force in an infiltration must have enough time to move in a stealthy and secure manner. Enemy units should not be able to move undetected in the gap between the forward security force and the main body.

3-78. As the infiltrating unit moves, the advance guard reports to the commander regarding the cover and concealment of each route, enemy activity, location of danger areas and linkup points, enemy activity on the objective, and other combat information. The unit attempts to avoid enemy and civilian contact; however, contact does not always mean the mission is compromised. The infiltrating unit engages targets first with indirect fires to avoid revealing its presence and exact location. These fires include the conduct of offensive information operations designed to blind enemy ISR assets and prevent the enemy from coordinating an effective response to the infiltration.

3-79. If necessary, the forward security force conducts actions on contact while the main body moves to another route, reconstitutes a forward security force, and continues the mission. If the main body makes contact unexpectedly, it either overruns the enemy force, if the enemy has little combat power, or bypasses him and continues the mission. During the infiltration, the unit ignores ineffective enemy fire and continues to move. The commander may use suppressive fires against the enemy to cover the sounds of the infiltration or to divert the enemy's attention to areas other than where the infiltration lanes are located.

3-80. The infiltrating unit's elements move to an AA or an ORP to consolidate its combat power, refine the plan, and conduct any last-minute coordination prior to continuing the mission. The unit then conducts those tasks needed to

accomplish its assigned mission, which could be an attack, raid, ambush, seizing key terrain, capturing prisoners, or collecting specific combat information.

3-81. A commander may need to abort an infiltration operation if the factors of METT-TC change so drastically during the infiltration that the infiltrating force is no longer capable of accomplishing its mission. Examples of changes that might trigger such an action include—

- Significant portions of the infiltrating force's combat power are lost through navigation errors, enemy action, accidents, or maintenance failures.
- Movement or significant reinforcement of a force-oriented objective.
- Detection of the infiltration by the enemy.
- Changes in the tactical situation that make the mission no longer appropriate, such as the initiation of an enemy attack.

The criteria for aborting the operation are developed in the planning process. The decision to abort the infiltration is transmitted to all appropriate headquarters for their action and information.

## PENETRATION

3-82. A *penetration* is a form of maneuver in which an attacking force seeks to rupture enemy defenses on a narrow front to disrupt the defensive system (FM 3-0). Destroying the continuity of that defense allows the enemy's subsequent isolation and defeat in detail by exploiting friendly forces. The penetration extends from the enemy's security area through his main defensive positions into his rear area. A commander employs a penetration when there is no assailable flank, enemy defenses are overextended and weak spots are detected in the enemy's positions, or time pressures do not permit an envelopment.

### Organization of Forces

3-83. Penetrating a well-organized position requires overwhelming combat power in the area of penetration and combat superiority to continue the momentum of the attack. (See [Figure 3-21](#), page 3-26.) The commander designates a breach, support, and assault force. He can designate these elements for each defensive position that he is required to penetrate. He should not withhold combat power from the initial penetration to conduct additional penetration unless he has so much combat power that the success of the initial penetration is assured.

3-84. The commander reserves a reserve to deal with expected or unexpected contingencies, such as an enemy counterattack, to avoid diverting the assault element from attacking the final objective of the penetration. He designates additional units follow-and-support or follow-and-assume missions to ensure rapid exploitation of initial success. He designates forces to fix enemy reserves in their current locations and isolate enemy forces within the area selected for penetration.

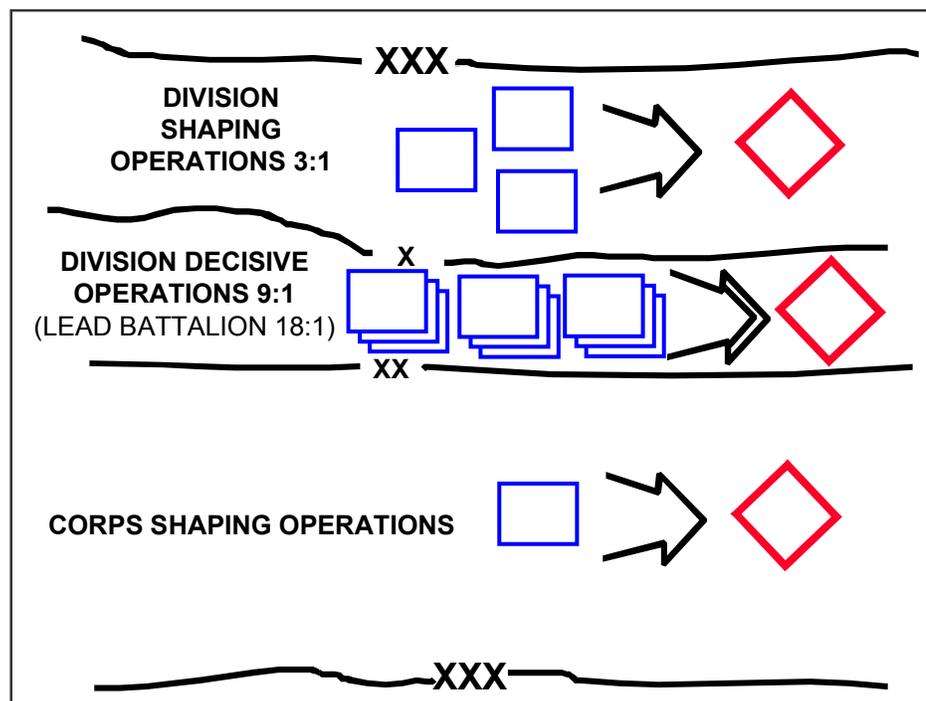


Figure 3-21. Penetration: Relative Combat Power

### Control Measures

3-85. A commander assigns, as a minimum, an AO to every maneuver unit, a LD or LC; time of the attack or time of assault; phase lines; objective; and a LOA to control and synchronize the attack. (A commander can use a battle handover line instead of a LOA if he knows where he would like to commit a follow-and-assume force.) The lateral boundaries of the unit making the decisive operation are narrowly drawn to help establish the overwhelming combat power necessary at the area of penetration. The commander locates the LOA beyond the enemy's main defensive position to ensure completing the breach. If the operation results in opportunities to exploit success and pursue a beaten enemy, the commander adjusts existing boundaries to accommodate the new situation. (See [Figure 3-22](#).)

3-86. A commander uses the graphics associated with a breach site, such as gaps and lanes, on the small-scale maps used to control the maneuver of his forces at each point where he penetrates the enemy's defenses. FM 3-34.2 defines the graphics.

3-87. Other control measures available to the commander include checkpoints, support-by-fire and attack-by-fire positions, probable line of deployment, fire support coordinating measures, attack position, assault position, and time of assault. Within the unit's AO, a commander can use either an axis of advance or a direction of attack to further control maneuver.

### Planning a Penetration

3-88. The success of the penetration depends primarily on a coordinated and synchronized plan—violently executed at a high tempo to achieve surprise—

against comparatively weak enemy defenses. However, the terrain behind the area selected to penetrate must allow the penetration to proceed from the breach to a decisive objective.

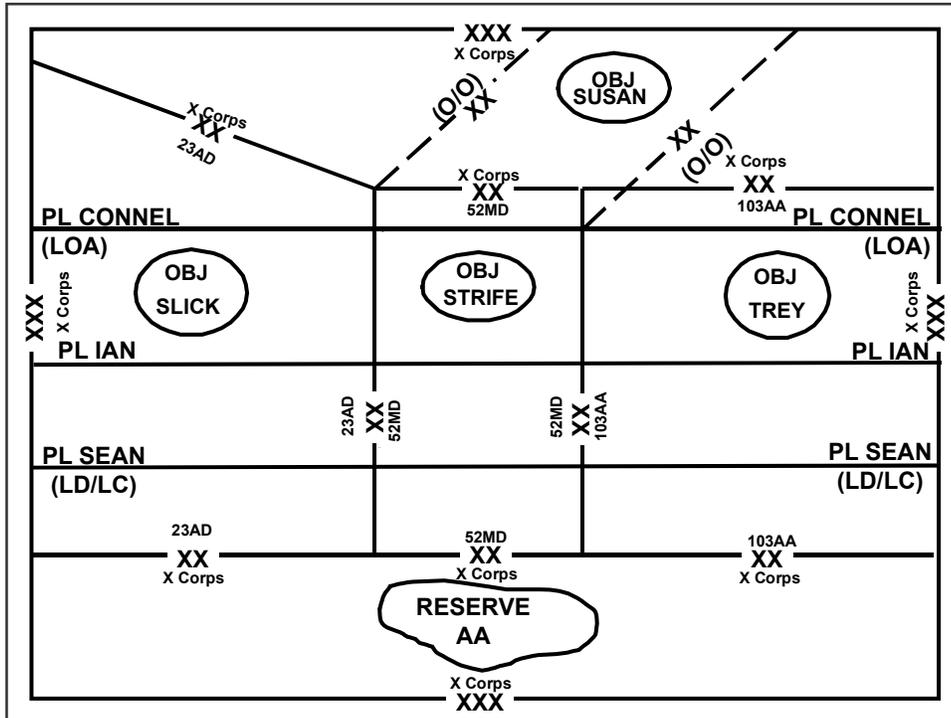


Figure 3-22. Penetration Graphic Control Measures

3-89. The depth of the enemy position and the relative strength of attacking echelons determine the width of the penetration. The availability of artillery, air support, and other combat multipliers for the attacking force helps the commander determine relative combat power. A wider gap allows friendly forces to drive deeper, making it more difficult for the enemy to close the gap. The deeper the penetration, the easier it is for a unit to seize its objective and roll up the enemy's flanks exposed by the breach and the less likely it is that the enemy will be in a position to restore his front by falling back.

3-90. Plans for penetrating a defensive position include isolating, suppressing, and destroying by fire—to include offensive information operations—enemy forces in the area selected for the penetration. These plans should also address how to isolate the area of penetration from support or reinforcement by enemy forces located outside the area. This consideration includes how to fix enemy reserves and long-range weapons in their current locations. Positioning friendly assets so that the commander can mass the effects of their combat power to accomplish these results without giving away the location of the penetration is also a critical part of the plan.

3-91. The commander plans to place the majority of his forces and assets in positions where the effects of their combat power can be felt in the area

selected for penetration. The commander's plan for the penetration normally has three phases:

- Breaching the enemy's main defensive positions.
- Widening the gap created to secure the flanks by enveloping one or both of the newly exposed flanks.
- Seizing the objective with its associated subsequent exploitation.

3-92. Planning the sequence of these phases depends on the specific situation. In some situations, if there are weaknesses or gaps in the enemy's front, it is possible for heavy forces to breach the enemy's defenses and proceed straight to the objective. Simultaneously, light units could conduct local envelopment and exploitation operations. In other situations, the commander uses his light forces to create the breach, holding his heavy forces initially in reserve to exploit gaps in the enemy's defenses created by light forces.

3-93. The commander plans shaping operations outside the area of penetration to contain the enemy on the flanks of the penetration and fix his reserves in their current locations. Synchronizing the effects of rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft, artillery fires, and obscuration smoke to delay or disrupt repositioning forces is an example of such shaping operations. These shaping operations will involve the maintenance of operations security and the conduct of deception operations. The commander usually attempts to penetrate the enemy's defensive positions along unit boundaries because defenses tend to be less effective along a boundary.

3-94. The commander plans for the penetration to break through the enemy's defenses so he is unable to reestablish his defense on more rearward positions. Until this event takes place, the commander does not want to divert the strength of his attacking units to widening the gap to secure the flanks of the penetration. However, he must develop plans that address contingencies, such as hostile counterattacks against the flanks of the penetration. The plan should provide assistance to attacking elements as they close with the enemy and support the attack until the enemy's power of resistance is broken.

### Executing a Penetration

3-95. After the initial breach of the enemy's main line of resistance, the sequence of the remaining two phases is determined by the factors of METT-TC. If the enemy is in a weak defensive position, it may be possible for the lead attacking force to seize the penetration's final objective while simultaneously widening the initial breach. In other situations, the commander must wait to seize the final objective until the breach is wide enough for other forces, such as reserves and follow-and-assume forces, to be committed. Commanders at all levels must take advantage of success within the commander's intent throughout the penetration.

3-96. **Breaching the Enemy's Main Defensive Positions.** The commander launches the actual penetration on a relatively narrow front. (See [Figure 3-23](#).) He narrows the AO of the unit or units conducting his decisive operation—the penetration—by adjusting unit lateral boundaries to the exact point or points where he wants to penetrate the enemy's defenses. This allows the force conducting the penetration to focus overwhelming combat power. The commander assigns his assault force a close-in objective. His support

force locates where it can support by fire both the breach and the assault forces. Local reserves are held in readiness to conduct a forward passage through or around units whose attacks have slowed or stopped.

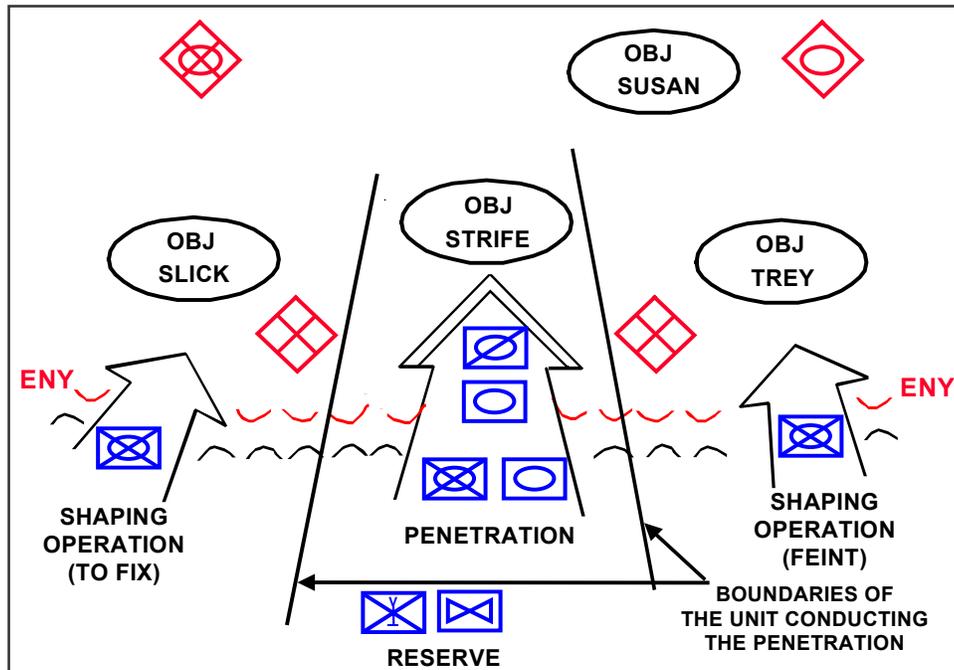


Figure 3-23. Penetration: The Breach

3-97. Shaping operations on the remainder of the hostile front fix the enemy in his current positions and prevent him from disengaging to reinforce enemy units opposing the decisive operation. The commander tracks the battle's progress to ensure that his forces penetrate entirely through the enemy's main defensive positions and not just the enemy's security area.

3-98. The enemy normally tries to slow down or stop the breach to gain time to react to the changing situation. Therefore, the attacking commander rapidly exploits and reinforces success. He piles on resources and additional units as necessary to ensure completing the penetration through the enemy's defensive positions. He also conducts offensive information operations to desynchronize the enemy's reaction.

3-99. **Widening the Breach to Secure the Flanks.** Once the attacking force penetrates the main defenses, it begins to widen the penetration of the enemy's defensive positions by conducting a series of shallow envelopments to roll back its shoulders. (See Figure 3-24, page 3-30.) The task of widening the initial gap of the penetration is normally assigned to a follow-and-support force. That task can also be assigned to the reserve as a contingency mission. If the commander commits his reserve to accomplish that task, he must reconstitute his reserve from another part of his force. Alternatively, he may assume the risk of not having a reserve for the time necessary to accomplish this task. The commander makes plans to meet enemy counterattacks by shifting fires or committing his reserves or follow-and-assume forces. Units

can use obstacles on the flanks of the penetration as a combat multiplier to assist in defeating any local enemy counterattack and to provide additional security for the force.

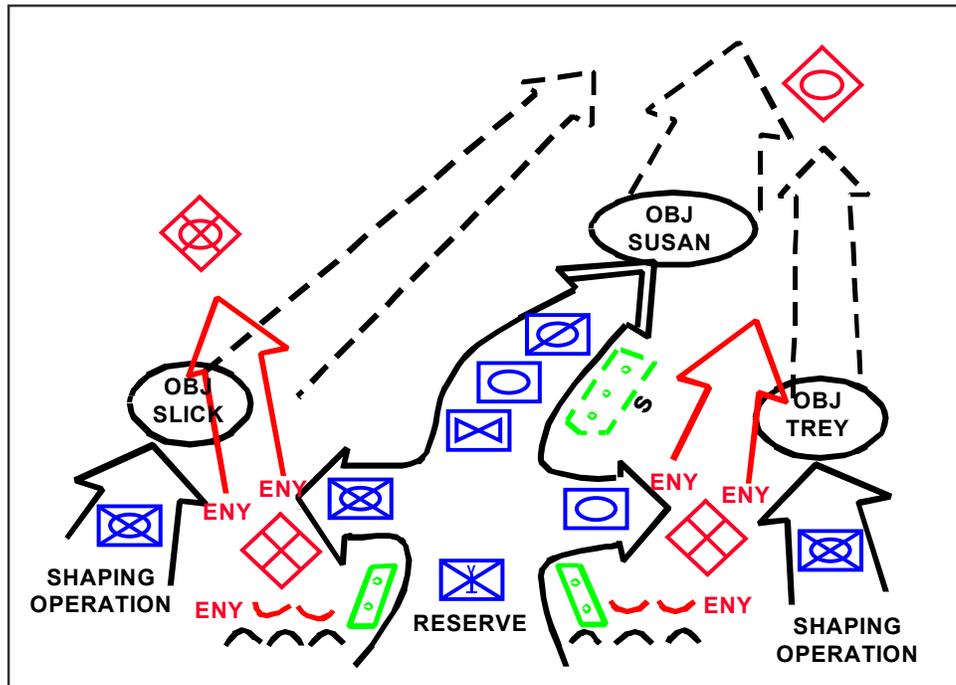


Figure 3-24. Expanding the Penetration

3-100. **Seizing the Objective and Subsequent Exploitation.** The mission of seizing the objective—which may be a specific enemy force—to destroy the continuity of the enemy’s defensive position is normally the decisive operation after completing the penetration. Frequently that objective is so far from the area of penetration that the unit or units initially conducting the penetration cannot seize it without a pause. In that case, the commander plans to pass his reserve or follow and assume forces through the initial attacking force early, leaving exploitation beyond the objective to higher echelons. While the exact force mix is METT-TC-dependent, armored, mechanized, and aviation forces are generally suited for subsequent exploitation.

3-101. In large commands, forces may initiate an attack by simultaneously launching two or more convergent penetrations against weak localities on the hostile front. Often this method of attack helps isolate an extremely strong, hostile defense. The commander assigns shaping operations to initially contain any strong localities. When the multiple attacks have advanced sufficiently, the force reduces bypassed enemy forces and unites the penetrating attacks into a single decisive operation.

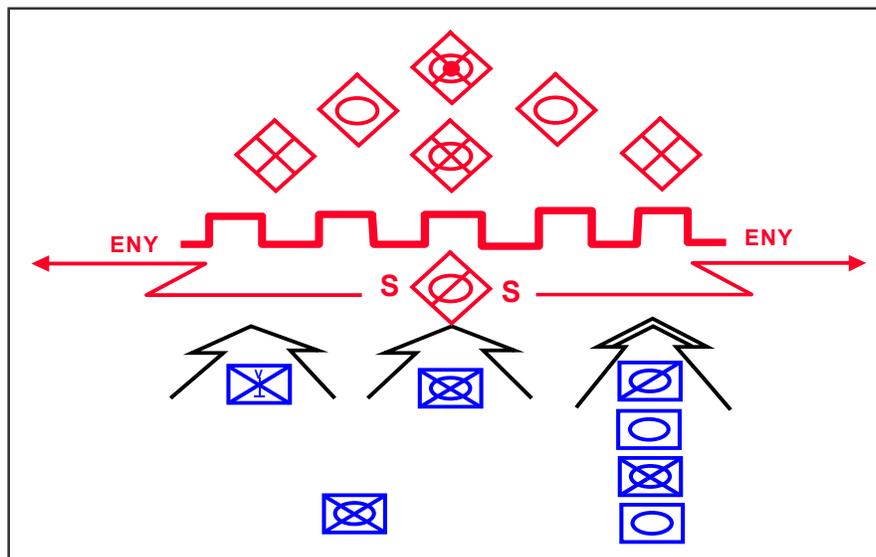
## FRONTAL ATTACK

3-102. A *frontal attack* is a form of maneuver in which an attacking force seeks to destroy a weaker enemy force or fix a larger enemy force in place over a broad front (FM 3-0). At the tactical level, an attacking force can use a

frontal attack to rapidly overrun a weak enemy force. A commander commonly uses a frontal attack as a shaping operation in conjunction with other forms of maneuver. He normally employs a frontal attack to—

- Clear enemy security forces.
- Overwhelm a shattered enemy during an exploitation or pursuit.
- Fix enemy forces in place as part of a shaping operation.
- Conduct a reconnaissance in force.

Figure 3-25 depicts a frontal attack.



**Figure 3-25. Frontal Attack**

3-103. It is also necessary to conduct a frontal attack when assailable flanks do not exist. Where a penetration is a sharp attack designed to rupture the enemy position, the commander designs a frontal attack to maintain continuous pressure along the entire front until either a breach occurs or the attacking forces succeed in pushing the enemy back. Frontal attacks conducted without overwhelming combat power are seldom decisive. Consequently, the commander's choice to conduct a frontal attack in situations where he does not have overwhelming combat power is rarely justified unless the time gained is vital to the operation's success.

### Organization of Forces

3-104. There is no unique organization of forces associated with this form of maneuver. A commander conducting a frontal attack organizes his unit into an element to conduct reconnaissance and security operations, a main body, and a reserve. The factors of METT-TC dictate the specific task organization of the unit.

### Control Measures

3-105. A commander conducting a frontal attack may not require any additional control measures beyond those established to control the overall

mission. This includes an AO, defined by unit boundaries, and an objective at a minimum. The commander can also use any other control measure he feels is necessary to control the attack, including—

- Attack positions.
- Line of departure.
- Phase lines.
- Assault positions.
- Limit of advance.
- Direction of attack or axis of advance for every maneuver unit.

A unit conducting a frontal attack normally has a wider AO than a unit conducting a penetration.

### **Planning a Frontal Attack**

3-106. It is seldom possible for a commander to exert sufficient pressure to overwhelm an enemy using a frontal attack, since it strikes the enemy along a significant portion of his front. The force's primary objective is to maintain pressure and help fix the enemy force. The commander's planning effort should reflect these two considerations. When considering employing a frontal attack in a shaping operation, the commander should also consider other means for holding the enemy in position, such as feints and demonstrations employing indirect fires to preclude excessive losses.

### **Executing a Frontal Attack**

3-107. The unit conducting a frontal attack advances on a broad front, normally with its subordinate ground maneuver elements abreast (except for the reserve). This clears the enemy's security area of his security forces and reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition assets while advancing the friendly force into the enemy's main defenses. Once the unit makes contact with the enemy, the attacking force's subordinate elements rapidly develop the situation and report enemy dispositions immediately to the commander so he can exploit enemy weaknesses. The attacking force fixes enemy forces in their current locations and seeks to gain a position of advantage to destroy them using fire and movement.

3-108. If the attacking unit discovers a gap in the enemy's defenses, the commander seeks to exploit that weakness and disrupt the integrity of the enemy's defense. After assessing the situation to make sure that it is not a trap, the commander can employ his reserve to exploit the opportunity. He synchronizes the exploitation with the actions of his other combat, CS, and CSS units to prevent counterattacking enemy forces from isolating and destroying successful subordinate elements of his force.

3-109. When the unit conducting the frontal attack can no longer advance, it adopts a defensive posture. The commander may require it to assist the forward passage of lines of other units. It continues to perform reconnaissance of enemy positions to locate gaps or assailable flanks.

## COMMON OFFENSIVE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

3-110. Visualizing, describing, and directing are aspects of leadership common to all commanders. The tactical commander begins with a designated AO, identified mission, and assigned forces. The commander develops and issues planning guidance based on his visualization in terms of the physical means to accomplish the mission.

3-111. The offense is basic to combat operations. Only by a resolute offense, conducted at a high tempo and to great depth, is total destruction of the enemy attained. The offense has a number of indisputable advantages. The principal advantage enjoyed is its possession of the initiative. Having the initiative allows a commander to select the time, place, and specific tactics, techniques, and procedures used by the attacking force. The attacker has the time and opportunity to develop a plan and to concentrate the effects of his forces and thoroughly prepare conditions for success when he has the initiative. The commander strikes the enemy in unexpected ways at unexpected times and places. He focuses on attacking the right combination of targets, not necessarily the biggest or the closest. These attacks are rapidly executed, violently executed, unpredictable in nature, and disorient the enemy. They enhance the commander's capability to impose his will on his enemy and thus to achieve decisive victory.

3-112. The commander maintains momentum by rapidly following up his attacks to prevent enemy recovery. He denies his enemy any opportunity to adjust to his action in spite of the enemy's desperate attempts to do so. He changes his means and methods before the enemy can adapt to those in current use. The tempo of his operations must be fast enough to prevent effective counteraction. He orchestrates unrelenting pressure by adjusting combinations to meet the offensive's ever-changing demands. He maintains relentless pressure and exploits his gains to make permanent any temporary battlefield success.

3-113. Each battle or engagement, even those occurring simultaneously as a part of the same campaign, has its own unique peculiarities, determined by the actual conditions of the situation. The widespread application of highly accurate and lethal weapons, high degree of tactical mobility, dynamic nature, rapid situational changes, and the noncontiguous and large spatial scope of unit AOs all characterize contemporary combined arms warfare. The commander first able to see the battlefield, understand the implications of existing friendly and enemy operational picture, and take effective action to impose his will on the situation will enjoy tactical success.

3-114. The following discussion uses those physical means—soldiers, organizations, and equipment—that constitute the seven BOS defined in FM 7-15 as the framework for discussing planning considerations that apply to all types and forms of tactical offensive operations. The commander synchronizes the effects of all BOS as part of the visualize, describe, direct, and assess process.

## INTELLIGENCE

3-115. A commander uses the products of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process to identify any aspect within his AO or area of interest that will affect how he accomplishes his mission. An *area of interest* is

that area of concern to the commander, including the area of influence, areas adjacent thereto, and extending into enemy territory to the objectives of current or planned operations. This area also includes areas occupied by enemy forces who could jeopardize the accomplishment of the mission (JP 2-03).

3-116. The entire staff, led by the echelon intelligence staff, uses the IPB process to identify any aspects of the area of operations or area of interest that will affect enemy, friendly, and third party operations. The IPB process is collaborative in nature and requires information from all staff elements and some subordinate units. All staff and subordinate elements use the results and products of the IPB process for planning. FM 2-01.3 describes the IPB process.

3-117. The commander uses his ISR assets to study the terrain and confirm or deny the enemy's strengths, dispositions, and likely intentions, especially where and in what strength the enemy will defend. These assets also gather information concerning the civilian population within the AO to confirm or deny their numbers, locations, and likely intentions, especially with regard to staying put in shelters or fleeing from combat operations.

3-118. By studying the terrain, the commander tries to determine the principal heavy and light avenues of approach to his objective. He also tries to determine the most advantageous area for the enemy's main defense to occupy, routes that the enemy may use to conduct counterattacks, and other factors, such as observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, and cover and concealment (OAKOC). (See FM 6-0 for a discussion of the components of OAKOC.) It is unlikely that the commander has complete knowledge of the enemy's intentions; therefore, he must conduct ISR collection continuously during the battle.

3-119. The echelon intelligence and operations officers, in coordination with the rest of the staff, develop an integrated ISR plan that satisfies the commander's maneuver, targeting, and information requirements. A commander's information requirements are dictated by the factors of METT-TC, but commonly include—

- Locations, composition, equipment, strengths, and weaknesses of the defending enemy force, to include high-priority targets and enemy ISR capabilities.
- Locations of possible enemy assembly areas.
- Location of enemy indirect-fire weapon systems and units.
- Location of gaps and assailable flanks.
- Location of areas for friendly and enemy air assaults.
- Location of enemy air defense gun and missile units.
- Location of enemy electronic warfare units.
- Effects of weather and terrain on current and projected operations.
- Numbers, routes, and direction of movement of dislocated civilians.
- Withdrawal routes for enemy forces.
- Anticipated timetable schedules for the enemy's most likely COA and other probable COAs.
- Locations of enemy C2 and ISR systems and the frequencies used by the information systems linking these systems.

If friendly ISR systems cannot answer the commander's information requirements, his intelligence staff can send a request for information to higher and adjacent units, he can commit additional resources, or he can decide to execute his offensive operation with the current information.

## MANEUVER

3-120. The commander conducts maneuver to avoid enemy strengths and to create opportunities to increase the effects his fires. He secures surprise by making unexpected maneuvers, rapidly changing the tempo of ongoing operations, avoiding observation, and using deceptive techniques and procedures. He seeks to overwhelm the enemy with one or more unexpected blows before the enemy has time to react in an organized fashion. This occurs when he is able to engage the defending enemy force from positions that place the attacking force in a position of advantage with respect to the defending enemy force, such as engaging the enemy from a flanking position. His security forces prevent the enemy from discovering friendly dispositions, capabilities, and intentions, or interfering with the preparations for the attack. Finally, he maneuvers to close with and destroy the enemy by close combat and shock effect. *Close combat* is combat carried out with direct fire weapons, supported by indirect fire, air-delivered fires, and nonlethal engagement means. Close combat defeats or destroys enemy forces, or seizes and retains ground (FM 3-0). Close combat encompasses all actions that place friendly forces in immediate contact with the enemy where the commander uses direct fire and movement in combination to defeat or destroy enemy forces or seize and retain ground.

3-121. A commander can overwhelm an enemy by the early seizing and retaining of key and decisive terrain that provides dominating observation, cover and concealment, and better fields of fire to facilitate the maneuver of his forces. If decisive terrain is present, the commander designates it to communicate its importance in his concept of operations, first to his staff and later to subordinate commanders. The friendly force must control decisive terrain to successfully accomplish its mission.

## Combat Formations

3-122. A **combat formation** is an ordered arrangement of forces for a specific purpose and describes the general configuration of a unit on the ground. A commander can use seven different combat formations depending on the factors of METT-TC:

- Column.
- Line.
- Echelon (left or right).
- Box.
- Diamond.
- Wedge.
- Vee.

Terrain characteristics and visibility determine the actual arrangement and location of the unit's personnel and vehicles within a given formation.

3-123. Combat formations allow a unit to move on the battlefield in a posture suited to the senior commander's intent and mission. A unit may employ a series of combat formations during the course of an attack; each has its advantages and disadvantages. Subordinate units within a combat formation can also employ their own combat formations, consistent with their particular situation. The commander considers the advantages and disadvantages of each formation in the areas of C2 maintenance, firepower orientation, ability to mass fires, and flexibility when determining the appropriate formation for a given situation. All combat formations use one or more of the three movement techniques: traveling, traveling overwatch, and bounding overwatch. (Chapter 13 describes these three movement techniques.)

3-124. The commander's use of standard formations allows him to rapidly shift his unit from one formation to another, giving him additional flexibility when adjusting to changes in the factors of METT-TC. (This results from a commander rehearsing his unit so that it can change formations using standard responses to changing situations, such as actions on contact.) By designating the combat formation he plans to use, the commander—

- Establishes the geographic relationship between units.
- Indicates how he plans to react once the enemy makes contact with the formation.
- Indicates the level of security desired.
- Establishes the preponderant orientation of his weapon systems.
- Postures his forces for the attack.

The number of maneuver units available makes some formations, such as the box and the diamond, impractical for modernized organizations, including the initial brigade combat team and the limited conversion division, which only have three subordinate maneuver units at the brigade and battalion echelons unless task organization occurs.

3-125. **Column Formation.** The unit moves in column formation when the commander does not anticipate early contact, the objective is distant, and speed and control are critical. (See Figure 3-26.) The location of fire support units within the column reflects the column's length and the range fans of those fire support systems. Normally, the lead element uses a traveling overwatch technique while the following units are in traveling formation. Employing a column formation—

- Provides the best formation to move large forces quickly, especially with limited routes and limited visibility.
- Makes enemy contact with a small part of the total force while facilitating control and allowing the commander to quickly generate mass.

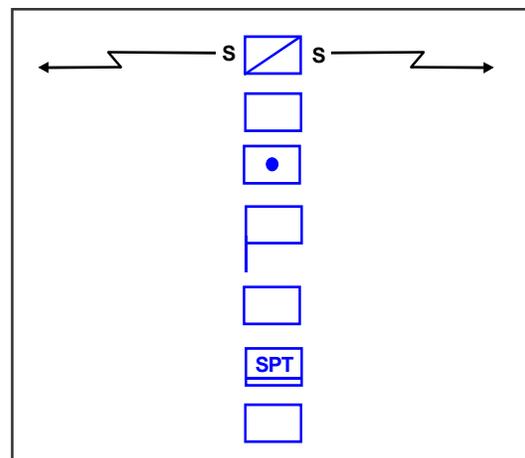


Figure 3-26. Column Formation

- Provides a base for easy transition to other formations.
- Works in restricted terrain.

3-126. A disadvantage of using the column formation is that the majority of the column's firepower can only be immediately applied on the column's flanks. The length of the column impacts movement and terrain management. Additionally, there are the possibilities of inadvertently bypassing enemy units or positions and exposing the unit's flanks or running head on into an enemy deployed perpendicular to the column's direction of movement.

3-127. **Line Formation.** In a line formation, the unit's subordinate ground maneuver elements move abreast of each other. (See Figure 3-27.) A commander employs this formation when he assaults an objective because it concentrates firepower to the front in the direction of movement. A line formation also—

- Facilitates speed and shock in closing with an enemy.
- Allows the coverage of wide frontages.
- Facilitates the occupation of attack-by-fire or support-by-fire positions.

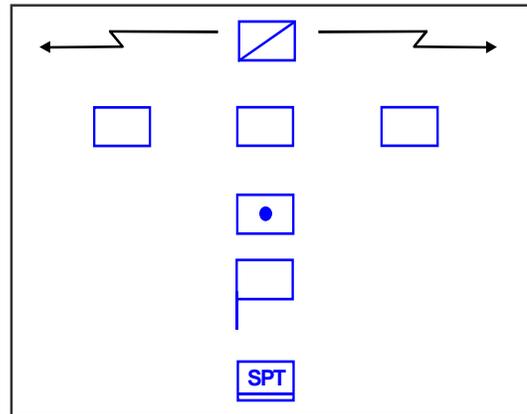


Figure 3-27. Line Formation

3-128. There are also disadvantages of a line formation:

- Provides less flexibility of maneuver than other formations since it does not distribute units in depth.
- Linear deployment allows a unit deployed on line to bring only limited firepower to bear on either flank.
- Provides limited or no reserve.
- Limits overwatch forces.
- Limits control of a unit using a line formation in restricted terrain or under conditions of limited visibility.

3-129. **Echelon Formation.** A commander who has knowledge of potential enemy locations can use an echelon formation to deploy his subordinate ground maneuver units diagonally left or right. (See Figures 3-28 and 3-29, page 3-38.) Units operating on the flank of a larger formation commonly use this formation. Using an echelon formation—

- Facilitates control in open terrain.
- Allows the concentration of

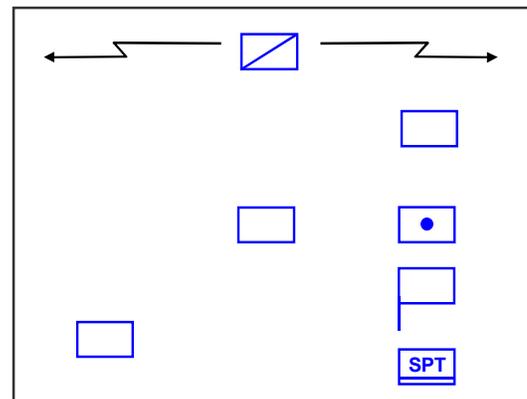


Figure 3-28. Echelon Left Formation

the unit's firepower forward and to the flank in the direction of echelon.

- Allows forces not in contact to maneuver against a known enemy, because all elements probably will not come into contact at the same time.

3-130. The primary disadvantages of the echelon formation are that it is more difficult to maintain control over the unit in restricted terrain than a column formation and the lack of security or firepower available on the opposite side of the echelon.

3-131. **Box Formation.** The box formation arranges the unit with two forward and two trail maneuver elements. (See Figure 3-30.) A unit with only three maneuver elements cannot adopt the box formation. The subordinate elements of the box usually move in a column formation with flank security. It is often used when executing an approach march, an exploitation, or a pursuit when the commander has only general knowledge about the enemy. Employing a box formation—

- Allows the unit to change quickly and easily to any other formation.
- Facilitates rapid movement, yet still provides all-around security.
- Provides firepower to the front and flanks.
- Maintains control more easily when compared to a line formation.

The primary disadvantages of a box formation are that it requires sufficient maneuver space for dispersion and the availability of multiple routes.

3-132. **Diamond Formation.** The diamond formation arranges the unit with one forward and one trail unit and a unit on each flank. (See Figure 3-31.)

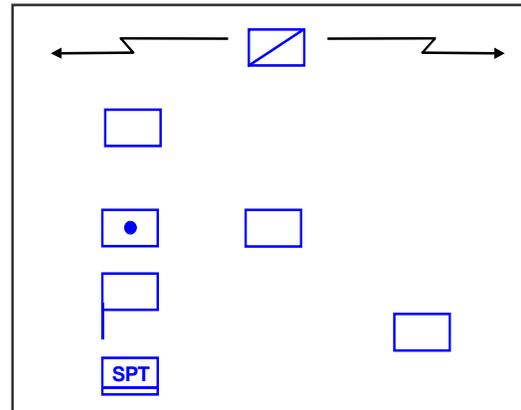


Figure 3-29. Echelon Right Formation

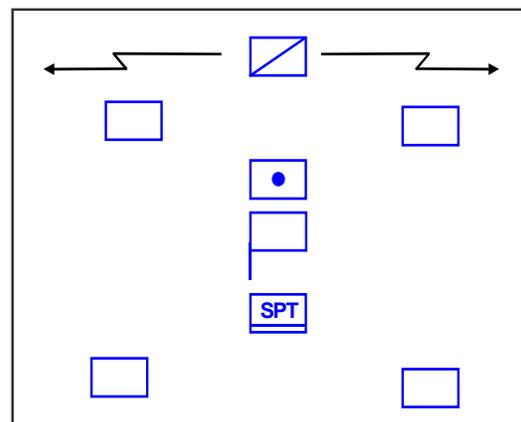


Figure 3-30. Box Formation

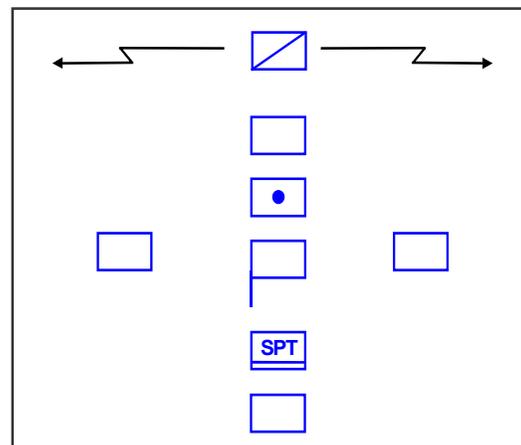


Figure 3-31. Diamond Formation

The subordinate elements of the diamond usually move in a column formation with flank security. It is most effective during approach marches, exploitations, or pursuits when the commander has only general knowledge about the enemy. Employing a diamond formation—

- Allows the commander to maneuver either left or right immediately, without first repositioning, regardless of which subordinate element makes contact with the enemy. (This is the chief advantage of and the difference between a diamond and a box formation.)
- Facilitates making enemy contact with the smallest possible force, yet provides all-around security.
- Provides firepower to the front and flanks.
- Changes easily and quickly to another formation.
- Facilitates speed of movement while remaining easy to control.
- Provides an uncommitted force for use as a reserve.

3-133. The primary disadvantages of this formation are that it—

- Requires sufficient space for dispersion laterally and in depth.
- Requires four subordinate maneuver elements.
- Requires the availability of multiple routes.

3-134. **Wedge Formation.** The wedge formation arranges forces to attack an enemy appearing to the front and flanks. (See Figure 3-32.) A unit with only three subordinate maneuver elements can adopt the wedge formation. The commander uses the wedge when contact with the enemy is possible or expected, but his location and dispositions are vague. It is the preferred formation for a movement to contact in an organization with three subordinate

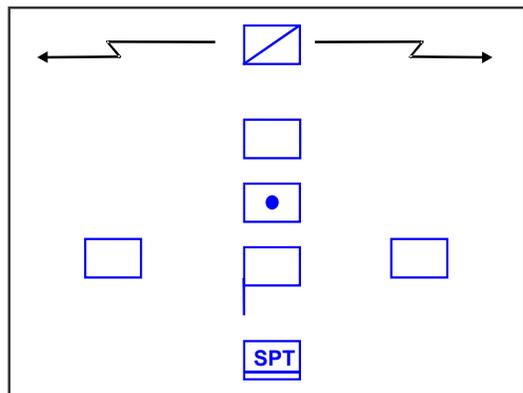


Figure 3-32. Wedge Formation

maneuver units because it initiates contact with one unit while retaining two other subordinate uncommitted units positioned to maneuver and further develop the situation. Within the wedge, subordinate units employ the formation best suited to the terrain, visibility, and likelihood of contact. Employing a wedge formation—

- Provides maximum firepower forward and allows a large portion of the unit's firepower to be used on the flanks.
- Allows rapid crossing of open terrain when enemy contact is not expected.
- Facilitates control.
- Allows for rapid changes in the orientation of the force.
- Facilitates the rapid change to a line, vee, echelon, or column formation.

3-135. The primary disadvantages to the wedge formation are that it—

- Requires sufficient space for dispersion laterally and in depth.

- Requires the availability of multiple routes.
- Lacks ease of control in restricted terrain or poor visibility.

3-136. **Vee Formation.** The vee formation disposes the unit with two maneuver elements abreast and one or more units trailing. (See Figure 3-33.) This arrangement is well suited for an advance against a known threat to the front. The commander may use this formation when he expects enemy contact and knows the location and disposition of the enemy. Employing a vee formation—

- Provides maximum firepower forward and good firepower to the flanks, but the firepower on the flanks is less than that provided by the wedge.
- Facilitates a continued maneuver after contact is made and a rapid transition to the assault.
- Allows the unit to change quickly to a line, wedge, or column formation.

3-137. The primary disadvantages to this formation are that it—

- Makes reorientation of the direction of movement, such as a 90-degree turn, more difficult than using a wedge.
- Makes control in restricted terrain and under limited-visibility conditions difficult.
- Requires sufficient space for dispersion laterally and in depth.

### Limited-Visibility Conditions

3-138. The capability to fight at night and under limited-visibility conditions is an important aspect of conducting maneuver. The commander conducts field training exercises under limited-visibility conditions to ensure that his unit has this capability as part of his standard training program. A commander conducts offensive operations at night or under limited-visibility conditions when a daylight operation continues into the night or when an operation could result in heavy losses if conducted in daylight. Offensive operations conducted in these conditions can achieve surprise, gain terrain required for further operations, and negate enemy visual target acquisition capabilities while taking advantage of the friendly force's night-fighting capabilities.

3-139. All operations conducted in limited visibility or adverse weather require more planning and preparation time than normal. They require designating reference points and establishing navigation aids, such as GPS waypoints. The commander ensures that the night-vision and navigation systems required to maneuver under these conditions are available and functional. The commander rehearses these operations before execution to ensure complete integration and synchronization of the plan. Rehearsals also ensure that

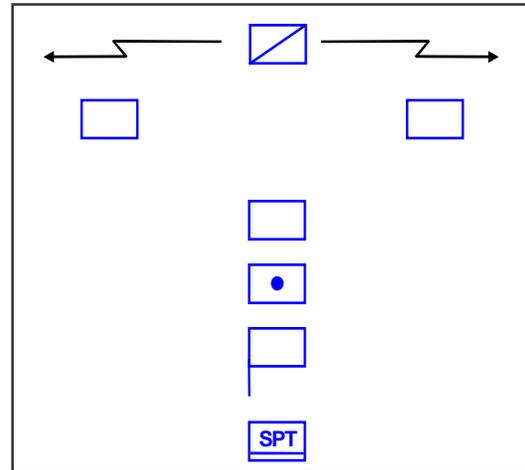


Figure 3-33. Vee Formation

his soldiers have the necessary skills to accomplish the mission. Any problem areas require resolution before beginning the operation.

3-140. Night operations degrade the capabilities of soldiers and units. Cognitive abilities degrade more rapidly than physical strength and endurance. Night-vision devices degrade the user's depth perception. This degradation in performance occurs after as little as 18 hours of sustained work. (Additional information concerning the impact of extended operations on soldiers and unit can be found in FM 6-22.5.) The plan should allow time for both soldiers and units to recuperate after conducting a night attack before being committed to other operations. The weight that soldiers must carry also directly affects their endurance. The commander carefully determines the fighting load of his soldiers, taking into account the factors of METT-TC and limits the fighting load of his soldiers conducting night operations. The equipment carried by a soldier for an extended period should never exceed one-third of his body weight.

## **FIRE SUPPORT**

3-141. Fire superiority must be gained and maintained throughout all offensive operations. Fire support uses a variety of methods and assets that attrit, delay, and disrupt enemy forces and enable friendly maneuver. Using preparatory, counterfire, suppression, and nonlethal fires provides the commander with numerous options for gaining and maintaining fire superiority. The commander uses his long-range artillery systems and air support to engage the enemy throughout the depth of his positions.

3-142. Along with the reserve, attacks by indirect-fire systems and close air support are some of the commander's principal means for influencing ongoing actions. Such support helps establish the conditions required for successful mission accomplishment and is key to the commander's ability to react to unexpected situations. Decentralized execution characterizes the employment of fires when conducting offensive operations. Subordinates must have direct access to sufficient firepower to adequately support their maneuvering elements. Simultaneously, the commander retains control over sufficient fire support assets to enable him to mass their effects at critical times and places to support his decisive operation or to respond to the enemy's counteraction.

3-143. Fire support planning is the continuing process of analyzing, allocating, and scheduling fires. It determines how fires are used, what types of targets to attack, what collection assets are used to acquire and track those targets, what assets are used to attack the target, and what assets verify effects on the target. This planning does not stop at the objective or LOA. The commander gives attention to flanks and potential enemy hide positions. Coordination among echelon fire support elements (FSEs) and the proper use of fire support coordinating measures are critical to prevent fratricide.

3-144. The fire support coordinator (FSCOORD) integrates fire support into the unit's maneuver scheme for the commander. The FSCOORD supports the unit's maneuver by planning preparatory fires, harassing fires, interdiction fires, suppressive fires, and deception fires. These fires can be time- or event-driven. The FSCOORD plans fires on known and likely enemy positions, which may include templated enemy positions. Successful massing of indirect

fires and fixed-wing attacks requires a FSE that is proficient in the tracking of all battery positions and movements and knows the maximum ordinate requirements. It also requires a tactical air control party proficient in the timely execution of close air support. Fire planning reconciles top-down planning and bottom-up refinement.

3-145. As the attacking force moves forward, preparatory fires sequentially neutralize, suppress, or destroy enemy positions. The commander must weigh its probable effects against achieving a greater degree of surprise against the enemy, especially under conditions of limited visibility, in determining whether to fire an artillery preparation. He may decide to employ smart or brilliant munitions to destroy select high-payoff targets or use these munitions in mass against part of the enemy defense to facilitate a breach and negate the requirement for long-duration preparation fires using conventional munitions.

3-146. The commander may choose to make his initial assault without using preparatory fires to achieve tactical surprise. However, fires are always planned to support each unit's operations so that they are available if needed. Preparatory fires are normally high-volume fires delivered over a short period of time to maximize surprise and shock effect. These preparatory fires also include the conduct of offensive information operations. They can continue while ground combat elements are maneuvering. This consideration applies to all types and forms of offensive operations.

3-147. Artillery and mortars must occupy positions that are well forward and still within supporting range of the flanks or maneuver forces to provide responsive indirect fires. The commander considers the effect that movement by echelon or battery has on the amount of fire support provided. The commander should support his unit's decisive operation with priority of fires. His main effort prior to the initiation of the decisive operation will have priority of fires if the operation contains phases. He places coordinated fire lines (CFLs) as close as possible to friendly maneuver forces and plans on-order CFLs on phase lines so that they can be quickly shifted as the force moves. This allows the expeditious engagement of targets beyond the CFL by the maximum number of available systems.

3-148. The effective assignment of forward observers and target acquisition assets to quick-fire or exclusive nets also provides responsive fires. Quick-fire nets allow the lead observers to associate directly with specific field artillery or mortar fire units. These kinds of communication arrangements enhance fire support responsiveness through streamlined net structures and focused priorities. Communications planning should also include the need for communication nets for the clearing of targets for rotary- and fixed-wing attacks.

3-149. Offensive information operations perform several functions to support the offense. As the friendly force moves through the enemy's security area and closes into his main defensive positions, jamming resources concentrate on neutralizing enemy fire control, target acquisition, and intelligence-gathering systems. The commander uses deception to prevent the enemy from determining the location and objective of his decisive operation. In addition, electronic warfare resources continue to provide intelligence and guidance to both friendly jammers and lethal indirect fire weapon systems so attacking

units can destroy enemy C2, ISR, fire support, and other high-value targets. The commander synchronizes the timing and conduct of his offensive operations so they achieve maximum effectiveness.

## AIR DEFENSE

3-150. Air defense operations are performed by all members of the combined arms team; however, ground-based air defense artillery units execute the bulk of the Army's air defense tasks. Allocation of air defense artillery assets within a unit depends on the factors of METT-TC. The commander at each echelon establishes his air defense priorities based on his concept of operations, scheme of maneuver, air situation, and the air defense priorities established by higher headquarters. He generally will weight his air defense coverage toward his decisive operation and establish a protective corridor over the terrain traversed by the unit conducting that decisive operation. The commander has the option of retaining all assets under his direct control or allocating assets to subordinate units. Command and control of all air defense assets requires complete and timely communications to ensure proper weapon status for the protection of friendly air support assets.

3-151. Passive air defense measures are an essential part of air and missile defense planning at all levels. All units conduct passive actions in conjunction with their assigned missions. Passive actions reduce the effectiveness of the enemy air threat.

3-152. Targets selected to support echelon tactical air defense efforts include the following—

- Unmanned aerial vehicles with their launchers and control nodes.
- Rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft.
- Facilities supporting enemy air operations, such as airfields, launch sites, logistics support facilities, technical support facilities, forward arming and refueling points, navigation aids, and C2 sites.

These facilities are normally engaged by maneuver and fire support elements and not air defense artillery units. (See FM 3-01 for additional information on using active and passive air defense measures in the offense.)

## MOBILITY/COUNTERMOBILITY/SURVIVABILITY

3-153. This BOS has three basic purposes. It preserves the freedom of maneuver of friendly forces. It obstructs the maneuver of the enemy in areas where fire and movement can destroy him. Finally, it enhances the survivability of friendly forces. Time, equipment, and materials may restrict the amount of work accomplished before, during, and after conducting an offensive operation. The commander's plan must realistically reflect these limitations. The plan must provide the desired balance among these three basic purposes and assign support priorities among subordinate units. Normally, priority of support should be concentrated on the unit or units conducting the decisive operation rather than distributed evenly throughout the force. That support will focus on maintaining the mobility of the force conducting the decisive operation while ensuring the survivability of the C2 system.

## Mobility

3-154. Mobility is key to successful offensive operations. Its major focus is to enable friendly forces to maneuver freely on the battlefield. The commander wants the capability to move, exploit, and pursue the enemy across a wide front. When attacking, he wants to concentrate the effects of combat power at selected locations. This may require him to improve or construct combat trails through areas where routes do not exist. The surprise achieved by attacking through an area believed to be impassable may justify the effort expended in constructing these trails. The force bypasses existing obstacles and minefields identified before starting the offensive operation instead of breaching them whenever possible. Units mark bypassed minefields whenever the factors of METT-TC allow.

3-155. Maintaining the momentum of an offensive operation requires the force to quickly pass through obstacles as it encounters them. This translates to a deliberate effort to capture bridges and other enemy reserved obstacles intact. Using air assault and airborne forces is an effective technique to accomplish this goal. The preferred method of fighting through a defended obstacle is employing an in-stride breach, because it avoids the loss of time and momentum associated with conducting a deliberate breach. The commander plans how and where his forces conduct breaching operations. He plans his breaching operations using a reverse planning sequence from the objective back to the assembly area. FM 3-34.2 addresses breaching operations in more detail.

3-156. Rivers remain major obstacles despite advances in high-mobility weapon systems and extensive aviation support. River crossings are among the most critical, complex, and vulnerable combined arms operations. Rivers are crossed in-stride as a continuation of the attack whenever possible. The size of the river, as well as the enemy and friendly situations, will dictate the specific tactics, techniques, and procedures used in conducting the crossing. Corps engineer brigades contain the majority of tactical bridging assets. (See FM 3-97.13 for additional information on conducting hasty and deliberate river crossings.)

## Countermobility

3-157. Countermobility operations are vital to help isolate the battlefield and protect the attacking force from enemy counterattack, even though force mobility in offensive operations normally has first priority. Obstacles provide security for friendly forces as the fight progresses into the depth of the enemy's defenses. They provide flank protection and deny the enemy counterattack routes. They assist friendly forces in defeating the enemy in detail and can be vital in reducing the amount of forces required to secure a given area. Further, they can permit the concentration of forces for offensive operations in the first place by allowing a relatively small force to defend a large AO. The commander ensures the use of obstacles is fully synchronized with his concept of operations and does not hinder the mobility of the attacking force.

3-158. During visualization, the commander identifies avenues of approach that offer natural flank protection to an attacking force, such as rivers or ridgelines. Staff estimates support this process. Flanks are protected by

destroying bridges, emplacing minefields, and by using scatterable mines to interdict roads and trails. Swamps, canals, lakes, forests, and escarpments are natural terrain features that can be quickly reinforced for flank security.

3-159. Offensive countermobility plans must stress rapid emplacement and flexibility. Engineer support must keep pace with advancing maneuver forces and be prepared to emplace obstacles alongside them. Time and resources will not permit developing the terrain's full defensive potential. The commander first considers likely enemy reactions, then plans how to block enemy avenues of approach or withdrawal with obstacles. He also plans the use of obstacles to contain bypassed enemy elements and prevent the enemy from withdrawing. The plan includes obstacles to use on identification of the enemy's counterattack. Speed and interdiction capabilities are vital characteristics of the obstacles employed. The commander directs the planning for aircraft- and artillery-delivered mines on enemy counterattack routes. The fire support system delivers these munitions in front of or on top of enemy lead elements once they commit to one of the routes. Rapid cratering devices and surface minefields provide other excellent capabilities.

3-160. Control of mines and obstacles, and accurate reporting to all units are vital. Obstacles will hinder both friendly and enemy maneuver. Positive C2 is necessary to prevent the premature activation of minefields and obstacles. (See FM 3-34.1 for additional information on using countermobility obstacles in the offense.)

## Survivability

3-161. Denying the enemy a chance to plan, prepare, and execute an effective response to friendly offensive operations through maintaining a high operational tempo is a key means a commander employs to ensure the survivability of his force. Using multiple routes, dispersion, highly mobile forces, piecemeal destruction of isolated enemy forces, scheduled rotation and relief of forces before they culminate, and wise use of terrain are techniques for maintaining a high tempo of offensive operations. The exact techniques employed in a specific situation must reflect the factors of METT-TC.

3-162. The commander protects his force to deny the enemy the capability to interfere with ongoing operations. That protection also meets his legal and moral obligations to his soldiers. To protect his force, the commander—

- Maintains a high tempo of operations.
- Conducts area security operations.
- Employs operations security (OPSEC) procedures.
- Executes deception operations.
- Conducts defensive information operations.
- Employs camouflage, cover, and concealment.
- Constructs survivability positions for nondisplacing systems and supplies.
- Conducts operations to defend against enemy use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

Although this list is not all-inclusive, it typifies the measures a commander takes to secure his force during offensive operations.

3-163. The echelon's OPSEC program and any deception or survivability efforts should conceal from the enemy or mislead him regarding the location of the friendly objective, decisive operation, the disposition of forces, and the timing of the offensive operation. This tends to prevent the enemy from launching effective spoiling attacks. (See FM 3-13 for additional information on OPSEC, deception, and defensive information operations.)

3-164. The commander normally considers the impact of directing the construction of protective emplacements for artillery, air defense units, and logistics concentrations as part of his planning process. This occurs although units do not employ protective positions in the offense as extensively as they do in the defense. The commander may require the hardening of key C2 facilities, especially those with detectable electronic signatures. Maneuver units construct as many fighting positions as possible whenever they halt or pause during offensive operations. They improve existing terrain by cutting reverse-slope firing shelves or slots when possible. (See FM 3-34.112 for more information on constructing protective positions.) Forces conducting offensive operations will continue to use camouflage, cover, and concealment. (See FM 3-24.3 for additional information on those topics.)

3-165. The IPB process contributes to survivability by developing products that help the commander protect his forces, including intervisibility overlays and situation templates. Intervisibility overlays help protect the force. If an enemy cannot observe the friendly force, he cannot engage the friendly force with direct-fire weapons. Situation templates also help protect the force. If a commander knows how fast an enemy force can respond to his offensive operations, he can sequence his operations at times and places where the enemy can respond least effectively. This occurs through determining enemy artillery range fans, movement times between enemy reserve assembly area locations and advancing friendly forces, and other related intelligence items.

3-166. The commander integrates NBC defensive considerations into his offensive plans. Implementing many NBC defensive measures slows the tempo, degrades combat power, and may also increase logistics requirements. NBC reconnaissance consumes resources, especially time. Personnel in protective gear find it more difficult to work or fight. The key fundamental of all NBC defense activities is to avoid NBC attacks and their effect whenever possible. Avoidance includes passive and active avoidance measures. The other fundamentals of NBC defense are protection and decontamination. Avoidance and protection are closely linked. (See FM 3-11 for additional information on NBC defensive considerations.)

## **COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT**

3-167. The objective of CSS in offensive operations is to assist the tactical commander in maintaining the momentum. The commander wants to take advantage of windows of opportunity and launch offensive operations with minimum advance warning time. Therefore, logistics and personnel planners and operators must anticipate these events and maintain the flexibility to support the offensive plan accordingly. A key to successful offensive operations is the ability to anticipate the requirement to push support forward, specifically in regard to ammunition, fuel, and water. Combat service support

commanders must act, rather than react, to support requirements. The existence of habitual support relationships facilitates the ability to anticipate.

3-168. Combat service support maintains momentum of the attack by delivering supplies as far forward as possible. The commander can use throughput distribution and preplanned and preconfigured packages of essential items to help maintain his momentum and tempo. The commander examines his unit's basic load to determine its adequacy to support the operation. He determines his combat load, the supplies carried by his individual soldiers and combat vehicles. His sustainment load consists of what remains of his basic load once his combat load is subtracted. His tactical vehicles carry the sustainment load. The commander also determines the supplies required for likely contingencies. He determines the amount of cross-loading of supplies required by the situation to prevent all of one type of supply from being destroyed by the loss of a single system.

3-169. CSS units and material remain close to the maneuver force to ensure short turnaround time for supplies and services. This includes uploading as much critical materiel—such as POL and ammunition—as possible and coordinating to preclude attempted occupation of a piece of terrain by more than one unit. The commander makes a decision regarding the possibility that CSS preparation for the attack will be detected by enemy forces and give away his tactical plans.

3-170. The availability of adequate supplies and transportation to sustain the operation becomes more critical as it progresses. Supply LOCs are strained, and requirements for repair and replacement of weapon systems mount. Requirements for POL increase because of the distance the combat vehicles of the maneuver force are likely to travel. CSS units in direct support of maneuver units must be as mobile as the forces they support. One way to provide continuous support is to task organize elements of CSS units or complete CSS units with their supported maneuver formations as required by the factors of METT-TC.

3-171. The variety and complexity of offensive operations requires the Army to establish a flexible and tailorable transportation system. There may be a wide dispersion of forces and lengthening of LOCs. Required capabilities include movement control, in-transit visibility of supplies being carried, terminal operations, and mode operations.

3-172. Maintenance assets move as far forward as consistent with the tactical situation to repair inoperable and damaged equipment and to return it to battle as quickly as possible. Crews continue to perform their preventive maintenance checks and services as modified for the climate and terrain in which they find themselves. Battle damage assessment and repair (BDAR) may be critical to sustaining offensive operations. Crews as well as maintenance and recovery teams conduct BDAR to rapidly return disabled equipment for battlefield service by expediently fixing, bypassing, or jury-rigging components. It restores the minimum essential combat capabilities necessary to support a specific combat mission or to enable the equipment to self-recover.

3-173. The burden on medical resources increases due to the intensity of operations and the increased distances over which support is required as the force advances. The commander reallocates medical resources as the tactical

situation changes. Medical units can anticipate large numbers of casualties in a short period of time due to the capabilities of modern conventional weapons and the employment of weapons of mass destruction. These mass casualty situations will probably exceed the capabilities of local medical units and require them to alter their normal scope of operations to provide the greatest good for the greatest number. Key factors for effective mass casualty management are on-site triage, emergency resuscitative care, early surgical intervention, reliable communications, and skillful evacuation by air and ground resources.

3-174. Establishing aerial resupply and forward logistics bases may be necessary to sustain maneuver operations such as exploitation and pursuit conducted at great distance from the unit's sustaining base. The unit or support activity at the airlift's point of origin is responsible for obtaining the required packing, shipping, and sling-load equipment. It prepares the load for aerial transport, prepares the pickup zone, and conducts air-loading operations. The unit located at the airlift destination is responsible for preparing the landing zone to accommodate aerial resupply and for receiving the load.

3-175. Raids conducted by ground maneuver forces within the depths of the enemy's rear area tend to be audacious, high-speed, and of short duration. Logistics support is minimal; units carry as much POL and ammunition as possible, taking advantage of any captured enemy supplies. Once the raiding force crosses its LD, only limited, emergency aerial resupply of critical supplies and medical evacuation are feasible because of the absence of a secure LOC. The commander must thoroughly plan for aerial resupply of the raiding force since it entails greater risk than normal operations. Under these conditions, units destroy damaged equipment that is unable to maintain the pace of the operation.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

3-176. The commander's mission and intent determine the scheme of maneuver and the allocation of available resources. The commander reduces the scope of the initial mission if only a few resources are available. For example, a commander could tell his subordinates to clear their AOs of all enemy platoon-size and larger forces instead of clearing their areas of operation of all enemy forces if he lacks the time or forces needed to accomplish the latter task.

3-177. All planning for offensive operations address the factors of METT-TC, with special emphasis on—

- Enemy positions, strengths, and capabilities.
- Missions and objectives for each subordinate element and task and purpose for each BOS manager.
- Commander's intent.
- AOs for the use of each subordinate element with associated control graphics.
- Time the operation is to begin.
- Scheme of maneuver.
- Special tasks required to accomplish the mission.

- Risk.
- Options for accomplishing the mission.

The commander and his staff translate the unit's assigned mission into specific objectives for all subordinates, to include the reserve. These objectives can involve any type or form of operations. If the type of operation assigned has associated forms, the commander may specify which form to use, but should minimize restrictions on his subordinates' freedom of action. FM 5-0 addresses the military decision making process and the format for plans and orders.

3-178. Prior planning and preparations that result in synchronizing the seven BOS increase a unit's effectiveness when executing operations. However, the fluid nature of combat requires the commander to guide the actions of his subordinates during the execution phase. The commander locates himself where he can best sense the flow of the operation and influence its critical points by redirecting the effects of committed forces or employing his reserve. This normally means that he is well forward in the combat formation, usually with the force designated to conduct the decisive operation. Once he makes contact with the enemy, he quickly moves to the area of contact, assesses the situation, and takes appropriate aggressive actions to direct the continuation of the offensive operation.

3-179. In addition to assigning objectives, commanders at all echelons consider how to exploit advantages that arise during operations and the seizure of intermediate and final objectives. The commander exploits success by aggressively executing the plan, taking advantage of junior leader initiative, and employing trained units capable of rapidly executing standard drills. His reserve also provides a flexible capability to exploit unforeseen advantages.

3-180. The commander always seeks to surprise his opponent throughout the operation. Information operations, such as deception, and the choice of an unexpected direction or time for conducting an offensive operation can result in the enemy being surprised. Surprise delays enemy reactions, overloads and confuses enemy C2, induces psychological shock, and reduces the coherence of his defenses. Tactical surprise is more difficult to achieve once hostilities begin, but it is still possible. The commander achieves tactical surprise by attacking in bad weather and over seemingly impassible terrain, conducting feints and demonstrations, making rapid changes in tempo, and employing sound OPSEC measures.

3-181. The commander should anticipate any requirements to shift his main effort during the offensive to press the fight and keep the enemy off balance. The commander develops decision points to support these changes using both human and technical means to validate his decision points.

3-182. The commander retains the capability to rapidly concentrate force effects, such as fires, throughout the extent of his AO during offensive operations. This capability is also critical to the commander when his force crosses linear obstacles. Lanes and gaps resulting from combined arms breaching operations or occurring naturally typically are choke points. There is a tendency for each subordinate element to move out independently as it completes its passage through the choke point. This independent movement detracts from the ability of the whole force to rapidly generate combat power on the far side of an obstacle.

3-183. The commander briefs his plan and the plans of adjacent units and higher echelons to his unit's leaders and soldiers. This helps units and soldiers moving into unexpected locations to direct their efforts toward accomplishing the mission. This exchange of information occurs in all operations.

3-184. The free flow of information between all force elements must be maintained throughout the offensive operation. This requires the commander to maintain communications with all elements of his unit. He plans how to position and reposition his information systems to maintain his common operational picture throughout the operation. The commander plans how to expand his communications coverage to accommodate increased distances as his force advances. Accordingly, he provides for redundant communication means—including wire, radio, visible and ultraviolet light, heat, smoke, audible sound, messengers, and event-oriented communications, such as the casualty-producing device that initiates an ambush.

3-185. A unit with advanced information systems and automated decision aids enjoys reduced engagement times and an enhanced planning process. This assists the unit commander's ability to control the operational tempo of the battle and stay within the enemy's decision making cycle. Greatly improved knowledge of the enemy and friendly situations facilitates the tactical employment of precision fires and decisive maneuver at extended ranges. These digital systems also enhance the commander's freedom to move to those battlefield locations where he can best influence the battle at the critical time and place.

## TRANSITION

3-186. A transition occurs when the commander makes the assessment that he must change his focus from one type of military operation to another. The following paragraphs explain why a commander primarily conducting offensive operations would transition to the defense and describe techniques that a commander can use to ease the transition.

3-187. A commander halts an offensive operation only when it results in complete victory and the end of hostilities, reaches a culminating point, or the commander receives a change in mission from his higher commander. This change in mission may be a result of the interrelationship of the other elements of national power, such as a political decision.

3-188. All offensive operations that do not achieve complete victory reach a culminating point when the balance of strength shifts from the attacking force to its opponent. Usually, offensive operations lose momentum when friendly forces encounter heavily defended areas that cannot be bypassed. They also reach a culminating point when the resupply of fuel, ammunition, and other supplies fails to keep up with expenditures, soldiers become physically exhausted, casualties and equipment losses mount, and repairs and replacements do not keep pace. Because of enemy surprise movements, offensive operations also stall when reserves are not available to continue the advance, the defender receives reinforcements, or he counterattacks with fresh troops. Several of these causes may combine to halt an offense. In some cases, the unit can regain its momentum, but this only happens after difficult fighting or after an operational pause.

3-189. If the attacker cannot anticipate securing decisive objectives before his force reaches its culminating point, he plans a pause to replenish his combat power and phases his operation accordingly. Simultaneously, he prevents the enemy from knowing when the friendly forces become overextended.

3-190. Once offensive operations begin, the attacking commander tries to sense when he reaches, or is about to reach, his culminating point. Before reaching this point, he must transition to some other type of military operation. The commander has more freedom to choose where and when he wants to halt the attack if he can sense that his forces are approaching culmination. He can plan his future activities to aid the defense, minimize vulnerability to attack, and facilitate renewal of the offense as he transitions to branches or sequels of the operation. For example, to prevent overburdening the extended LOCs resulting from the advances away from his sustaining base, some of the commander's subordinate units may move into assembly areas before he terminates the offense to start preparing for the ensuing defensive operation.

3-191. A lull in combat operations often accompanies transition. Civilians may present themselves to friendly forces during this period. The commander must consider how he will minimize the interference of these civilians with his military operations while protecting the civilians from future hostile actions. He must also consider the threat they pose to his force and its operations if enemy intelligence agents or saboteurs constitute a portion of the civilian population encountered.

3-192. A commander anticipating the termination of his offensive operation prepares orders that include the time or circumstances under which the offense transitions to another type of military operation, such as the defense, the missions and locations of subordinate units, and C2 measures. As he transitions from the offense to the defense, a commander takes the following actions:

- Maintains contact and surveillance of the enemy, using a combination of reconnaissance units and surveillance assets to develop the information required to plan future actions.
- Establishes a security area and local security measures.
- Redeploys fire support assets to ensure the support of security forces.
- Redeploys forces based on probable future employment.
- Maintains or regains contact with adjacent units in a contiguous AO and ensures that his units remain capable of mutual support in a non-contiguous AO.
- Transitions the engineer effort by shifting the emphasis from mobility to countermobility and survivability.
- Consolidates and reorganizes.
- Explains the rationale for transitioning from the offense to his soldiers.

3-193. The commander redeploys his air defense assets to cover the force's defensive position. A transition to the defense may require the commander to change his air defense priorities. For example, his top priority may have been coverage of maneuver units in the offense. This may shift to coverage of his long-range sensors and weapons in the defense.

3-194. The commander conducts any required reorganization and resupply concurrently with the above activities. This requires a transition in the logistics effort, with a shift in emphasis from ensuring the force's ability to move forward (POL and forward repair of maintenance and combat losses) to ensuring the force's ability to defend on its chosen location (forward stockage construction, barrier, and obstacle material, and ammunition). Transition is often a time in which equipment maintenance can be performed. Additional assets may also be available for casualty evacuation and medical treatment because of a reduction in the tempo.

3-195. The commander should not wait too long to transition from the offense to the defense as his forces approach their culminating point. Without prior planning, transitioning to defensive actions after reaching a culminating point is extremely difficult for several reasons. Defensive preparations are hasty, and forces are not adequately disposed for defense. Defensive reorganization requires more time than the enemy will probably allow. Usually, attacking forces are dispersed, extended in depth, and weakened in condition. Moreover, the shift to defense requires a psychological adjustment. Soldiers who have become accustomed to advancing must now halt and fight defensively—sometimes desperately—on new and often unfavorable terms.

3-196. A commander can use two basic techniques when he transitions to the defense. The first technique is for the leading elements to commit forces and push forward to claim enough ground to establish a security area anchored on defensible terrain. The main force moves forward or rearward as necessary to occupy key terrain and institutes a hasty defense that progresses into a deliberate defense as time and resources allow. The second technique is to establish a security area generally along the unit's final positions, moving the main body rearward to defensible terrain. The security force thins out and the remaining force deploys to organize the defense. In both methods, the security area should be deep enough to keep the main force out of the range of enemy medium artillery and rocket systems.

3-197. In the first technique, the security area often lacks depth because the force lacks sufficient combat power to seize required terrain. In the second technique, the enemy force will probably accurately template the forward trace of friendly units and engage with artillery and other fire support systems. These actions often result in the loss of additional friendly soldiers and equipment and the expenditure of more resources.

3-198. If a commander determines that it is necessary to break off an offensive operation and conduct a retrograde, he typically has his units conduct an area defense from their current locations until he can synchronize the retrograde operation. The amount of effort expended in establishing the area defense depends on the specific factors of METT-TC currently prevailing.

## Chapter 4

# Movement to Contact

*When armies approach each other, it makes all the difference which owns only the ground on which it stands or sleeps and which one owns all the rest.*

Winston Churchill: *Their Finest Hour*, 1949

*Movement to contact* is a type of offensive operation designed to develop the situation and establish or regain contact (FM 3-0). A commander conducts this type of offensive operation when the tactical situation is not clear or when the enemy has broken contact. A properly executed movement to contact develops the combat situation and maintains the commander's freedom of action after contact is gained. This flexibility is essential in maintaining the initiative. All of the tactical concepts, control measures, and planning considerations introduced in [Chapters 2 and 3](#) apply to the conduct of a movement to contact. Many of the attack preparation consideration introduced in [Chapter 5](#) also apply.

4-1. Purposeful and aggressive movement, decentralized control, and the hasty deployment of combined arms formations from the march to attack or defend characterize the movement to contact. The fundamentals of a movement to contact are—

- Focus all efforts on finding the enemy.
- Make initial contact with the smallest force possible, consistent with protecting the force.
- Make initial contact with small, mobile, self-contained forces to avoid decisive engagement of the main body on ground chosen by the enemy. This allows the commander maximum flexibility to develop the situation.
- Task-organize the force and use movement formations to deploy and attack rapidly in any direction.

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- Keep forces within supporting distances to facilitate a flexible response.
- Maintain contact regardless of the course of action (COA) adopted once contact is gained.

Close air support, air interdiction, and counterair operations are essential to the success of large-scale movements to contact (MTCs). Local air superiority or, as a minimum, air parity is vital to the operation's success.

4-2. The Army's improved intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities reduce the need for corps and divisions to conduct an MTC since fully modernized units normally have a general idea of the location of significant enemy forces. However, enemy use of complex terrain and offensive information operations designed to degrade the accuracy of the friendly common operational picture will continue to require small tactical units to conduct an MTC.

4-3. A *meeting engagement* is a combat action that occurs when a moving force engages an enemy at an unexpected time and place (JP 3-0). Conducting an MTC results in a meeting engagement. The enemy force may be either stationary or moving. Such encounters often occur in small-unit operations when reconnaissance has been ineffective. The force that reacts first to the unexpected contact generally gains an advantage over its opponent. However, a meeting engagement may also occur when the opponents are aware of each other and both decide to attack immediately to obtain a tactical advantage or seize key or decisive terrain. A meeting engagement may also occur when one force attempts to deploy into a hasty defense while the other force attacks before its opponent can organize an effective defense. Acquisition systems may discover the enemy before the security force can gain contact. No matter how the force makes contact, seizing the initiative is the overriding imperative. Prompt execution of battle drills at platoon level and below, and standard actions on contact for larger units can give that initiative to the friendly force.

## HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

4-4. The following vignette discusses the Soviet Manchurian Campaign in the closing days of World War II and illustrates the idea that tacticians can profit from the lessons learned by other armies in other times. It demonstrates the conduct of an MTC at the operational level.

### **The Soviet Manchurian Campaign, August 1945**

Shortly after midnight on 9 August 1945, Soviet assault troops crossed the Soviet-Manchurian border and attacked Japanese positions. This was the vanguard of a force of more than 1.5 million men that was to advance along multiple axes on a frontage of more than 4,400 kilometers. Soviet offensive tactics were shaped by several factors:

- The necessity for speed to increase the effectiveness of maneuver, thus increasing surprise, overcoming initial defenses, and preempting the establishment of subsequent effective defenses.
- The vast expanse of the area of operations (AO).
- The diversity of the terrain, giving rise to large-scale force tailoring.
- The nature of the opposition.

The Soviets conducted their movement to contact operation at the last possible moment. This reinforced strategic surprise and yielded tactical surprise as well. Units deployed for attack from assembly areas 20 to 80 kilometers behind the border and entered from the march, attacking along every possible axis using small, task-organized assault groups with heavy engineer and firepower support. Conduct of operations under adverse weather conditions and at night went contrary to Japanese expectations. The Soviet tendency to bypass fortified positions confused Japanese commanders.

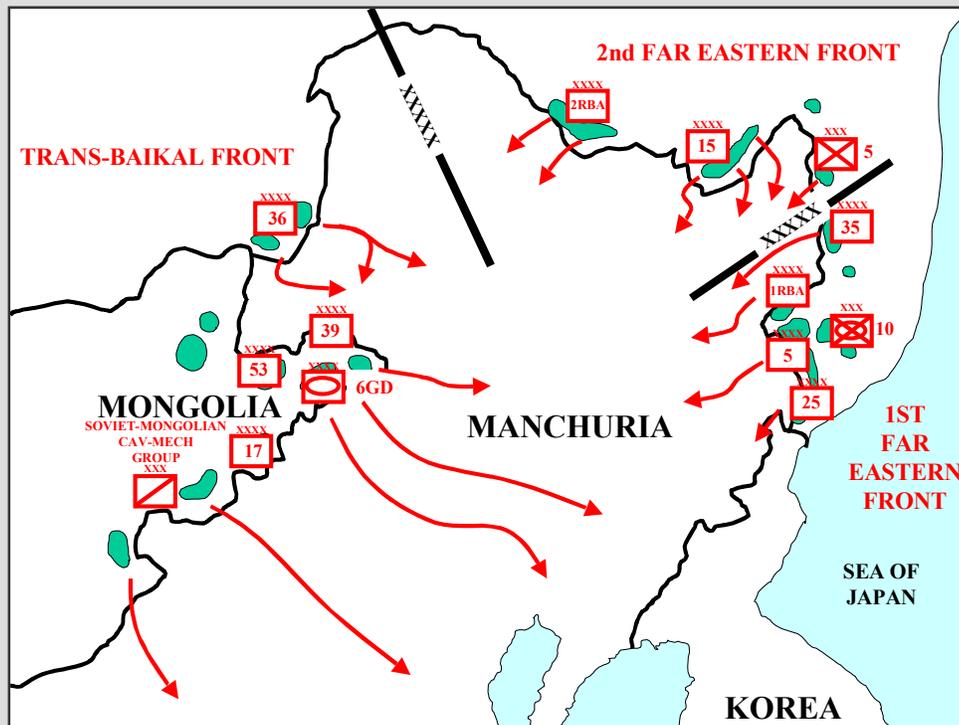


Figure 4-1. Soviet Moves

The Soviets carefully timed the application of their offensive power by first attacking with forward detachments and advance guards in the first echelon, and then with the main force. See Figure 4-1. This perpetuated the momentum of initial assaults and created a momentum that was imparted to army and front-level operations. Often enemy resistance was eliminated before the main columns had to deploy. Forces massed at the critical point on each axis and maneuvered over what was considered to be impassable terrain. All this resulted in a loss of defense coherence that the defending Japanese *Kwantung* Army was never able to regain. In seven days Soviet forces penetrated between 500 and 950 kilometers into Manchuria from their starting points, securing all the objectives necessary for a complete victory over the Japanese.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

4-5. A movement to contact is organized with an offensive covering force or an advance guard as a forward security element and a main body as a

minimum. A portion of the main body composes the commander's sustaining base. Based on the factors of METT-TC, the commander may increase his security forces by having an offensive covering force and an advance guard for each column, as well as flank and rear security (normally a screen or guard). (See Figure 4-2.) Chapter 12 discusses security operations.

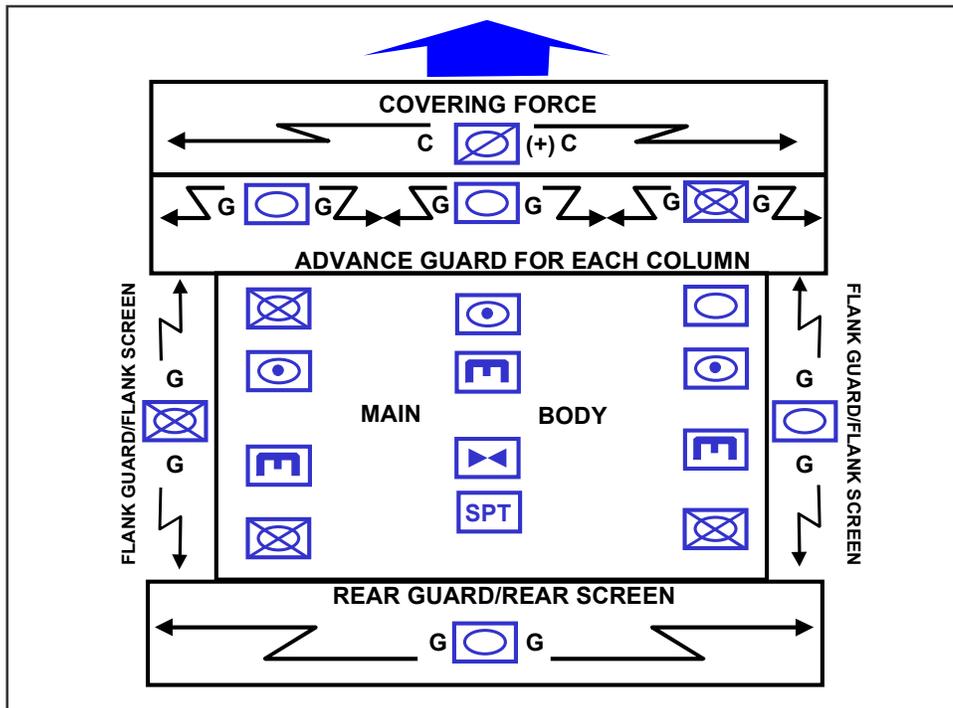


Figure 4-2. Force Organized for a Movement to Contact

4-6. A movement to contact mission requires the commander not to have contact with the enemy main body. However, the commander may still know the location of at least some enemy reserve and follow-on forces. If the corps or division commander has enough intelligence information to target enemy uncommitted forces, reserves, or sustaining operations activities, he normally designates forces, such as long-range artillery systems and attack helicopters, to engage known enemy elements regardless of their geographical location within his AO. At all times the forward security element and the main body perform reconnaissance.

## SECURITY FORCES

4-7. A corps or division commander conducting an MTC typically organizes his security element into a covering force to protect the movement of the main body and to develop the situation before committing the main body. A covering force is task-organized to accomplish specific tasks independent of the main body in accordance with the factors of METT-TC, such as conduct mobility and breach operations. This covering force reports directly to the establishing commander.

4-8. If a force conducting an MTC is unable to resource a covering force for independent security operations, it may use an advance guard in the place of a covering force. An advance guard is a task-organized combined arms unit or detachment that precedes a column formation to protect the main body from ground observation or surprise by the enemy. This typically occurs when a brigade or battalion conducts an MTC. In cases where the higher echelon (corps or division) creates a covering force, subordinate elements can establish an advance guard behind the covering force and ahead of the main body. This normally occurs when subordinate units are advancing in multiple parallel columns. In this case, each main body column usually organizes its own advance guard.

4-9. The advance guard operates forward of the main body to ensure its uninterrupted advance by reducing obstacles to create passage lanes, repair roads and bridges, or locate bypasses. The advance guard also protects the main body from surprise attack and fixes the enemy to protect the deployment of the main body when it is committed to action. The elements composing the advance guard should have equal or preferably superior mobility to that of the main body. For this reason, mechanized infantry, cavalry, and armored units are most suitable for use in an advance guard. Engineer mobility assets should also constitute a portion of the advance guard, but the main body can also provide other support.

4-10. The advance guard moves as quickly and as aggressively as possible, but, unlike the covering force, remains within supporting range of the main body's weapon systems. It forces the enemy to withdraw or destroys small enemy groups before they can disrupt the advance of the main body. When the advance guard encounters large enemy forces or heavily defended areas, it takes prompt and aggressive action to develop the situation and, within its capability, defeat the enemy. Its commander reports the location, strength, disposition, and composition of the enemy and tries to find the enemy's flanks and gaps or other weaknesses in his position. The main body may then join the attack. The force commander usually specifies how far in front of his force the advance guard is to operate. He reduces those distances in close terrain and under low-visibility conditions.

4-11. When the command's rear or flanks are not protected by adjacent or following units, it must provide its own flank and rear security. The command can accomplish this by establishing a screen or a guard on its flanks or to its rear. The flank columns of the main body normally provide these flank security elements; for example, the left flank brigade would provide the left flank screen for a division MTC. The rear guard normally comes from one of the subordinate elements of the corps or division and reports directly to the corps or division headquarters. A corps may conduct a flank cover if there is a clearly identified, significant threat from the flank. A flank cover requires significant resources that are unavailable to the main body. Aviation units or intelligence systems may establish a flank screen if the factors of METT-TC allow; however, this increases the risk to the main body. While aviation units can use their combat power to delay enemy forces, intelligence systems can only provide early warning, they cannot trade space for time to "buy" time for the main body to react. (For more specific information concerning reconnaissance

operations see FM 3-55. See [Chapter 12](#) for more detailed information concerning security operations.)

## MAIN BODY

4-12. The main body consists of forces not detailed to security duties. The combat elements of the main body prepare to respond to enemy contact with the unit's security forces. Attack helicopter units normally remain under division and corps control until contact is made. If the situation allows, the commander can assign a follow and support mission to one of his subordinate units. This allows that subordinate unit to relieve his security forces from such tasks as observing bypassed enemy forces, handling displaced civilians, and clearing routes. This prevents his security forces from being diverted from their primary mission.

4-13. The commander designates a portion of the main body for use as his reserve. The size of the reserve is based upon the factors of METT-TC and the amount of uncertainty concerning the enemy. The more vague the enemy situation, the larger the size of the reserve. The reserve typically constitutes approximately one-fourth to one-third of the force. On contact with the enemy, the reserve provides the commander flexibility to react to unforeseen circumstances and allows the unit to quickly resume its movement.

4-14. The commander tailors his sustainment assets to the mission. He decentralizes the execution of the sustainment support, but that support must be continuously available to the main body. This includes using preplanned logistics packages (LOGPACs). **A logistics package is a grouping of multiple classes of supply and supply vehicles under the control of a single convoy commander.** Daily LOGPACs contain a standardized allocation of supplies. Special LOGPACs can also be dispatched as needed.

4-15. The commander frequently finds that his main supply routes become extended as the operation proceeds. Aerial resupply may also be necessary to support large-scale MTCs or to maintain the momentum of the main body. Combat trains containing fuel, ammunition, medical, and maintenance assets move with their parent battalion or company team. Fuel and ammunition stocks remain loaded on tactical vehicles in the combat trains so they can instantly move when necessary. Battalion field trains move in more depth, with the forward support battalion in the main body of each brigade. Aviation units use forward arming and refuel points (FARPs) to reduce aircraft turn-around time.

## CONTROL MEASURES

4-16. A commander uses the minimal number and type of control measures possible in an MTC because of the uncertain enemy situation. These measures include designation of an AO with left, right, front, and rear boundaries, or a separate AO bounded by a continuous boundary (noncontiguous operations). The commander further divides the AO into subordinate unit AOs to facilitate subordinate unit actions.

4-17. The operation usually starts from a line of departure (LD) at the time specified in the operations order (OPORD). The commander controls the MTC by using phase lines, contact points, and checkpoints as required. (See

Figure 4-3.) He controls the depth of the movement to contact by using a limit of advance (LOA) or a forward boundary. Figure 4-3 shows an LOA and not a forward boundary. The commander could designate one or more objectives to limit the extent of the MTC and orient the force. However, these are often terrain-oriented and used only to guide movement. Although an MTC may result in taking a terrain objective, the primary focus should be on the enemy force. If the commander has enough information to locate significant enemy forces, then he should plan some other type of offensive action.

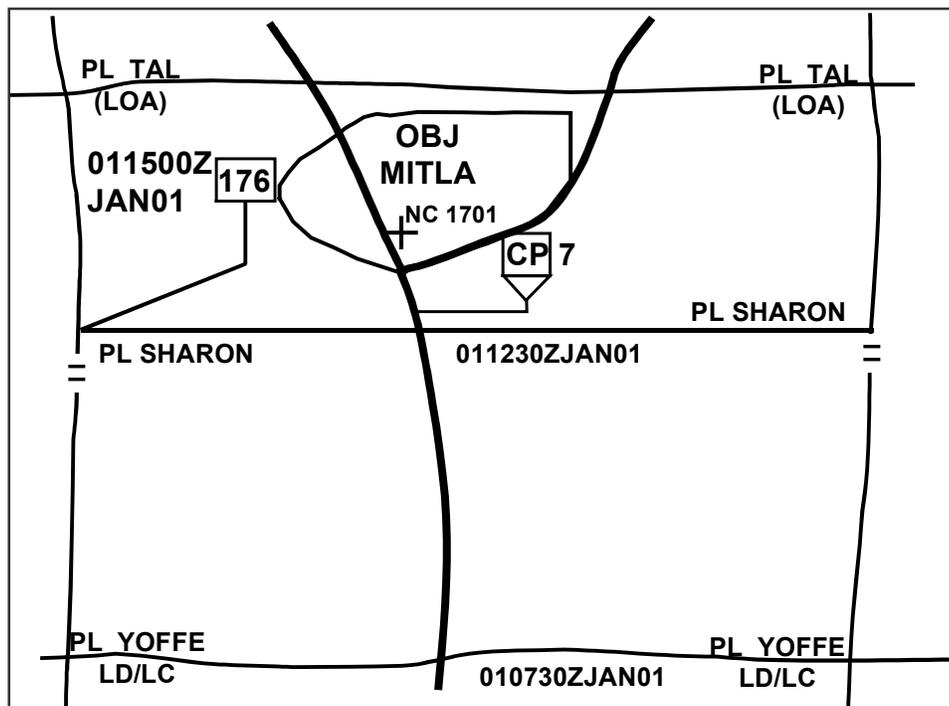


Figure 4-3. Movement to Contact Control Measures

4-18. Corps, division, or brigade commanders use boundaries to separate the various organizational elements of a movement to contact and clearly establish responsibilities between different organizations. Battalion task force commanders use positive control over maneuver units, coupled with battle drills and formation discipline. Company teams are not normally assigned their own areas of operation during the conduct of a movement to contact.

4-19. The commander can designate a series of phase lines that can successively become the new rear boundary of the forward security elements as that force advances. Each rear boundary becomes the forward boundary of the main body and shifts as the security force moves forward. The rear boundary of the main body designates the limit of responsibility of the rear security element. This line also shifts as the main body moves forward. (See Chapter 12 for a discussion of boundaries for a security force.)

4-20. Commanders may use an axis of advance in limited visibility. However, there is the risk of enemy forces outside the axis not being detected, and thus being inadvertently bypassed.

## PLANNING A MOVEMENT TO CONTACT

4-21. The commander conducts intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations to determine the enemy's location and intent while conducting security operations to protect the main body. This includes the use of available fixed-wing aircraft. This allows the main body to focus its planning and preparation, to include rehearsals, on the conduct of hasty attacks, bypass maneuvers, and hasty defenses. The plan addresses not only actions anticipated by the commander based on available intelligence information but also the conduct of meeting engagements at anticipated times and locations where they might occur.

4-22. The commander wants to gain contact by using the smallest elements possible. These elements are normally ground scouts or aeroscouts performing reconnaissance, but may also be unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or other intelligence systems. He may task organize his scouts to provide them with additional combat power to allow them to develop the situation. The unit's planned movement formation should contribute to the goal of making initial contact with the smallest force possible. It should also provide for efficient movement of the force and adequate reserves. The commander can choose to have all or part of his force conduct an approach march as part of the movement to contact to provide that efficient movement. An approach march can facilitate the commander's decisions by allowing freedom of action and movement of the main body. (See [Chapter 14](#) for a discussion of an approach march.)

4-23. The frontage assigned to a unit in a movement to contact must allow it to generate sufficient combat power to maintain the momentum of the operation. Reducing the frontage covered normally gives the unit adequate combat power to develop the situation on contact while maintaining the required momentum. Both the covering force and advance guard commanders should have uncommitted forces available to develop the situation without requiring the deployment of the main body. The commander relies primarily on fire support assets to weight the lead element's combat power but provides it with the additional combat multipliers it needs to accomplish the mission. The fire support system helps develop fire superiority when organized correctly to fire immediate suppression missions to help maneuver forces get within direct-fire range of the enemy.

4-24. The reconnaissance effort may proceed faster in a movement to contact than in a zone reconnaissance because the emphasis is on making contact with the enemy. However, the commander must recognize that by increasing the speed of the reconnaissance effort, he increases the risk associated with the operation.

4-25. Bypass criteria should be clearly stated and depend on the factors of METT-TC. For example, a brigade commander in an open desert environment could declare that no mounted enemy force larger than a platoon can be bypassed. All other forces will be cleared from the brigade's axis of advance. Any force that bypasses an enemy unit must maintain contact with it until handing it off to another friendly element, usually a force assigned a follow and support mission. The commander tasks his forward security force with conducting route reconnaissance of routes the main body will traverse.

4-26. The echelon intelligence officer (G2 or S2), assisted by the engineer and air defense staff representatives, must carefully analyze the terrain to include air avenues of approach. He identifies the enemy's most dangerous COA in the war gaming portion of the military decision making process. Because of the force's vulnerability, the G2 must not underestimate the enemy during a movement to contact. A thorough intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB)—by developing the modified combined obstacle overlay to include intervisibility overlays and other products, such as the event templates—enhances the force's security by indicating danger areas where the force is most likely to make contact with the enemy. It also helps to determine movement times between phase lines and other locations. Potential danger areas are likely enemy defensive locations, engagement areas, observation posts (OPs), and obstacles. The fire support system targets these areas and they become on-order priority targets placed into effect and cancelled as the lead element can confirm or deny enemy presence. The reconnaissance and surveillance plan supporting the movement to contact must provide coverage of these danger areas. If reconnaissance and surveillance forces cannot clear these areas, more deliberate movement techniques are required.

4-27. The commander develops decision points to support changes in the force's movement formation or change from an approach march to a combat formation. Uses both human and technical means to validate his decision points, the commander must determine the degree of risk he is willing to accept based on his mission. The commander's confidence in the products of the IPB process and the risk he is willing to accept determine his combat formation and maneuver scheme. In a high-risk environment, it is usually better to increase the distance between forward elements and the main body than to slow the speed of advance.

4-28. Corps and divisions can execute shaping operations as part of a movement to contact although, by definition, a force conducts a movement to contact when the enemy situation is vague or totally unknown. This occurs when the necessary information regarding enemy reserves and follow-on forces is available, but information regarding those enemy forces in close proximity to the friendly force is not available. As in any other type of operation, the commander plans to focus his operations on finding the enemy and then delaying, disrupting, and destroying each enemy force element as much as possible before it arrives onto the direct-fire battlefield. This allows close combat forces to prepare to engage enemy units on their arrival.

4-29. In a movement to contact, the commander can opt not to designate his decisive operation until his forces make contact with the enemy, unless there is a specific reason to designate it. In this case, he retains resources under his direct control to reinforce his decisive operation. He may designate his decisive operation during the initial stages of a movement to contact because of the presence of a key piece of terrain or avenue of approach.

## **EXECUTING A MOVEMENT TO CONTACT**

4-30. Each element of the force synchronizes its actions with adjacent and supporting units, maintaining contact and coordination as prescribed in orders and unit standing operating procedures (SOP). The advance guard

maintains contact with the covering force. The lead elements of the main body maintain contact with the advance guard. The rear guard and flank security elements maintain contact with and orient on the main body's movement. These security forces prevent unnecessary delay of the main body and defer the deployment of the main body as long as possible. Reconnaissance elements operate to the front and flanks of each column's advance guard and maintain contact with the covering force. The commander may instruct each column's advance guard to eliminate small pockets of resistance bypassed by forward security force. (See Figure 4-4.)

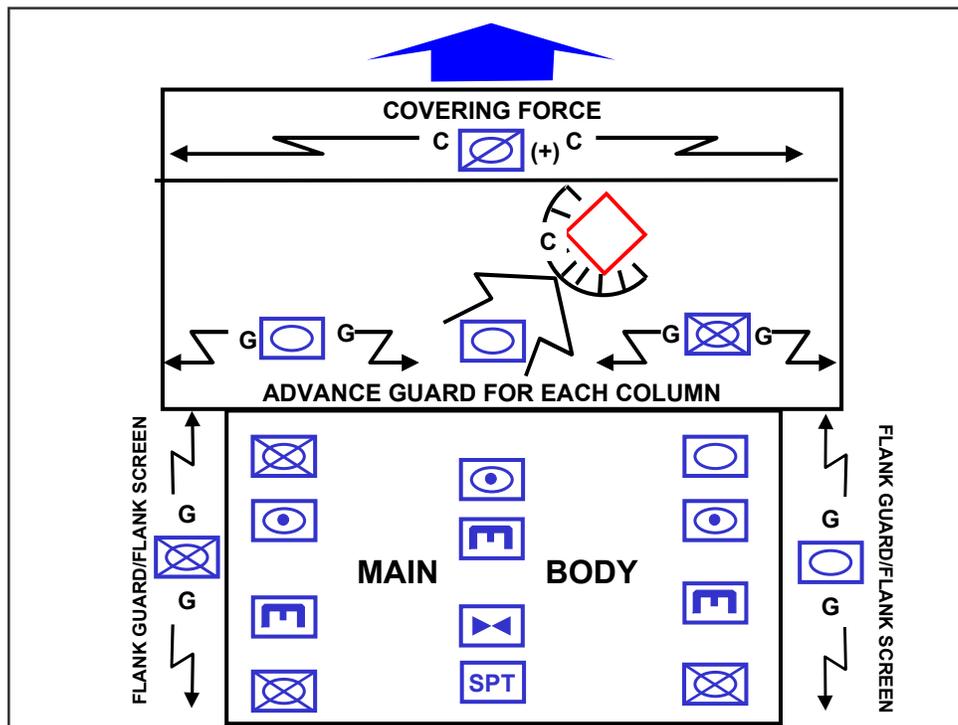


Figure 4-4. A Column Advance Guard Attacking to Destroy a Contained Enemy Force

4-31. The commander of the advance guard chooses a combat formation, based on the factors of METT-TC, to make contact with the smallest possible force while providing flexibility for maneuver. Whatever combat formation is chosen, it must be able to deploy appropriately once the commander becomes aware of the enemy's location. He ensures that the route or axis of advance traveled by the main body is free of enemy forces. It may move continuously (traveling and traveling overwatch) or by bounds (bounding overwatch). It moves by bounds when contact with the enemy is imminent and the terrain is favorable. Some indirect-fire assets, such as a mortar platoon or artillery battery and combat observation and lasing teams (COLTs), may be positioned with the formation. The COLTs can help overwatch the advance guard movement, and indirect fires focus on suppressing enemy weapons, obscuring enemy observation posts, and screening friendly movement.

4-32. The main body keeps enough distance between itself and its forward security elements to maintain flexibility for maneuver. This distance varies

with the level of command, the terrain, and the availability of information about the enemy. The main body may execute an approach march for all or part of the movement to contact to efficiently use the available road network or reduce the time needed to move from one location to another. Command posts and trains travel along high-mobility routes within the AO and occupy hasty positions as necessary.

4-33. Behind these forward security elements, the main body advances over multiple parallel routes with numerous lateral branches to remain flexible and reduce the time needed to initiate maneuver. (While it is preferred for a battalion to use multiple routes, battalions and smaller units can move on just one route.) In a movement to contact, the main body's march dispositions must allow maximum flexibility for maneuvering during movement and when establishing contact with the enemy force.

4-34. The commander's fire support systems tend to focus on suppression missions to disrupt enemy forces as they are encountered and smoke missions to obscure or screen exposed friendly forces when conducting a movement to contact. The commander schedules the movements of fire support systems in synchronization with the movement of the rest of the force. Fire support systems that cannot match the cross-country mobility of the combat units cause them to slow their rate of advance. If these units do not slow down, they run the risk of outrunning their fire support. The commander synchronizes the employment of close air support to prevent the enemy from regaining his balance while his ground fire support assets are repositioning. The main body updates its priority target list during a movement to contact operation.

4-35. The same considerations apply to air defense when the enemy possesses aerial capabilities. The commander ensures that his force stays within the air defense umbrella provided by corps and division assets.

4-36. The enemy has a difficult time detecting and targeting the main body when executing a movement to contact until contact is made because of its tempo, momentum, and dispersal; and the attention the commander pays to electromagnetic emission control. Once the force makes contact and concentrates its effects against detected enemy forces, it becomes vulnerable to strikes by enemy conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. It must concentrate its combat effects rapidly and disperse again as soon as it overcomes resistance to avoid enemy counteractions.

4-37. Movement should be as rapid as the terrain, the mobility of the force, and the enemy situation permit. Open terrain provides maneuver space on either side of the line of march and facilitates high-speed movement. It also allows for greater dispersal and usually permits more separation between forward security elements and the main body than restricted terrain allows. The commander should never commit his main body to canalizing terrain before these forward security elements have advanced far enough to ensure that the main body will not become fixed within that terrain. The enemy may have also established fire support control measures that allow him to employ nonobserved harassing and interdiction fires to interdict friendly forces traversing these choke points. As the enemy situation becomes known, the commander may shorten the distance between elements of the force to decrease reaction time or he may deploy to prepare for contact.

4-38. At the battalion and company levels, a moving force should move along covered or concealed routes from one covered or concealed position to another, using terrain to minimize its vulnerability to enemy weapons. Further, an overwatching force should cover the moving force. (Chapter 14 describes movement techniques, such as traveling overwatch.) Regardless of the specific movement technique employed, both forces need to provide mutual support and be knowledgeable about their counterpart's sectors of fire.

4-39. The force must attempt to cross any obstacles it encounters without loss of momentum by conducting in-stride breaches. The commander uses his forward security forces in an attempt to seize intact bridges whenever possible. Lead security elements bypass or breach obstacles as quickly as possible to maintain the momentum of the movement. If these lead elements cannot overcome obstacles, the commander directs subsequent elements of the main body to bypass the obstacle site and take the lead. Following forces can also reduce obstacles that hinder the unit's sustainment flow.

4-40. The commander locates himself well forward in the movement formation. Once the formation makes contact with the enemy, he can move quickly to the area of contact, analyze the situation, and direct aggressively. The commander's security elements conduct actions on contact to develop the situation once they find the enemy. Once they make contact with the enemy, a number of actions occur that have been divided into the following sequence. (Units equipped with a full set of digital command and control systems may be able to combine or skip one or more of the steps in that sequence. Those units will conduct maneuver and remain within supporting distance of each other with a significantly larger AOs than units equipped with analog systems.)

#### **GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT**

4-41. All ISR assets focus on determining the enemy's dispositions and providing the commander with current intelligence and relevant combat information; this ensures that he can commit friendly forces under optimal conditions. The commander uses all available sources of combat information to find the enemy's location and dispositions in addition to his intelligence systems. Corps and divisions employ long-range surveillance units and detachments in conjunction with data provided by available special operating forces, joint, and multinational assets, in addition to their organic ISR assets. The commander may use his surveillance systems to cue the conduct of aerial and ground reconnaissance.

4-42. The enemy situation becomes clearer as the unit's forward security elements conduct actions on contact to rapidly develop the situation in accordance with the commander's plan and intent. By determining the strength, location, and disposition of enemy forces, these security elements allow the commander to focus the effects of the main body's combat power against the enemy main body. The overall force must remain flexible to exploit both intelligence and combat information. The security force should not allow the enemy force to break contact unless it receives an order from the commander. When a strong covering force has not preceded the advance guard, it should seize terrain that offers essential observation.

4-43. **Actions on contact** are a series of combat actions often conducted simultaneously taken on contact with the enemy to develop the situation. Actions on contact are:

- Deploy and report.
- Evaluate and develop the situation.
- Choose a course of action.
- Execute selected course of action
- Recommend a course of action to the higher commander.

4-44. Once the lead elements of a force conducting a movement to contact encounter the enemy, they conduct actions on contact. The unit treats obstacles like enemy contact, since it assumes that the obstacles are covered by fire. The unit carries out these actions on contact regardless of whether the enemy has detected its presence. The unit's security force often gains a tactical advantage over an enemy force by using tempo and initiative to conduct these actions on contact, allowing it to gain and maintain contact without becoming decisively engaged. How quickly the unit develops the situation is directly related to its security. This tempo is directly related to the unit's use of well-rehearsed SOP and drills.

### **Deploy and Report**

4-45. When a unit's security element encounters an enemy unit or obstacle, it deploys to a covered position that provides observation and fields of fire. If the security element is under enemy fire, it uses direct and indirect fire to suppress the enemy and restore freedom of maneuver. Simultaneously, the commander of the security element reports the contact using a spot report format to provide all available information on the situation to his higher headquarters. This alerts the commander and allows him to begin necessary actions. (FM 6-99.2 provides the format for a spot report.)

### **Evaluate and Develop the Situation**

4-46. The unit's security force develops the situation rapidly within mission constraints by employing techniques ranging from stealthy, foot-mobile reconnaissance to reconnaissance by fire, which uses both direct and indirect weapons. If possible the commander continues the security mission with other elements not currently in contact with the enemy after evaluating the situation. This helps to develop the situation across the front and provides more maneuver space to execute further actions. As the situation develops, the security force submits additional reports.

### **Choose a Course of Action**

4-47. After the security force makes contact, its commander gathers information, makes an assessment, and chooses a course of action (COA) consistent with his higher commander's intent and within the unit's capability. The unit initiates direct and indirect fires to gain the initiative if it is appropriate to engage the enemy. This allows the security force to resume its mission as soon as possible. The commander cannot allow small enemy forces to delay the movement of the security force. Usually, available intelligence and the concept of the operation indicate the COA to follow. For obstacles not covered

by fire, the unit can either seek a bypass or create the required number of lanes to support its maneuver or the maneuver of a supported unit. Once enemy contact is made, these COAs are normally to conduct an attack, bypass, defend, delay, or withdrawal. For obstacles covered by fire, the unit can either seek a bypass or conduct breaching operations as part of a hasty attack.

### **Execute Selected Course of Action**

4-48. The security force commander should determine quickly whether to bypass the enemy or attack. The security force attacks (see Chapter 5) if it has sufficient, immediately available combat power to overwhelm the enemy and the attack will not detract from mission accomplishment. Such attacks are usually necessary to overcome enemy attempts to slow the movement of the security force. If this initial attack fails to defeat enemy defenses, the security force commander must consider other options, such as making a more deliberate attack or assuming the defense while continuing to find out as much as possible about the enemy's positions.

4-49. The security force may bypass the enemy if it does not have sufficient combat power or an attack would jeopardize mission accomplishment. It must request permission to bypass an enemy force unless the operations order provides bypass criteria. The security force commander must report bypassed enemy forces to the next higher headquarters, which then assumes responsibility for their destruction or containment. Alternatively, the security force could keep a minimum force in contact with the bypassed enemy so that he cannot move freely around the battlefield. (See Appendix B for a discussion of bypass as a tactical task.)

4-50. If the security force cannot conduct either a hasty attack or a bypass, it attempts to establish a defense (see Chapter 8). In the defense, the security force maintains enemy contact, continues to perform reconnaissance, and prepares to support other forces. When the security force commander decides to defend, responsibility for further action rests with his higher commander. In the event other COAs would lead to decisive engagements or destruction, the security force conducts those activities necessary to assure self-preservation, such as delay or withdrawal (see Chapter 11), but maintains enemy contact unless the higher commander orders otherwise.

### **Recommend a Course of Action to the Higher Commander**

4-51. Once the security force commander selects a COA keeping in mind his commander's intent, he reports it to his higher commander, who has the option of disapproving it based on its impact on his mission. To avoid delay, unit SOP may provide automatic approval of certain actions. If the higher commander assumes responsibility for continuing to develop the situation, the security force supports his actions as ordered. The higher commander must be careful to avoid becoming overly focused on initial security fights to the detriment of operations directed against the enemy main body.

### **DISRUPT THE ENEMY**

4-52. Once contact is made, the main body commander brings overwhelming fires onto the enemy to prevent him from conducting either a spoiling attack or organizing a coherent defense. The security force commander maneuvers

as quickly as possible to find gaps in the enemy's defenses. The commander uses his ISR assets to gain as much information as possible about the enemy's dispositions, strengths, capabilities, and intentions. As more intelligence becomes available, the main body commander attacks to destroy or disrupt enemy command and control (C2) centers, fire control nodes, and communication nets. The main body commander conducts operations to prevent enemy reserves from moving to counter his actions.

### **FIX THE ENEMY**

4-53. The commander tries to initiate maneuver at a tempo the enemy cannot match, since success in a meeting engagement depends on effective actions on contact. The security force commander does not allow the enemy to maneuver against the main body. The organization, size, and combat power of the security force are the major factors that determine the size of the enemy force it can defeat without deploying the main body.

4-54. The commander uses his aerial maneuver and fire support assets—including offensive information operations—to fix the enemy in his current positions by directly attacking his combat and command systems and emplacing situational obstacles. The priorities are typically to attack enemy forces in contact, C2 and fire control facilities, fire support assets, and moving enemy forces not yet in contact, such as follow-on forces and reserves. These priorities vary with the factors of METT-TC. Attack helicopters and close air support fixed-wing aircraft working in joint air attack teams (JAAT) are ideally suited to engage the enemy throughout the depth of his area of operations.

4-55. The techniques a commander employs to fix the enemy when both forces are moving are different than those employed when the enemy force is stationary during the meeting engagement. In both situations, when the security force cannot overrun the enemy by conducting a hasty frontal attack, he must deploy a portion of the main body. When this occurs the unit is no longer conducting a movement to contact but an attack.

### **MANEUVER**

4-56. If the security force cannot overrun the enemy with a frontal attack, the commander quickly maneuvers his main body to conduct a penetration or an envelopment. (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of attack.) He does this to overwhelm the enemy force before it can react effectively or reinforce. The commander attempts to defeat the enemy in detail while still maintaining the momentum of his advance. After a successful attack, the main body commander resumes the movement to contact. If he did not defeat the enemy he has three main options: bypass, transition to a more deliberate attack, or conduct some type of defense. In all cases, he makes every effort to retain the initiative and prevent the enemy from stabilizing the situation by conducting violent and resolute attacks. Simultaneously he must maintain his momentum by synchronizing the actions of his combat, combat support, and combat service support elements.

4-57. Main body elements deploy rapidly to the vicinity of the contact if the commander initiates a frontal attack. Commanders of maneuvering units coordinate forward passage through friendly forces in contact as required. The

intent is to deliver the assault before the enemy can deploy or reinforce his engaged forces. The commander may order an attack from a march column for one of the main body's columns, while the rest of the main body deploys. The commander can also wait to attack until he can bring the bulk of the main body forward. He avoids piecemeal commitment except when rapidity of action is essential and combat superiority at the vital point is present and can be maintained throughout the attack, or when compartmentalized terrain forces such a COA.

4-58. When trying to conduct an envelopment, the commander focuses on attacking the enemy's flanks and rear before he can prepare to counter these actions. The commander uses the security force to fix the enemy while the main body maneuvers to look for an assailable flank or he uses the main body to fix the enemy while the security force finds the assailable flank.

### **FOLLOW THROUGH**

4-59. If the enemy is defeated, the unit transitions back into an MTC and continues to advance. The movement to contact terminates when the unit reaches the final objective or limit of advance, or it must transition to a more deliberate attack, a defense, or retrograde. (For more discussion of these types of operations, see the respective chapters in this manual.)

### **SEARCH AND ATTACK**

4-60. *Search and attack* is a technique for conducting a movement to contact that shares many of the characteristics of an area security mission (FM 3-0). A commander employs this form of a movement to contact, conducted primarily by light forces and often supported by heavy forces, when the enemy is operating as small, dispersed elements, or when the task is to deny the enemy the ability to move within a given area. The battalion is the echelon that normally conducts a search and attack. A brigade will assist its subordinate battalions by ensuring the availability of indirect fires and other support.

### **ORGANIZATION OF FORCES**

4-61. The commander task organizes his unit into reconnaissance, fixing, and finishing forces, each with a specific purpose and task. The size of the reconnaissance force is based on the available intelligence about the size of enemy forces in the AO. The less known about the situation, the larger the reconnaissance force. The reconnaissance force typically consists of scout, infantry, aviation, and electronic warfare assets. The fixing force must have enough combat power to isolate the enemy once the reconnaissance force finds him. The finishing force must have enough combat power to defeat those enemy forces expected to be located within the AO. The commander can direct each subordinate unit to retain a finishing force, or he can retain the finishing force at his echelon. The commander may rotate his subordinate elements through the reconnaissance, fixing, and finishing roles. However, rotating roles may require a change in task organization and additional time for training and rehearsal.

## CONTROL MEASURES

4-62. The commander establishes control measures that allow for decentralized actions and small-unit initiative to the greatest extent possible. The minimum control measures for a search and attack are an AO, target reference points (TRPs), objectives, checkpoints, and contact points. (See Figure 4-5.) The use of TRPs facilitates responsive fire support once the reconnaissance force makes contact with the enemy. The commander uses objectives and checkpoints to guide the movement of subordinate elements. Coordination points indicate a specific location for coordinating fires and movement between adjacent units. The commander uses other control measures, such as phase lines, as necessary. (See [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) for definitions of available control measures.)

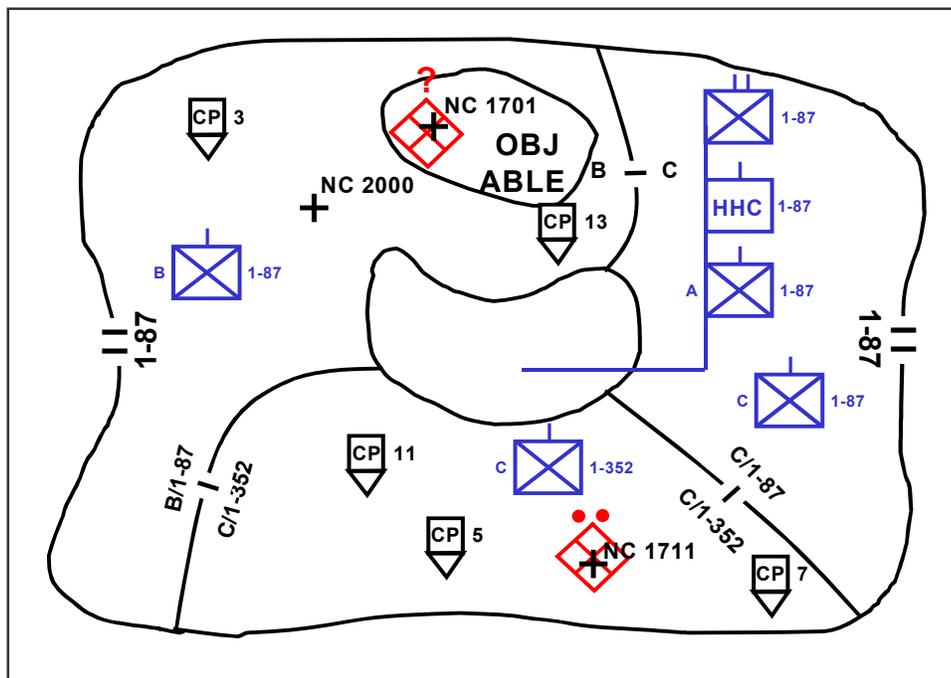


Figure 4-5. Search and Attack Control Measures

## PLANNING A SEARCH AND ATTACK

4-63. A commander conducts a search and attack for one or more of the following purposes:

- Destroy the enemy: render enemy units in the AO combat-ineffective.
- Deny the area: prevent the enemy from operating unhindered in a given area; for example, in any area he is using for a base camp or for logistics support.
- Protect the force: prevent the enemy from massing to disrupt or destroy friendly military or civilian operations, equipment, property, and key facilities.
- Collect information: gain information about the enemy and the terrain to confirm the enemy COA predicted as a result of the IPB process.

4-64. The products of the IPB process are critical to conducting a search and attack. They focus the force's reconnaissance efforts on likely enemy locations.

4-65. The search and attack plan places the finishing force, as the decisive operation, where it can best maneuver to destroy enemy forces or essential facilities once located by reconnaissance assets. Typically, the finishing force occupies a central location in the AO. However, the factors of METT-TC may allow the commander to position the finishing force outside the search and attack area. The commander weights this decisive operation by using priority of fires and assigning priorities of support to his other available combat multipliers, such as engineer elements and helicopter lift support. The commander establishes control measures as necessary to consolidate units and concentrate the combat power of the force before the attack. Once the reconnaissance force locates the enemy, the fixing and finishing forces can fix and destroy him. The commander also develops a contingency plan in the event that the reconnaissance force is compromised.

4-66. Fire support plans must provide for flexible and rapidly delivered fires to achieve the commander's desired effects throughout the AO. The commander positions his fire support assets so they can support subordinate elements throughout the AO. The commander must establish procedures for rapidly clearing fires. To clear fires rapidly, command posts and small-unit commanders must track and report the locations of all subordinate elements. Because of the uncertain enemy situation, the commander is careful to assign clear fire-support relationships.

## **EXECUTING A SEARCH AND ATTACK**

4-67. Each subordinate element operating in its own AO is tasked to destroy the enemy within its capability. The commander should have in place previously established control measures and communications means between any closing elements to prevent fratricide. The reconnaissance force conducts a zone reconnaissance to reconnoiter identified named areas of interest (NAIs).

4-68. Once the reconnaissance force finds the enemy force, the fixing force develops the situation, then executes one of two options based on the commander's guidance and the factors of METT-TC. The first option is to block identified routes that the detected enemy can use to escape or rush reinforcement over. The fixing force maintains contact with the enemy and positions its forces to isolate and fix him before the finishing force attacks. The second option is to conduct an attack to fix the enemy in his current positions until the finishing force arrives. The fixing force attacks if that action meets the commander's intent and it can generate sufficient combat power against the detected enemy. Depending on the enemy's mobility and the likelihood of the reconnaissance force being compromised, the commander may need to position his fixing force before his reconnaissance force enters the AO.

4-69. Brigades (and possibly battalions) may establish fire-support bases as part of the operations of their fixing force to provide fire-support coverage throughout the area of operations during search and attack operations conducted in restricted terrain. These positions should be mutually supporting and prepared for all-around defense. They are located in positions that

facilitate aerial resupply. The development of these positions depends on the factors of METT-TC because their establishment requires diverting combat power to ensure protecting fire support and other assets located within such bases.

4-70. If conditions are not right to use the finishing force to attack the detected enemy, the reconnaissance or the fixing force can continue to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance activities to further develop the situation. Whenever this occurs, the force maintaining surveillance must be careful to avoid detection and possible enemy ambushes.

4-71. The finishing force may move behind the reconnaissance and fixing forces, or it may locate at a pickup zone and air assault into a landing zone near the enemy once he is located. The finishing force must be responsive enough to engage the enemy before he can break contact with the reconnaissance force or the fixing force. The echelon intelligence officer provides the commander with an estimate of the time it will take the enemy to displace from his detected location. The commander provides additional mobility assets so the finishing force can respond within that timeframe.

4-72. The commander uses his finishing force to destroy the detected and fixed enemy during a search and attack by conducting hasty or deliberate attacks, maneuvering to block enemy escape routes while another unit conducts the attack, or employing indirect fire or close air support to destroy the enemy. The commander may have his finishing force establish an area ambush and use his reconnaissance and fixing forces to drive the enemy into the ambushes.

## Chapter 5

# Attack

*I approve of all methods of attacking provided they are directed at the point where the enemy's army is weakest and where the terrain favors them the least.*

Frederick the Great

An *attack* is an offensive operation that destroys or defeats enemy forces, seizes and secures terrain, or both (FM 3-0). When the commander decides to attack or the opportunity to attack occurs during combat operations, the execution of that attack must mass the effects of overwhelming combat power against selected portions of the enemy force with a tempo and intensity that cannot be matched by the enemy. The resulting combat should not be a contest between near equals. The attacker must be determined to seek decision on the ground of his choosing through the deliberate synchronization and employment of his combined arms team.

5-1. Attacks take place along a continuum defined at one end by fragmentary orders that direct the execution of rapidly executed battle drills by forces immediately available. Published, detailed orders with multiple branches and sequels; detailed knowledge of all aspects of enemy dispositions; a force that has been task organized specifically for the operation; and the conduct of extensive rehearsals define the other end of the continuum. Most attacks fall between the ends of the continuum as opposed to either extreme. ([Chapter 1](#) discusses this continuum between hasty and deliberate operations.)

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

5-2. Once a commander determines his scheme of maneuver, he task organizes his force to give each unit enough combat power to accomplish its

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mission. He normally organizes into a security force, a main body, a reserve, and a sustainment organization. He should complete any changes in task organization in time to allow units to conduct rehearsals with their attached or supported unit. The best place and time for an attacking force to task organize is when it is in an assembly area.

## **SECURITY FORCES**

5-3. Under normal circumstances, a commander resources dedicated security forces during an attack only if the attack uncovers one or more flanks or the rear of the attacking force as it advances. In this case, the commander designates a flank or rear security force and assigns it a guard or screen mission, depending on the factors of METT-TC. Normally an attacking unit does not need extensive forward security forces; most attacks are launched from positions in contact with the enemy, which reduces the usefulness of a separate forward security force. The exception occurs when the attacking unit is transitioning from the defense to an attack and had previously established a security area as part of the defense.

## **MAIN BODY**

5-4. The commander organizes his main body into combined arms formations to conduct his decisive operation and necessary shaping operations. The commander aims his decisive operation toward the immediate and decisive destruction of the enemy force, its will to resist, seizure of a terrain objective, or the defeat of the enemy's plan. His maneuver scheme identifies the focus of the decisive operation. All of the force's available resources operate in concert to assure the success of the decisive operation. The subordinate unit or units designated to conduct the decisive operation can change during the course of the attack. The commander designates an assault, breach, and support force if he expects to conduct a breach operation during his attack.

5-5. If it is impractical to determine initially when or where the echelon's decisive operation will be, such as during a hasty attack, the commander retains flexibility by arranging his forces in depth, holding out strong reserves, and maintaining centralized control of his long-range fire support systems. As soon as the tactical situation clarifies enough to allow the commander to designate his decisive operation, he focuses his resources to support that decisive operation's achievement of its objective. Enemy actions, minor changes in the situation, or the lack of success by other elements cannot be allowed to divert either forces or their effects from the decisive operation.

5-6. The commander may need to designate a unit or units to conduct shaping operations to create windows of opportunity for executing his decisive operation. He allocates the unit or units assigned to conduct shaping operations the minimal combat power necessary to accomplish the missions since he cannot employ overwhelming combat power everywhere. Units conducting shaping operations usually have a wider area of operations (AO) than those conducting a decisive operation. If the commander has sufficient forces as part of his shaping operations, he can assign the tasks of follow and assume or follow and support to subordinate units. ([Appendix B](#) defines these two tactical mission tasks.)

## RESERVE

5-7. The commander uses his reserve to exploit success, defeat enemy counterattacks, or restore momentum to a stalled attack. Once committed, the reserve's actions normally become or reinforce the echelon's decisive operation, and the commander makes every effort to reconstitute another reserve from units made available by the revised situation. Often a commander's most difficult and important decision concerns the time, place, and circumstances for committing the reserve. The reserve is not a committed force, it is not used as a follow and support force or a follow and assume force.

5-8. In the attack, the combat power allocated to the reserve depends primarily on the level of uncertainty about the enemy, especially the strength of any expected enemy counterattacks. The commander only needs to resource a small reserve to respond to unanticipated enemy reactions when he has detailed information about the enemy. When the situation is relatively clear and enemy capabilities are limited, the reserve may consist of a small fraction of the command. When the situation is vague, the reserve may initially contain the majority of the commander's combat power.

5-9. In addition, the strength and composition of the reserve vary with the reserve's contemplated missions, the forces available, the form of offensive maneuver selected, the terrain, and acceptable risk. For example, in a hasty attack the reserve can contain up to one-third of the force's combat power. Alternatively, in a deliberate attack the reserve is normally sized to defeat the enemy's counterattack forces. The commander should not constitute his reserve by weakening his decisive operation. A reserve must have mobility equal to or greater than the most dangerous enemy ground threat, and be able to fight that threat.

5-10. In an attack the commander generally locates his reserve to the rear of the unit making his decisive operation in a location that provides maximum protection from hostile observation and fire. However, it must be able to move quickly to areas where it is needed in different contingencies. This is most likely to occur if the enemy has strong counterattack forces. For heavy reserve forces, the key factor is cross-country mobility or road networks. For light forces, the key factor is the road network if trucks are available, or the availability of pickup zones (PZs) for air assault forces. The commander prioritizes the positioning of his reserve to reinforce the success of the decisive operation first, then to counter the worst-case enemy counterattack.

## SUSTAINMENT ORGANIZATION

5-11. The commander resources his sustaining operations to support the attacking force. A battalion commander organizes his combat service support and other logistics assets into combat and field trains. Higher echelon commanders appoint someone to control sustaining operations within their echelon rear areas. In an attack, the commander tries to position his CSS units well forward. From these forward locations they can sustain the attacking force, providing priority of support to the units conducting the decisive operation. As the attacking force advances, CSS units displace forward as required to shorten the supply lines, using different displacement techniques to ensure uninterrupted support to maneuver units. The size of the force a

commander devotes to rear area security depends on the threat in the attacking force's rear area. A significant enemy threat requires the commander to resource a tactical combat force. (Chapter 12 addresses area security operations in more detail.)

## CONTROL MEASURES

5-12. Units conducting offensive operations are assigned an AO within which to operate. Within the AO the commander normally designates the following control measures regardless of whether he operates in a contiguous or non-contiguous environment:

- Areas of operations for subordinate units of battalion size or larger.
- Phase line as the line of departure (LD), which may also be the line of contact (LC).
- Time to initiate the operation.
- Objective.

If necessary, a commander can use either an axis of advance or a direction of attack to further control his maneuver forces. (Figure 5-1 depicts the minimum control measures for an attack.)

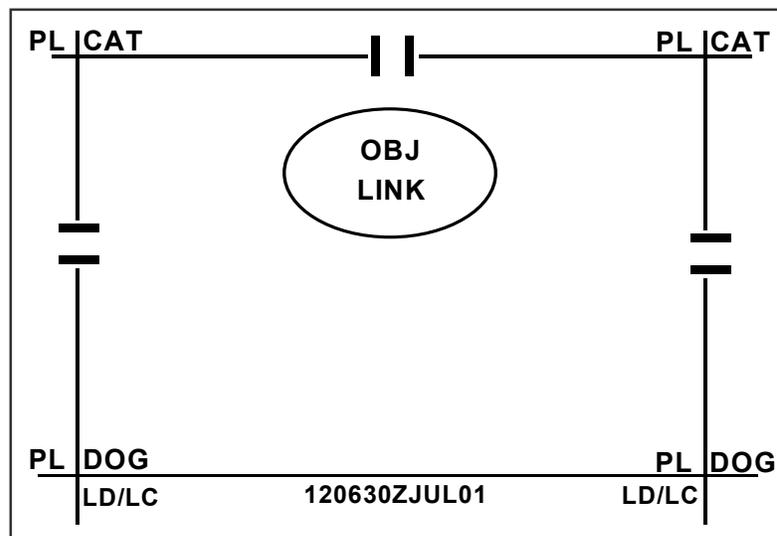


Figure 5-1. Minimum Attack Control Measures

5-13. A commander can use any other control measures necessary to control his attack. Short of the LD/LC, the commander may designate assembly areas and attack positions where the unit prepares for offensive operations or waits for the establishment of the required conditions to initiate the attack. Beyond the LD/LC he may designate checkpoints, phase lines (PLs), probable line of deployment (PLD), assault positions, and direct and indirect fire support coordinating measures. Between the PLD and the objective he can use a final coordination line (FCL), assault positions, support-by-fire and attack-by-fire positions, and time of assault to further control the final stage of the attack. Beyond the objective he can impose a limit of advance (LOA) if he does not want the unit to conduct an exploitation or a pursuit. ([Chapters 2](#)

and 3 discuss these control measures. They describe how a commander can use attack positions, axis of advance, combat formations, direction of attack, limit of advance, a LD, objectives, PLD, and a time of attack to help control the operation. Chapter 3 describes the use of AOs, assembly areas, line of contact, phase lines, and common direct and indirect fire coordinating measures.)

5-14. In an attack during limited-visibility conditions, the commander wants positive control over the movement of all attacking elements. He typically imposes additional control measures beyond those he would use in a daylight attack. These additional measures may include using a point of departure (PD) and a direction of attack.

## PLANNING AN ATTACK

5-15. In an attack, friendly forces seek to place the enemy in a position where he can easily be defeated or destroyed. The commander seeks to keep the enemy off-balance while continually reducing the enemy's options. In an attack the commander focuses the maneuver effects, supported by the other battle-field operating systems (BOS), on those enemy forces that prevent him from accomplishing his mission and seizing his objective. Planning helps a commander synchronize the effects of his combat power through the military decision making process outlined in FM 5-0 and troop leading procedures outlined in FM 6-0.

5-16. This section addresses those considerations unique to an attack by BOS. There are no unique air defense, mobility/countermobility/survivability, or CSS BOS planning considerations that apply only to the attack. Those BOS planning considerations discussed in Chapter 3 continue to apply.

5-17. ***Fire superiority is that degree of dominance in the fires of one force over another that permits that force to conduct maneuver at a given time and place without prohibitive interference by the enemy.*** The commander plans to focus the effects of friendly systems to achieve fire superiority and allow friendly maneuver forces to breach the enemy's defensive network. The force must gain and maintain fire superiority at critical points during the attack. Having fire superiority allows the commander to maneuver his forces without prohibitive losses. The commander gains fire superiority by using a variety of tactics, techniques, and procedures. This includes using counterfires and precision fires, suppressing enemy positions, and destroying key facilities and assets. Achieving fire superiority requires the commander to take advantage of—

- The range and lethality of available weapon systems.
- Offensive information operations to prevent the enemy commander from synchronizing the effects of his available combat power.
- Movement to place the enemy in a position of disadvantage where his weapons can be destroyed, one or more at a time, with little risk to friendly weapon systems.

## INTELLIGENCE

5-18. To employ the proper capabilities and tactics, the commander must have detailed knowledge of the enemy's organization, equipment, and tactics.

He must understand the enemy's strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, this knowledge is available during the military decision making process. The commander and his staff develop enemy situational and weapons templates based on analysis of all available combat information and intelligence data. These templates help to determine the feasibility of available courses of action (COAs) designed to achieve a position of advantage.

5-19. Before the attack a unit conducts ISR operations to ascertain those information requirements addressed in [paragraph 3-111](#). Other ISR requirements can include—

- The location and depth of enemy reserves.
- The location and extent of contaminated areas.
- The location and extent of obstacles, possible breach sites, and enemy engagement areas.
- The location of areas where attacking units could become disoriented, such as rough or restrictive terrain.
- The most favorable routes of approach to the attack objective.
- Areas that the attacker can use for flanking fire and maneuver, such as support-by-fire and attack-by-fire positions.
- Suitability of planned friendly assault, support, artillery, and CSS positions.
- Enemy deception operations.

Commanders and leaders at all echelons personally participate in this process.

5-20. The commander takes every opportunity to gain and refine combat information regarding the enemy. He uses his available ISR assets to gather combat information and process it into intelligence. Information gathered during the planning phase of the plan, prepare, and execute cycle is especially useful in determining the viability of each COA developed. Generally, if a commander does not have good intelligence and, therefore, does not know where the overwhelming majority of the enemy's units and systems are located, he cannot conduct a deliberate attack. He must conduct a movement to contact, conduct a hasty attack, or collect more combat information.

5-21. The two fundamental employment techniques for reconnaissance in the attack are: reconnaissance-pull and reconnaissance-push. In reconnaissance-pull, the reconnaissance objective is to find weaknesses in enemy dispositions that can be exploited by the main force. Reconnaissance is launched over a broad area that allows the reconnaissance elements to identify enemy weaknesses to exploit and enemy strengths to avoid. Once these are identified, the commander exploits the situation by choosing a COA that allows his decisive operation to attack enemy weaknesses and penetrate gaps in the enemy's defense. The commander can then commit forces to widen the gap and envelop the enemy. The reconnaissance elements continue to move, seeking paths of least resistance and pulling the main body deep into the enemy's rear.

5-22. In reconnaissance-push, the reconnaissance objective is to identify the obstacles and enemy forces the attack forces must overcome to assault the objective in a previously chosen location in accordance with a COA selected prior to the reconnaissance. Once friendly reconnaissance elements gain

contact with the enemy, they develop the situation within their capabilities. If the objective is an enemy force, the reconnaissance element orients on it to maintain contact and determine as much as possible about its dispositions.

5-23. The commander ensures that reconnaissance and surveillance of the enemy's defensive positions and any terrain critical to the scheme of maneuver continue throughout the attack. If the enemy attempts to modify his defenses, those actions will be detected. In turn, this allows the commander to adjust his scheme of maneuver as the enemy situation becomes clearer. The commander can use human and technological means, acting separately or in combination, to provide the required degree of reconnaissance and surveillance.

5-24. A commander's organic capability to gain information about the enemy and the AO's environment varies by echelon. At the corps echelon these assets include a military intelligence (MI) brigade, an armored cavalry regiment (ACR), and parts of almost every major subordinate command within the corps. Even a company conducts reconnaissance patrols. (For more information on reconnaissance operations, see FM 3-55.)

## MANEUVER

5-25. In his plan of attack, the commander seeks to surprise his enemy by choosing an unexpected direction, time, type, or strength for the attack and by exploiting the success of military deception operations. Surprise delays enemy reactions, overloads and confuses enemy C2, induces psychological shock in the enemy, and reduces the coherence of the enemy defense. The commander achieves tactical surprise by attacking in bad weather and over seemingly impassible terrain, conducting feints and demonstrations, maintaining a high tempo, destroying enemy forces, and employing sound operations security (OPSEC). He may plan different attack times for his decisive and shaping operations to mislead the enemy and allow the shifting of supporting fires to successive attacking echelons. However, simultaneous attacks provide a means to maximize the effects of mass in the initial assault. They also prevent the enemy from concentrating his fires against successive attacks.

5-26. In planning the commander and subordinate leaders focus on the routes, formations, and navigational aids they will use to traverse the ground from the LD or PD to the objective. Some terrain locations may require the attacking unit to change its combat formation, direction of movement, or movement technique when it reaches those locations. The unit can post guides at these critical locations to ensure maintaining control over the movement.

5-27. The commander attacks targets throughout the depth of the enemy's defense to keep him off balance and limit his freedom of action. However, at the point of the decisive operation, the commander wants to concentrate the effects of overwhelming combat power against the enemy to shatter the cohesion of his defense. The commander accomplishes this by applying combat power against the enemy at a level of violence and in a manner that he cannot match. For example, the commander could concentrate a tank-heavy battalion task force's shock action and firepower against one enemy rifle

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platoon's hastily prepared defensive position. (Field Manual 3-0 discusses symmetric and asymmetric attack in more detail.)

5-28. Another aspect of concentration is the ability to rapidly concentrate force effects such as fires and offensive information operations during movement. This is especially critical when crossing linear obstacles. Each subordinate element tends to move out independently when it completes passage through a choke point. This independent movement detracts from the ability of the whole force to rapidly generate combat power on the far side of the obstacle.

### Daylight Attacks

5-29. Daylight attacks allow friendly forces to effectively use their equipment while facilitating command and control (C2). They are the least stressful psychologically and physically on the attacking units. One major disadvantage is that the enemy can effectively use his systems to oppose the attack. Another disadvantage is that it does not take advantage of the Army's superior thermal viewer capabilities.

### Limited-Visibility Attacks

5-30. The factors of METT-TC normally require an attack conducted during limited visibility to be more deliberate in nature, except when it occurs as part of the follow-up to a daylight attack or as part of an exploitation or pursuit operation. The commander planning a night attack considers how limited visibility complicates controlling units, soldiers, and fires; identifying and engaging targets; navigating and moving without detection; locating, treating, and evacuating casualties; and locating and bypassing or breaching obstacles.

5-31. Commanders attack in limited-visibility conditions to take advantage of American night-vision and navigational superiority against most potential enemy ground forces. Intensively trained forces equipped for such combat have significant advantages over an enemy who is unprepared for limited-visibility combat. When the friendly force's limited-visibility operations capabilities are significantly greater than the enemy's, limited-visibility attacks may be the norm. [Table 5-1](#) on page 5-8 outlines the advantages and disadvantages of conducting limited-visibility attacks.

5-32. Highly trained units equipped with modern night-vision devices conduct limited-visibility attacks in a manner similar to the way they conduct daylight attacks. Units without extensive night-vision devices can use the darkness to their advantage to conceal their movement, allowing them to get as close to the enemy positions as possible if the enemy also does not have extensive night-vision capabilities. Troops that are well trained for limited-visibility operations and take full advantage of the superiority of their night-vision equipment gain significant tactical and psychological advantages when attacking the enemy at night or in other conditions of reduced visibility. The commander should understand the different night-vision capabilities of all elements participating in the attack, to include the enemy's night-vision capabilities, and make any adjustments necessary to his plan based on these differences. The commander should take advantage of his superior night-fighting capabilities whenever possible.

Table 5-1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Limited-Visibility Attacks

ADVANTAGES OF LIMITED-VISIBILITY ATTACKS	DISADVANTAGES OF LIMITED-VISIBILITY ATTACKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defenses are more susceptible to infiltration.</li> <li>• Darkness can conceal the movement of large forces.</li> <li>• Physical and psychological factors favor the attacker, as shock, disorientation, and isolation are easier to achieve.</li> <li>• Air assets can operate more safely because air defenders with only optical sights have greater difficulty acquiring targets at night.</li> <li>• The element of surprise may increase because defenders are more susceptible to deception techniques, such as dummy lights, noise, smoke, and fires.</li> <li>• The defender cannot employ his reserves as quickly at night as he can during daylight conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Command and control is more difficult.</li> <li>• The defender can react easier to changing situations.</li> <li>• The attacker has difficulty determining the limits of obstacle systems.</li> <li>• Restrictive terrain is more difficult to traverse.</li> <li>• Light, smoke, noise, and fires can deceive the attacker.</li> <li>• The attacker loses momentum because he attacks at a reduced speed to maintain the coherence of his unit.</li> <li>• Land navigation, without GPS, is more difficult at night; units may become separated, cohesion can be lost, and support elements can move to the wrong positions.</li> <li>• The enemy can reposition or emplace obstacles during darkness without being detected by friendly reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence assets.</li> <li>• Attacking units are easier to ambush at night.</li> <li>• Adjusting indirect fire is difficult, even with night-vision devices or illumination.</li> <li>• Units require significantly larger quantities of signal ammunition such as smoke, tracers, flares, and illumination rounds.</li> <li>• The task of locating and evacuating casualties is more difficult to execute.</li> <li>• The risk of fratricide may increase.</li> </ul>

5-33. The basic organization of forces for a limited-visibility or night attack is the same as for any other attack. However, changing an existing task organization under limited-visibility conditions requires much more time and effort than it does during daylight. Small tactical organizations, such as combat crews and infantry squads, should be resourced as close as possible to full strength even if it means reducing the total number of these small tactical groups.

5-34. The presence or lack of illumination characterizes the conduct of limited-visibility attacks. Nonilluminated attacks offer the best chance of gaining surprise. Illumination, however, is normally planned for every limited-visibility attack so that it can be readily available if required. The commander can choose to conduct a nonilluminated attack until his forces

make contact with the enemy. At that point, he can illuminate the objective. The enemy can also choose to employ illumination to increase the effectiveness of his defensive efforts. Units generally conduct nonilluminated attacks although they always plan for illumination. All leaders within the attacking unit must understand the time, conditions, and authority required to employ illumination.

5-35. Illuminated, supported attacks are almost like daylight attacks. They are most effective when speed is essential, time for reconnaissance is limited, or the enemy is weak and disorganized. If the commander employs illumination, it should continue until the force secures the objective. The commander should place the illumination beyond the objective to silhouette objects on the objective. This helps the assaulting force see and fire at withdrawing or counterattacking enemy forces. The commander may also employ illumination in several locations to confuse the enemy about the exact place of attack.

5-36. The commander plans for limited-visibility operations in the same manner that he does for daylight operations, with emphasis on—

- Keeping the plan simple.
- Taking additional time for reconnaissance.
- Taking advantage of easily identifiable terrain features, such as roads and railroad tracks, when establishing control measures.
- Using intermediate objectives as necessary to control and maintain the correct movement direction during the attack.
- Concealing preparations.
- Scheduling initial rehearsals during daylight, with the final rehearsal at night.

5-37. To simplify control problems, the commander may weight his support element over the assault force to reduce the number of friendly soldiers moving on the objective in the darkness. Developing a plan that does not require the unit to change its movement azimuth after it crosses the LD/PD helps to simplify the plan execution.

5-38. The commander must assume that the enemy possesses, in at least limited quantities, the same limited-visibility observation capabilities as his own forces—absent positive information to the contrary—when conducting a limited-visibility attack. Using terrain to mask movement and deployment remains critical because limited visibility may create a false sense of protection from enemy observation. During movement, leaders reduce the distances between vehicles or individual soldiers as necessary to allow one system or soldier to observe the other. This decreases the time necessary to react to enemy contact. The attacking force wants to maintain its momentum; therefore, it does not preserve the alignment of units within the selected combat formation at the expense of additional time. However, it must adhere more closely to the plan of attack than under daylight conditions.

## **FIRE SUPPORT**

5-39. The planning process synchronizes the unit's maneuver with the provision of fire support. It must identify critical times and places where the commander needs the maximum effects from his fire-support assets. The

commander combines his maneuver with fires to mass effects, achieve surprise, destroy enemy forces, and obtain decisive results. His guidance gives specified attack criteria for fire support assets, thus focusing the planning and execution efforts on those critical times and events. The specified attack criteria are a compilation of the commander's guidance, desired effects, and high-payoff targets and attack priorities. The amount of time available to plan the operation constrains the commander's ability to synchronize fire-support operations that employ well-matched effects of all available assets against high-payoff targets.

5-40. The goal of the commander's attack criteria is to focus fires on seizing the initiative. The commander emphasizes simple and rapidly integrated fire support plans. This is done using quick-fire planning techniques and good standing operating procedures (SOPs). The commander integrates his fire support assets as far forward as possible in the movement formation to facilitate early emplacement. Fires concentrate (mass) on forward enemy elements to enable maneuver efforts to close with the enemy positions. Fire support isolates forward enemy elements by using long-range fires, air support, and electronic warfare.

5-41. Fires facilitate his unit's maneuver by destroying or neutralizing strong enemy forces and positions. His fire support system must take full advantage of available preparation time to achieve these demanding effects criteria. Fire-support plans feature the following characteristics:

- Targets that are confirmed or denied by ISR efforts.
- Designation of target sensor-to-shooter communication links.
- Possible use of preparation and deception fires to shape the enemy's defense.
- Air support to destroy high-payoff targets on the objective and then shift to reinforcing enemy units, artillery assets, and C2 nodes.
- Proactive suppression of enemy air-defense effort.
- Preparation fires that shift just as the maneuver force arrives on the objective.
- Suppression and obscuration fire plan to support breaching operations.
- Pre-positioned ammunition backed by prepackaged munitions stocks capable of rapid delivery.
- Integration of nonlethal fires, such as electronic attack and PSYOPS, into the attack guidance matrix.
- Integration of primary and backup observers to engage high-priority targets.
- Fire support coordinating measures, accounting for danger close and other technical constraints, to allow maneuver forces to get as close as possible to the objective before lifting fires.
- Signals for lifting and shifting fires on the objective, primarily by combat net radio and by visual signals as a backup means.

These later fire support coordinating measures should also facilitate the massing of fires, including CAS, against high-payoff targets throughout the AO.

## **COMMAND AND CONTROL**

5-42. The commander states the desired effect of fires on the enemy weapon systems, such as suppression or destruction, as part of his planning process. He assigns subordinate units their missions and imposes those control measures necessary to synchronize and maintain control over the operation.

5-43. Using the enemy situational and weapons templates previously developed, the commander determines his probable line of contact and enemy trigger lines. As he arrays his subordinate elements to shape the battlefield, he matches his weapon systems against the enemy's to determine his PLD. Once he determines his PLD, he establishes how long it takes him to move from the LD to the PLD and any support-by-fire positions the attack requires. He establishes when and where his force must maneuver into enemy direct-fire range.

5-44. In addition to accomplishing the mission, every attack plan must contain provisions for exploiting success or any advantages that may arise during the operation. The commander exploits success by aggressively executing the plan, promoting subordinate leader initiative, and using units that can rapidly execute battle drills.

## **PREPARING AN ATTACK**

5-45. Even in fluid situations, attacks are best organized and coordinated in assembly areas. If the commander decides that rapid action is essential to retain a tactical advantage, he may opt not to use an assembly area. Detailed advance planning—combined with digital communications, SOP, and battle drills—may reduce negative impacts of such a decision.

5-46. Unless already in an assembly area, the attacking unit moves into one during the preparation phase. The unit moves with as much secrecy as possible, normally at night and along routes that prevent or degrade the enemy's capabilities to visually observe or otherwise detect the movement. It avoids congesting its assembly area and occupies it for the minimum possible time. While in the assembly area, each unit provides its own local ground security and air defense.

5-47. Units moving to assembly areas send out their quartering parties and link up with their guides at the designated locations. While subordinate units move to and occupy assembly areas, the commander completes the process of planning and coordinating the attack.

5-48. The attacking unit should continue its troop leading procedures and priorities of work to the extent the situation and mission allow prior to moving to attack positions. These preparations include but are not necessarily limited to—

- Protecting the force.
- Conducting task organization.
- Performing reconnaissance.
- Refining the plan.
- Briefing the troops.
- Conducting rehearsals, to include test firing of weapons.

- Moving logistics support forward.
- Promoting adequate rest for both leaders and soldiers.
- Positioning the force for subsequent action.

As part of troop leading procedures, leaders at all levels should conduct a personal reconnaissance of the actual terrain. If a limited-visibility attack is planned, they should also reconnoiter the terrain at night.

5-49. A thorough reconnaissance of the objective, its foreground, and other enemy positions is a critical part of attack preparations. The commander exploits all available ISR assets to provide the necessary information. This includes requesting JSTARS feeds of enemy movements from higher echelons or imagery of enemy obstacles. Reconnaissance forces infiltrate through the enemy security area to conduct an area reconnaissance. They can employ precision munitions and conventional indirect fires to destroy detected enemy outposts while remaining undetected. They locate and attempt to infiltrate the enemy's main defensive positions to confirm his dispositions. When properly task-organized, forces conducting reconnaissance may also be given a mission to conduct covert breaches in the enemy's obstacle complexes to facilitate rapid movement of the decisive or shaping operation.

5-50. During this phase, the commander positions his artillery target-acquisition radars to provide support throughout the AO. Divisions and corps establish quick-fire channels between sensors, such as counterbattery radars and firing units, to rapidly silence enemy indirect fire systems. These channels do not change command relationships or priority of fires.

5-51. The commander exercises and refines his maneuver and fire plans during rehearsals which are an important part of ensuring the plan's coordination and synchronization. As part of the rehearsal process, the commander and his subordinates review the anticipated battle sequence to ensure all units understand the plan, the relationship between fire and movement, and the synchronization of critical events. These critical events include:

- Moving from the assembly area to the line of departure.
- Maneuvering from the line of departure to the probable line of deployment.
- Occupying support-by-fire positions.
- Conducting the breach.
- Assaulting the objective.
- Consolidating on the objective.
- Exploiting success or pursuing a withdrawing enemy.
- Actions of echelon reserves.

The unit should conduct rehearsals under as many types of adverse conditions as possible with time and other restraints to identify and prepare the unit to cope with problems. At lower tactical echelons, the rehearsal includes battle drills, such as creating lanes through minefields.

5-52. From their assembly areas, attacking units move to their respective LDs. (See [Figure 5-2](#).) Units move from assembly areas to the LD in the same way as for any other tactical movement. ([Chapter 13](#) details troop movements.) The number of columns a unit employs in its movement depends on the availability of suitable routes and the friendly and enemy situation.

Primarily the tactical situation and the order in which the commander wants his subordinate units to arrive at their attack positions govern the march formation. Using an LD facilitates the simultaneous initiation of the attack at the prescribed time by all attacking units.

5-53. Light infantry units should move by tactical vehicles to the maximum extent possible to avoid prematurely exhausting their soldiers. However, light infantry forces should not travel too far forward in tactical vehicles.

The enemy can detect the noise and other battlefield signatures associated with using tactical vehicles at a greater distance than he can detect dismounted infantry soldiers, and will probably respond to the presence of tactical vehicles with direct- and indirect-fire systems. The commander must weigh the need for security against the time required to conduct a foot march and its resulting effects on soldiers.

5-54. Units move rapidly through their attack positions and across the LD, which should be controlled by friendly forces. A unit uses its designated attack position only by exception, such as when it must refuel prior to crossing the LD to ensure sufficient fuel to reach the objective or the conditions required to ensure the success of the planned maneuver are not yet established. A unit does not occupy its attack positions for more than 10 to 15 minutes without initiating actions to protect itself and increase its survivability, such as deploying local security and camouflage nets and starting the construction of fighting and survivability positions. If necessary, a unit can use guides to assist in occupying the attack position. These guides may come from organic resources or from another unit.

5-55. For units attacking on foot using infiltration and stealth, a commander may designate a point of departure for the attacking units instead of an LD. Armor and mechanized infantry units normally use gaps or lanes through the friendly positions to allow them to deploy into combat formations before they cross the LD.

5-56. Preliminary operations for an attack may include using preparatory fires and the relief of units in contact by executing a relief in place or a forward passage of lines. The relief of units may be desirable to continue the momentum of the attack with fresh troops, change the direction of the attack, exploit a weakness in the enemy position with reserve forces, or initiate an offensive on a stabilized front. (Chapter 14 details a relief in place. Chapter 15 details a forward passage of lines.)

5-57. The commander uses available artillery, mortar, CAS, and offensive information operations to conduct preparatory fires. Preparatory fires are developed from the top down, with bottom-up refinement. The subordinate

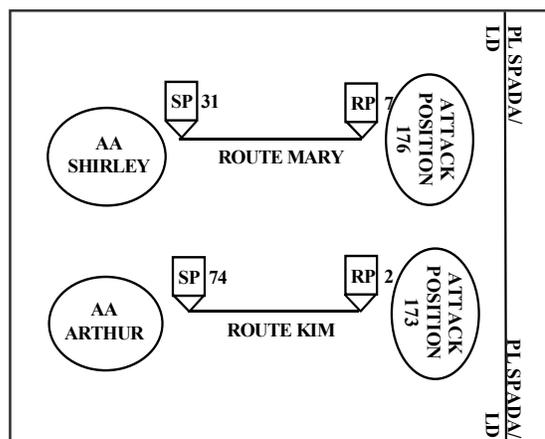


Figure 5-2. Movement from AA to LD

commander most affected by the effects of these preparatory fires must strongly emphasize the bottom-up refinement process. Preparatory fires can accomplish the following functions:

- Destroy the enemy.
- Suppress, neutralize, or disrupt high-value or high-priority targets.
- Gain fire superiority.
- Suppress the enemy in his defensive positions.
- Facilitate the attacking force's maneuver.
- Deceive the enemy.

5-58. If the attacking forces are in contact with the enemy's security zone, preparatory fires may initially destroy or disrupt only the enemy's reconnaissance and security forces and positions. In either case, counterfires and counterbattery fires conducted as part of preparatory fires serve to degrade the enemy's fire-support systems and assist in achieving fire superiority.

5-59. The commander ensures that his maneuver forces have the CS and CSS assets necessary to conduct the operation and continue the momentum of the attack as part of the preparation process. That support effort must anticipate future maneuvers to ensure the uninterrupted sustainment of the maneuver force.

## EXECUTING AN ATTACK

5-60. A series of advances and assaults by attacking units until they secure the final objective characterizes the attack. Commanders at all levels must use their initiative to rapidly shift their main effort between units as necessary to take advantage of opportunities and momentum to ensure the enemy's rapid destruction. Attacking units move as quickly as possible, following reconnaissance elements or successful probes through gaps in the enemy's defenses. They shift their strength to reinforce success and carry the battle deep into the enemy's rear. A commander does not delay his attack to preserve the alignment of subordinate units or to adhere closely to the preconceived plan of attack. This manual discusses executing the attack in a five-step sequence:

- Gain and maintain enemy contact.
- Disrupt the enemy.
- Fix the enemy.
- Maneuver.
- Follow through.

This sequence is for discussion purposes only and is not the only way of conducting an attack. The reader should understand that these sequences overlap during the conduct of an attack.

5-61. The commander must avoid becoming so committed to the initial plan that he neglects opportunities. He is prepared to abandon failed attacks and to exploit any unanticipated successes or enemy errors by designating another unit to conduct his decisive operation in response to the changing situation.

5-62. When maneuvering his force, the commander strives to retain freedom of action while protecting his force. Although he may have a detailed plan to

defeat the enemy, the commander continually seeks any opportunity to attack to defeat, destroy, or reduce the enemy's combat power or shatter his cohesion and will to fight. The commander avoids dogged adherence to a plan no longer appropriate to current battlefield conditions. The difference between success and failure in combat often depends on the commander's ability to make the plan fit existing circumstances rather than trying to make circumstances fit the plan.

### **GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT**

5-63. Gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy when he is determined to break that contact is vital to the success of offensive operations. A defending enemy generally establishes a security area around his forces to make early contact with the attacking forces to determine their capabilities, intent, and chosen COA and to delay their approach. The enemy commander wants to use his security area to strip away friendly reconnaissance forces and hide his dispositions, capabilities, and intent. His goal is to compel the attacking force to conduct a movement to contact against his forces that know the exact location of the attacking forces.

5-64. A commander employs his combat power to overwhelm enemy forces in accordance with his situational understanding. However echelons below division do not normally have the detection, tracking, and weapon systems necessary to conduct decisive or shaping operations directed against enemy forces not currently committed to close combat. The manner in which a unit gains and maintains contact depends on whether the unit is in contact with the enemy's security area or the enemy's main line of resistance and the echelon of the unit in the nested layers of reconnaissance and security. For example, the intent of the corps' reconnaissance effort is to determine the dispositions, composition, direction of movement, and rate of movement of the enemy's significant forces. The corps' armored cavalry regiment, acting as a covering force or advance guard, can fight through a security area, develop the situation, confirm information provided by technical means, and force the enemy to reveal more information than could be acquired solely through using intelligence sensors. This additional information includes locating the enemy's reserve. At a lower level, a battalion constituting the advance guard of the main body can use its scout platoon to conduct a zone reconnaissance that focuses on acquiring updates of enemy positions and obstacles.

5-65. The commander's ability to sense the enemy's actions by gaining and maintaining contact with all significant parts of the enemy force, to include tracking enemy reserves, fire support, and follow-on forces, increases the security of the attacking force. The enemy's attempts to shift major elements of his forces or launch a counterattack will be detected. Additionally, by sending out a force to conduct area reconnaissance with an on-order mission to be prepared to conduct a security mission, the commander can prevent enemy reconnaissance assets from detecting the friendly force's major movements and increase the enemy's risk. The risks to the enemy force increase to the extent friendly forces impede or deny success to enemy ISR assets. Combining these factors results in providing the attacking commander with additional time to take advantage of the changing situation. Moving within the enemy's decision cycle allows the commander to take advantage of his successes by

transitioning to the exploitation and pursuit to complete the destruction of the enemy.

5-66. The capabilities of digital C2 systems offer additional techniques a commander can use to gain and maintain enemy contact. The improved common operational picture provided by those systems enhances his situational understanding and ensures rapid, clear communication of orders and intent, thereby reducing the confusion, fog, and friction of battle. Advanced Army and joint intelligence systems feeding those C2 systems enable him to detect and track enemy forces throughout a given AO without having his forces make physical contact with the enemy. The commander's ability to see and understand the situation before the enemy can allows him to act first and maneuver out of contact with the enemy at a high tempo. This allows him to position his forces where they can overwhelm selected elements of the enemy force to disrupt and destroy the enemy's combined arms team. Such attacks—delivered simultaneously with precision by air, ground, and naval systems throughout the width, height, and depth of the battlefield—stun the enemy and rapidly lead to his defeat.

## **DISRUPT THE ENEMY**

5-67. Disrupting one or more parts of the enemy's combined arms team weakens his entire force and allows the friendly commander to attack the remaining enemy force in an asymmetrical manner. The assessment and decisions regarding what to disrupt, when to disrupt, and to what end are critical. For example, the goal of disrupting the enemy's fire-support system is to allow friendly forces to maneuver and mass the effects of their weapon systems against the enemy without being engaged by the enemy's indirect-fire weapons. Attacking forces can accomplish this by attacking enemy forward observers, fire-direction centers, command posts, artillery and rocket systems, or their ammunition supply. Each set of targets requires a different amount of resources. The probability of success, the effectiveness of the attack, and the time necessary to achieve the desired target effects varies with each set of targets.

5-68. Once any type of contact—even sensor contact—is made with the enemy, the commander wants to use the element of surprise to conduct shaping operations that strike at the enemy and disrupt both the enemy's combined arms team and his ability to plan and control his forces. Once this disruption process begins, it continues throughout the attack. The commander uses any existing technological advantage over the enemy in the following areas to aid the disruption process:

- Offensive information operations.
- Lethal firepower effects.
- Range of direct-fire weapons.
- Protection.
- Battlefield mobility.
- Information management.
- C2 systems.

5-69. Whatever form of disruption takes place helps the commander seize, retain, and exploit the initiative; maintain his freedom of action; impose his

will on the enemy; set the terms, and select the place for battle. That disruption also allows the commander to exploit enemy vulnerabilities and react to changing situations and unexpected developments more rapidly than the enemy. This disruption effort usually occurs at division level and above because lower echelons lack the necessary reconnaissance, target acquisition, intelligence analysis, and target attack assets to engage forces not committed to close combat.

5-70. The commander plans his shaping operations to occur at the place and time necessary to establish the conditions for his decisive operation. Targets of a shaping operation may include: enemy C2 facilities, ISR assets, fire-support systems, reserves, and logistics support. If a commander executes a shaping operation too early, the enemy has time to recover and respond before friendly forces conducting the decisive operation can complete their maneuver.

5-71. The commander plans to use harassment, suppressive, or interdiction fires against positions likely to contain high-payoff targets to disrupt enemy reactions to the attacking unit's advance. These fires deny the enemy unrestricted use of the terrain and can prevent his reserves from entering the fight before the unit seizes the objective. Additional benefits may result from these fires over time, including increased psychological pressure on enemy forces and a reduction in their mental and physical capabilities by disrupting their sleep and rest patterns.

5-72. Surprise denies the enemy the opportunity to focus and synchronize his combat power against the attacking force. It prevents the enemy from massing his forces or fires at a critical, possibly decisive, place and time. In place of cohesive resistance, surprise can produce confusion, fear, and piecemeal resistance. Factors that contribute to surprise include: the tempo and intensity in executing the attack plan and employing unexpected factors, such as selecting a less than optimal COA, varying operational tactics and methods, conducting deception operations, and ensuring OPSEC.

## **FIX THE ENEMY**

5-73. A primary purpose in fixing the enemy is to isolate the objective of the force conducting the echelon's decisive operation to prevent the enemy from maneuvering to reinforce the unit targeted for destruction. Since war is a contest between thinking opponents, the enemy will oppose the friendly commander's attempts to fix his forces. Every friendly move causes the enemy to attempt to counter that move. The commander does everything in his power to limit the options available to his opponent. Fixing an enemy into a given position or a COA and controlling his movements limit his options and reduce the amount of uncertainty on the battlefield.

5-74. Reducing uncertainty allows the friendly force to use maneuver to mass the effects of overwhelming combat power against a portion of the enemy. It gives the commander more time to modify his plan as necessary and orchestrate the employment of his forces. It allows him to mass forces in one place by using economy of force measures in other areas. The commander may also try to fix an enemy unit, such as the enemy reserve or follow-on

force, to prevent it from repositioning or maneuvering against the force conducting his decisive operation.

5-75. Fixing the enemy must be done with the minimum amount of force. The commander normally allocates the bulk of his combat power to the force conducting his decisive operation, so fixing operations are, by necessity, shaping operations that illustrate economy of force as a principle of war. Therefore, the commander must carefully consider which enemy elements to fix and target only those that can significantly affect the outcome of the fight. The longer the requirement to fix these forces, the more resources the commander needs to accomplish the mission. Generally, an enemy force only needs to be fixed until it cannot respond to the actions of the unit conducting the decisive operation in time to affect the outcome. This may require a commander to slow down the rate of march of an enemy unit to prevent it from influencing the outcome of the engagement or battle.

5-76. One method of isolating the objective is to conduct a shaping operation using lethal and nonlethal fires. Lethal fires may range from sniper fire to a joint fire plan designed to totally destroy a selected portion of the enemy force. Nonlethal fires, such as electronic jamming, can prevent the enemy from receiving orders or vital intelligence and combat information.

5-77. Severing enemy lines of communication over prolonged periods of time by using interdiction measures is another way to fix the enemy. These measures can range from air interdiction that destroys bridges and rail switching yards to ambushes conducted by infiltrating combat patrols.

5-78. Another method of fixing the enemy is to tie obstacles into the existing terrain to canalize and slow the movement of enemy reserves. At lower tactical echelons, scatterable minefields employed in accordance with the rules of engagement can seal the objectives from possible enemy reinforcement or counterattacks and neutralize enemy actions to the flanks. Deception operations and activities, such as demonstrations and false preparatory fires, can fix the enemy. Using extensive smoke screens and vehicle mock-ups in a deception effort can also assist in fixing an enemy force.

## MANEUVER

5-79. The commander maneuvers his forces to gain positional advantage so he can seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. He avoids the enemy's defensive strength. He employs tactics that defeat the enemy by attacking through a point of relative weakness, such as a flank or the rear.

5-80. Offensive maneuver seeks to achieve a decisive massing of effects at the decisive point, or at several decisive points if adequate combat power is available. The commander exploits maneuver by—

- Taking maximum advantage of dead space and covered and concealed routes to close with the enemy.
- Using his advantages in the effective ranges of weapon systems.
- Repositioning friendly forces rapidly.
- Navigating accurately cross-country.
- Obtaining situational understanding of friendly and enemy locations.
- Taking effective security measures.

- Synchronizing the application of all BOS at a time and place on the battlefield to maximize their effects.

5-81. The key to success is to strike hard and fast, overwhelm a portion of the enemy force, and then quickly transition to the next objective or phase, thus maintaining the momentum of the attack without reducing the pressure. The commander must retain freedom of maneuver with multiple COAs throughout the operation and responsive CSS. Additionally, he must make every effort to locate and track enemy reserve and follow-on forces, which prevents friendly forces from being attacked unexpectedly by significant enemy forces. This allows the commander time to delay, disrupt, or destroy these enemy forces before they can interfere with the attack.

5-82. Depending on the conditions of METT-TC, artillery and mortars may advance with the attacking formation or move forward by bounds. The echelon fire support coordinators (FSCOORDs) position direct support and reinforcing artillery in coordination with their maneuver commanders. The force field artillery headquarters, normally a division or corps artillery headquarters, coordinates position areas for general support and general support-reinforcing artillery units through the fire support officers at corps, division, and brigade. The commander considers the maneuver of fire support assets along with maneuver forces to ensure that proper fire support is available at all times.

5-83. The maneuver process normally follows this sequence:

- Movement from the LD to the PLD.
- Actions at the PLD, assault position, or FCL.
- Breaching operations (discussed in FM 3-34.2).
- Actions on the objective.

The movement from the assembly area to the LD that precedes many attacks is troop movement and is discussed in [Chapter 13](#).

### **Movement from the LD to the PLD**

5-84. The unit transitions from troop movement to maneuver once it crosses the LD. It moves aggressively and as quickly as the terrain and enemy situation allow. It moves forward using appropriate movement techniques assisted by the fires of supporting units. Fire and movement are closely integrated and coordinated. Effective suppressive fires facilitate movement, and movement facilitates more effective fires. Whenever possible, the attacking unit uses avenues of approach that avoid strong enemy defensive positions, takes advantage of all available cover and concealment, and places the unit on the flanks and rear of the defending enemy. Where cover and concealment are not available, the unit uses obscurants to conceal its movement. Any delays in establishing obscurants and suppressive fires prior to crossing the PLD may require the attacking unit to occupy its assault positions.

5-85. Artillery and other fire-support assets move as necessary to ensure that the attacking unit remains within supporting range. Previously conducted analysis of the time it takes the maneuver unit to move from the LD to the PLD and the distances involved ensures that their fire support systems are prepared to provide fire support before maneuver units move inside the

effective range of enemy direct-fire weapon systems. The existence of enemy artillery systems that have a longer range than fielded US artillery systems complicates this process. The commander uses fires delivered from fixed- and rotary-wing systems and the autonomous operation capabilities of modernized artillery systems to help counter any enemy range advantage.

5-86. If the commander expects to make enemy contact at or shortly beyond the LD, he deploys his unit so that he can maintain maximum firepower against the enemy's known positions. He chooses the combat formation that best balances firepower, tempo, security, and control in the specific situation. The commander has the option of deploying a security force in front of his attacking unit. He may also employ a flank or rear security force if required by the enemy situation. The commander may not want to change formations during his attack because of the potential loss of momentum resulting from such changes. If the commander finds it necessary to transition from one combat formation to another, he should base the transition on thoroughly trained drills. Once enemy contact is expected, he transitions to the bounding overwatch technique of movement. ([Chapter 13](#) addresses movement techniques.)

5-87. Between the LD and the PLD, the attacking unit secures intermediate objectives only to eliminate enemy positions or bring additional suppressive fires to bear. Fire-support assets engage targets of opportunity. The commander uses CAS and artillery to destroy enemy security forces. As the unit approaches suspected enemy positions or danger areas, the commander directs his forces to occupy predesignated support-by-fire positions. Fire support, suppression, and obscuration are key enablers that allow a force to occupy these positions. Commanders use fires from these positions to suppress enemy forces while the unit continues its advance toward the objective.

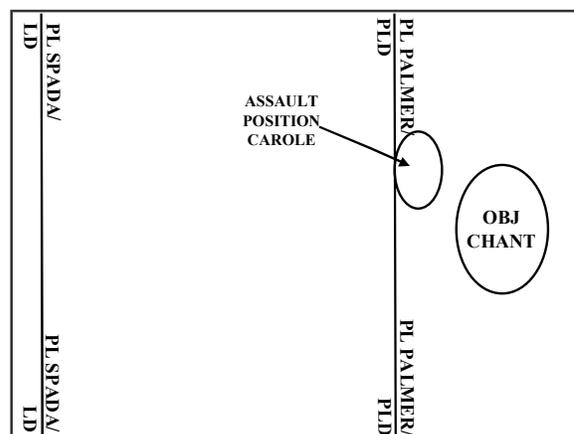
5-88. The commander engages known enemy forces with the maximum possible combat power to overwhelm them as quickly as possible. The attacking unit that encounters small enemy units on the way to the objective either quickly overruns or bypasses them if they meet the bypass criteria. The attacking unit then reports the location of bypassed enemy elements to its higher headquarters and maintains contact until they can be handed off to follow and support forces. The commander uses minimal force to maintain that contact to avoid significantly weakening the force conducting his decisive operation.

### **Actions at the PLD, Assault Position, or FCL**

5-89. The attacking unit maintains the pace of its advance as it approaches its PLD. (See [Figure 5-3](#).) The attacking unit splits into one or more assault and support forces once it reaches the PLD if not previously completed. At the PLD infantry soldiers dismount from their infantry fighting vehicles as required by the situation. All forces supporting the assault force should be set in their support-by-fire positions before the assault force crosses the PLD. The commander synchronizes the occupation of these support-by-fire positions with the maneuver of the supported attacking unit to limit the vulnerability of the forces occupying these positions. The commander uses his unit's tactical SOP, prearranged signals, engagement areas (EAs), and target

reference points (TRPs) to control the direct fires from these supporting positions. He employs restricted fire lines between converging forces.

5-90. The PLD can be collocated with the assault position. (See Figure 5-3.) The commander ensures that the final preparations of his breach force in an assault position do not delay its maneuver to the point of breach as soon as the conditions are set. Whenever possible, the assault force rapidly passes through the assault position. It may have to halt in the assault position while fires are lifted and shifted. In this case, if the enemy anticipates the assault, the assault force deploys into covered positions, screens its positions with smoke, and waits for the order to assault. As long as the assault force remains in the assault position, support forces continue their suppressive fires on the objective.



**Figure 5-3. PLD and Assault Positions**

5-91. Once the support force sets the conditions, the breach force reduces, proofs, and marks the required number of lanes through the enemy's tactical obstacles to support the maneuver of the assault force. The commander must clearly identify the conditions that allow the breach force to proceed to avoid confusion. From the PLD, the assault force maneuvers against or around the enemy to take advantage of the support force's efforts to suppress the targeted enemy positions. The support force employs direct and indirect fires against the selected enemy positions to destroy, suppress, obscure, or neutralize enemy weapons and cover the assault force's movement. The assault force must closely follow these supporting fires to gain ground that offers positional advantage. This COA normally results in the fewest casualties.

5-92. The key to forward movement when the assault force is under enemy direct fire is to return effective fire, which prevents the enemy from firing effectively at the moving assault force. Destructive or suppressive fires are most effective when fired by the stationary support force. These fires prevent the enemy from firing effectively at the moving assault force. Once the support force is in position and the assault force is prepared to move, the support force places a heavy volume of fires on the enemy to destroy, neutralize, or suppress him. The ability of the support force to move to advantageous terrain is critical to accomplishing its purpose of ensuring the assault force's success. Once it suppresses the enemy position, it reduces its rate of fire to sustainable levels to conserve ammunition as the assault force closes on the objective to ensure that it has enough to support the assault. When the assault force nears its objective, the support force increases its rate of fire to ensure the continued suppression of the enemy. This allows the assault force to assault the position before the enemy can react. Either on signal or when the

assault begins, the support force ceases fire, shifts its fire to another target area, or walks its fire across the objective in front of the assault force.

5-93. The commander uses smoke to help conceal units and individual weapons. It degrades enemy laser designators, range finders, and directed energy weapons. When planning to employ smoke, the commander remembers that smoke can have the same effects on friendly and enemy forces. If possible during the assault, the commander uses obscuration to blind the enemy and screen friendly movement onto the objective. Obscuration is placed in front of enemy positions, on the far side of obstacles, and in areas that restrict maneuver. The commander may use a smoke haze over rear areas to limit enemy observation. The defeat of enemy thermal viewers requires the use of multispectral smoke.

### **Assault on the Objective**

5-94. The effects of the overwhelming and simultaneous application of fire, movement, and shock action characterize the final assault. This violent assault destroys or drives the enemy from the objective area. Small units conduct the final assault while operating under the control of the appropriate echelon command post. Heavy forces have the option of conducting this final assault in either a mounted or dismounted configuration.

5-95. The commander employs all fire support means to destroy and suppress the enemy and sustain the momentum of the attack. By carefully synchronizing the effects of his indirect-fire systems and available CAS, the commander improves the likelihood of success. He plans fires in series or groups to support maneuver against enemy forces on or near the geographical objective. As the commander shifts artillery fires and obscurants from the objective to other targets, the assault element moves rapidly across the objective. The support element must not allow its suppressive fires to lapse. These fires isolate the objective and prevent the enemy from reinforcing or counterattacking. They also destroy escaping enemy forces and systems. The commander employs offensive information operations, such as electronic warfare, to attack enemy C2 nodes as part of this effort.

5-96. Supporting artillery may need to displace forward during the attack to ensure maximum support is available for the assault. However, changes in position are held to a minimum because they reduce the volume of available fires. The commander balances the need to maintain that amount of fire support against the enemy's counterbattery capabilities with the need to provide continued coverage as the attacking unit continues to move forward. Fire support assets supporting the unit move into their new positions one subordinate unit at a time, by echelon, to maintain fire support to the attack. The commander can use his available CAS to provide supporting fires while his artillery batteries displace.

5-97. Small enemy units moving toward the penetrated area can disrupt the synchronization of this final assault. As small units and weapon systems crews become engaged, they tend to focus on their immediate opponent rather than the overall situation. Loss of situational understanding, combined with the enemy's more detailed knowledge of the terrain, allows small enemy forces to inflict a great deal of damage on the attacking force. The

attacking unit's leaders must understand the flow of combat and retain the capability to engage these enemy forces before they can alter the outcome of the assault. The commander can commit his reserve to maintain the attack momentum and keep relentless pressure on the enemy. This action also hinders enemy attempts to stabilize the situation.

5-98. Against a well-prepared, integrated enemy defense, the commander must isolate and destroy portions of the enemy defense in sequence. (See [Figures 5-4](#) and [5-5](#), page 5-24.) His forces must isolate, suppress, obscure, and bypass selected enemy positions. For example, smoke delivered by field artillery and mortars in front of the objective—between the force and the enemy—screens friendly movement and obscures the enemy's weapon systems. Fires placed on and beyond the flanks of the objective serve to isolate the enemy's position. These fires include: smoke, high explosives, improved conventional munitions, and precision-guided munitions delivered by a mix of field artillery, fixed-wing aviation assets, and attack helicopters. In addition, the commander may employ short-duration scatterable mines in accordance with the rules of engagement in conjunction with terminally guided munitions to help isolate and impair the enemy's ability to counterattack. (Their use must not impede the commander's conduct of exploitation and pursuit operations.) Jamming can be used to cut C2 links between the enemy's maneuver force and its supporting artillery. The commander can also use any available CAS to accomplish the desired effects.

5-99. The commander generates overwhelming combat power in sequence against isolated centers of resistance. The assault element can task organize itself to assault one portion of the objective at a time. For example, within the assault company of a task force attack, two platoons may suppress while one platoon seizes a portion of the company objective. This initial platoon, having seized a foothold, then suppresses to allow a second platoon to continue the assault. The third platoon may have a third portion of the objective assigned to it to seize in turn. The enemy may attempt to reinforce its defending forces or counterattack during the friendly force's attack. Once the attacking force reaches the far side of the objective, selected elements clear remaining pockets of resistance while the bulk of the assault force prepares for a possible enemy counterattack. After the assault force reaches the objective, the support force leaves its support-by-fire position and rejoins the assault force or moves to a blocking position to counter possible enemy counterattacks.

5-100. **Mounted Assault.** In determining whether to conduct a mounted or dismounted attack, the commander considers the primary factors of the terrain, obstacles, and the strength of enemy antiarmor defenses. Mounted assaults accelerate the execution of the operation by allowing the greatest speed and shock action and providing the best protection against small arms and indirect fires while conserving the strength of the infantry soldiers conducting the assault.

5-101. When facing weak, hastily prepared, disorganized resistance, or when attacking with overwhelming combat power in relation to enemy forces on the objective, a heavy force commander can conduct a mounted assault. The commander conducting a mounted assault concentrates all of his supporting fires to destroy and neutralize the enemy and fix local reserves. Tanks and infantry fighting vehicles use cannon and machineguns to engage targets for

as long as possible, taking advantage of their accuracy, destructiveness, and small bursting radius of their munitions. As the fires from one type of weapon are lifted or shifted, other weapons increase their rate of fire. The assault force advances close to its objective under the cover of these supporting fires.

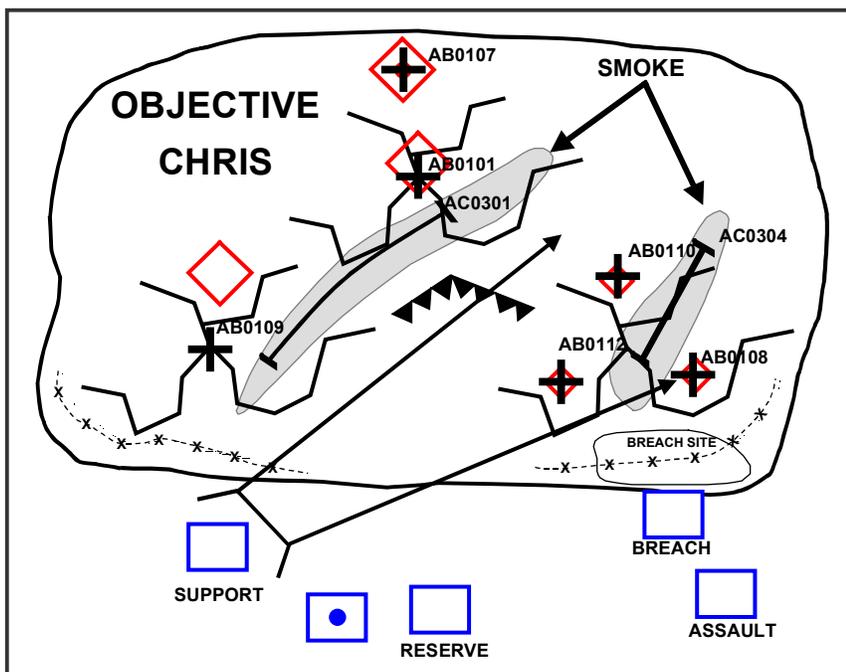


Figure 5-4. Attack of an Objective: The Breach

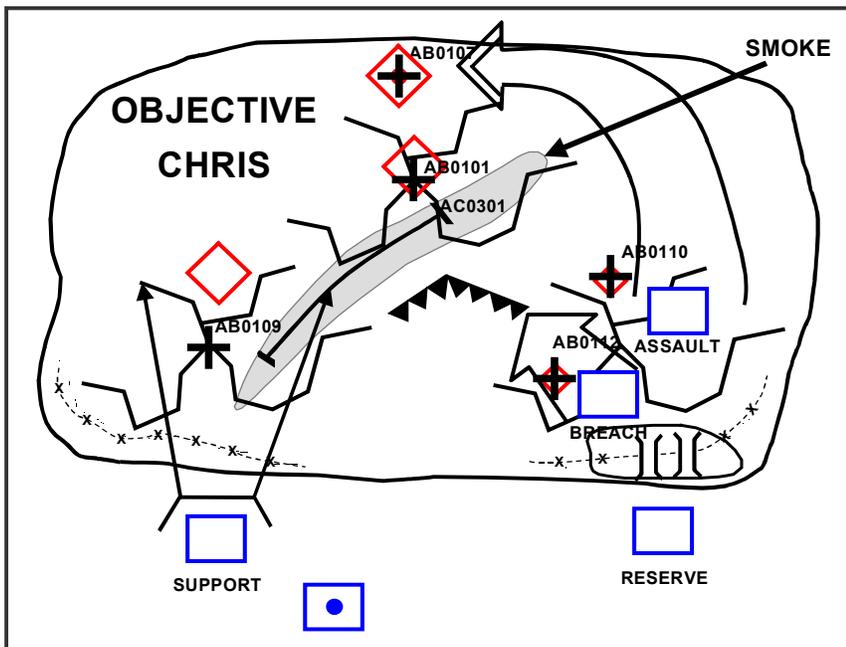


Figure 5-5. Attack of an Objective: The Assault

5-102. The assault force attacks using shock action aided by the firepower of organic systems to rapidly overrun the enemy position as soon as the commander shifts his supporting fires beyond the objective. Mechanized infantry elements move as close as possible to the objective while remaining mounted in their infantry fighting vehicles. When the danger to the mounted infantry elements exceeds the protection offered by their combat vehicle, the commander gives the order for his infantry elements to dismount from their carriers.

5-103. The following technique applies to a heavy force assigned the mission of rapidly clearing an objective against an enemy that does not have a robust antiarmor capability. The heavy force overruns the objective. The accompanying mechanized infantry soldiers dismount from their vehicles on the far side of the objective and sweep the objective from the far side back to the near side to clear any remaining pockets of resistance. The ability of heavy forces to closely follow friendly mortar and artillery fires as they shift across the objective is a major advantage. Any delay in launching the assault after the commander shifts the supporting fires allows the enemy time to move from his protective positions to his firing positions.

5-104. **Dismounted Assault.** A heavy force commander usually conducts a dismounted assault when any of the following conditions apply:

- Terrain favors dismounted operations.
- The enemy is in prepared positions.
- The enemy has a strong antiarmor capability.
- Tanks are not available to lead the assault even though the factors of METT-TC favor their employment.
- Obstacles prevent maneuver across the objective.
- Stealth is required to close on the objective.
- A mounted assault stalls on or short of the objective.

Based on his analysis of the factors of METT-TC and the degree of risk he is willing to accept, the commander determines if, when, and where any mechanized infantry forces in the assault force will dismount from their infantry fighting vehicles.

5-105. **Consolidation.** *Consolidation is the process of organizing and strengthening a newly captured position so that it can be defended.*

Normally, the attacking unit tries to exploit its success regardless of the type of the assault. In some situations, however, the unit may have to consolidate its gains. Consolidation may vary from a rapid repositioning of forces and security elements on the objective, to a reorganization of the attacking force, to the organization and detailed improvement of the position for defense. Actions taken to consolidate gains include—

- Conducting reconnaissance.
- Establishing security.
- Eliminating enemy pockets of resistance.
- Positioning forces to enable them to conduct a hasty defense by blocking possible enemy counterattacks.
- Adjusting the fire planning.
- Preparing for potential additional missions.

5-106. Immediately after the assault, the commander must maintain contact with those enemy forces that have abandoned the objective. If he has destroyed all enemy forces on the objective, he takes those actions necessary to regain contact with the enemy. The commander sends out patrols in any direction required to maintain or regain contact with the enemy within his AO. Higher echelons reposition their ISR collection assets and adjust their assigned missions as necessary to maintain that contact.

5-107. The commander also dispatches patrols to ensure contact with any adjacent friendly units. A unit is normally responsible for establishing contact with the units to its front and right as defined by the direction to the enemy. Unless a commander knows that units to his left and rear are preparing to make contact, he takes actions to initiate that contact. Otherwise, a dangerous gap could occur, which the enemy could exploit during a counterattack.

5-108. The task of establishing security is accomplished as soon as the force occupies the objective. Each subordinate element establishes observation posts (OPs) that monitor likely enemy avenues of approach and conduct other security operations. Units must remain aware that the enemy will have defensive fires planned on his former positions, including headquarters bunkers and supply caches.

5-109. Once subordinate units seize the objective, they clear it of enemy forces. They then occupy firing positions to prepare for an enemy counterattack. Normally, an attacking unit does not occupy vacated enemy positions because the enemy is familiar with and normally targets them. Therefore, the attacking unit should position itself away from established enemy positions usually on the next defensible piece of terrain. This positioning is also important because the unit needs to orient on different avenues of approach and in a different direction. The commander positions his armored and antitank systems to cover likely enemy mounted avenues of approach. Mechanized infantry forces normally dismount and orient along likely dismounted and mounted infantry avenues of approach. Overwatching forces, such as antitank systems, orient along likely mounted avenues of approach. Mortars, command posts, and CSS assets move forward to assist in the consolidation.

5-110. The commander should preplan the location and future missions of each element. Artillery and other fire support systems mass fires on enemy assembly areas and troops forming for counterattacks. The commander may alert his reserve to protect the flanks of the attacking units, hold ground seized by them, or counter an enemy counterattack. The commander may use antitank minefields or other obstacles to cover likely enemy avenues of approach. As the unit has time and resources, it improves these obstacles and defensive positions.

5-111. The commander normally designates TRPs, final protective fires, engagement areas, and other direct- and indirect-fire control measures as part of the consolidation process. Once in position, subordinate elements modify preplanned measures and improve their defensive capabilities as required. As local security is being established, the commander directs subordinate elements to conduct mounted or dismounted patrols along likely enemy avenues of approach. The echelon scout or cavalry unit deploys beyond these local security patrols to conduct its assigned reconnaissance or security mission.

5-112. **Reorganization.** Reorganization includes all measures taken by the commander to maintain the combat effectiveness of his unit or return it to a specified level of combat capability. Commanders of all types of units at each echelon conduct reorganization. Any reorganization actions not completed when conducting the attack are accomplished during consolidation. These actions include—

- Redistributing or cross-leveling supplies, ammunition, and equipment as necessary.
- Matching operational weapon systems with crews.
- Forming composite units by joining two or more attrited units to form a single, mission-capable unit.
- Replacing key personnel lost before or during the battle.
- Reporting unit location and status to keep the next higher commander informed; digitized units can do this automatically.
- Recovering, treating, and evacuating casualties, prisoners of war, and damaged equipment in accordance with its SOP.
- Resupply of its basic loads of ammunition, fuel, and repair parts as time permits.
- Integrating replacement soldiers and systems into the unit.
- Revising communication plans as required. The unit places its C2 facilities in position to conduct further operations and control the consolidation.
- Reestablishing unit cohesion.
- Conducting essential training, such as training replacements on the unit's SOP.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

5-113. After seizing the objective, the commander has two alternatives: exploit success and continue the attack or terminate the offensive operation. At brigade echelon and below, the unit maintains contact and attempts to exploit its success. Normally, a division or corps commander makes the decision regarding whether to initiate a general—as opposed to local—exploitation or pursuit or terminate offensive actions.

5-114. After seizing an objective, the most likely on-order mission is to continue the attack. During consolidation, the commander and his staff continue troop leading procedures in preparation for any on-order missions assigned by a higher headquarters. They use available combat information and intelligence products to adjust contingency plans. The commander redirects his ISR collection effort to support his next mission.

5-115. Fire support assets move quickly to take advantage of the natural reduction in support requirements that occur when a position is taken and when the enemy can organize a counterattack to provide depth to a defense. Field artillery units reposition to where they can support a renewed attack when ammunition supply and enemy action permit. Attacks by rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft can provide support while artillery systems reposition. Road conditions, such as destroyed bridges or dislocated civilians, and the unit's existing cross-country mobility abilities given the current environment conditions will also impact on the exact time of the decision to reposition.

5-116. The commander attempts to exploit the deterioration of the enemy position by administering quick and powerful blows before the enemy can reconstitute his defense. Using mass quantities of precision-guided munitions, combined with the action of large, heavy formations and air support, may prove decisive.

5-117. Ordinarily, the enemy attempts to hold his position until nightfall and complete his withdrawal under cover of darkness. The attacking unit maintains relentless pressure, continuing the attack at night. Through these attacks, the unit maintains contact with the enemy, keeps him off balance, and makes his withdrawal from action extremely difficult. If the enemy tries to delay, the unit continues its attack, concentrating its efforts on enveloping or encircling the retrograding enemy force if the enemy is too strong to overrun. An attack aggressively pushed through the hostile front may isolate major elements and force the enemy to evacuate the entire defensive position before he can construct a viable fall-back position.

5-118. When conducting a successful penetration, attacking units penetrate deeper into the hostile position to attack enemy reserves, artillery, C2 centers, and lines of communication. Either the assault or a support unit attacks the enemy's newly exposed flanks to widen the gap. The commander sends forces through the gap that have a high degree of tactical mobility to exploit the advantages gained, attack the enemy from the rear, and prevent his escape. At this time, the commander's force multipliers—such as fixed-wing aviation—concentrate on supporting the ground force exploiting the penetration.

5-119. As part of the follow through to the attack, the commander plans logical sequels to his attack. Attacking forces plan for exploitation. Exploiting forces plan for the pursuit of a defeated enemy. Furthermore, the commander must use his force without overextending its logistics capabilities. The commander must plan to have fresh units pass around or through forward units to sustain the momentum of the attack. He may assign these fresh units the task of follow and support or follow and assume in an effort to maintain the tempo of the attack. ([Appendix B](#) discusses both tactical mission tasks in greater detail.) A commander conducting either type of offensive operation envisions how, under what conditions, where, and when he will need to transition to the defense based on possible enemy countermoves and other events.

5-120. If the attacking unit is transitioning to a pursuit or exploitation, it may have to bypass enemy units to maintain the operational tempo. Units bypass enemy forces according to the previously established bypass criteria. As a minimum, the bypassed force is left under observation or fixed in place by other units.

5-121. If the enemy succeeds in withdrawing his major forces from action, the commander intensifies reconnaissance to obtain the information necessary to decide on a COA. Aggressive action may prevent the enemy from reconstituting his defense in a rearward position. The commander may have to delay the renewal of his attack until completing additional reconnaissance so he can formulate a tactically sound plan if the enemy succeeds in occupying new defensive positions.

## SPECIAL PURPOSE ATTACKS

5-122. The commander can launch an attack to achieve various results or for special purposes. These subordinate forms of an attack are—

- Ambush.
- Counterattack.
- Demonstration.
- Feint.
- Raid.
- Spoiling attack.

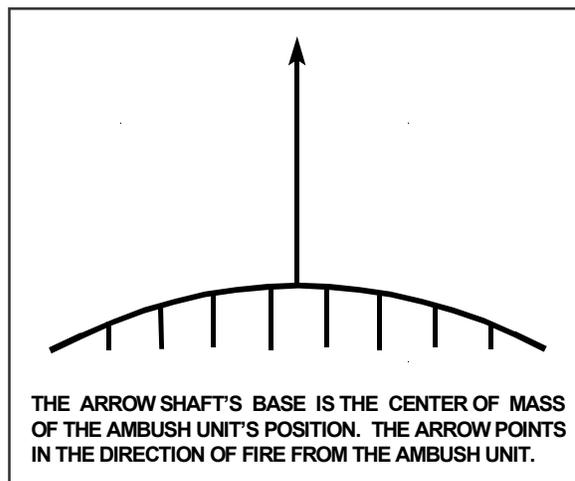
The commander's intent and the factors of METT-TC determine the specific form of attack. As attack forms, they share many of the planning, preparation, and execution considerations of the offense. This section discusses the unique considerations of each form of attack. Demonstrations and feints, while forms of attack, are also associated with military deception operations. (See FM 3-13.)

## AMBUSH

5-123. An *ambush* is a form of attack by fire or other destructive means from concealed positions on a moving or temporarily halted enemy (FM 3-0). It may include an assault to close with and destroy the engaged enemy force. In an ambush, ground objectives do not have to be seized and held.

5-124. The two types of ambush are point ambush and area ambush. In a point ambush, a unit deploys to attack a single kill zone. In an area ambush, a unit deploys into two or more related point ambushes. A unit smaller than a platoon does not normally conduct an area ambush.

5-125. Ambushes are categorized as either hasty or deliberate but take place along a continuum. A hasty ambush is an immediate reaction to an unexpected opportunity conducted using SOPs and battle drill. A deliberate ambush is planned as a specific action against a specific target. Detailed information about the target, such as size, organization, and weapons and equipment carried; route and direction of movement; and times the target will reach or pass certain points on its route may be available. Heavy or light forces may conduct an ambush. (Figure 5-6 shows the tactical mission graphic for an ambush.) Doctrine categorizes ambushes as near or far ambushes, based on the proximity of the friendly force to the enemy.



**Figure 5-6. Ambush Tactical Mission Graphic**

reach or pass certain points on its route may be available. Heavy or light forces may conduct an ambush. (Figure 5-6 shows the tactical mission graphic for an ambush.) Doctrine categorizes ambushes as near or far ambushes, based on the proximity of the friendly force to the enemy.

5-126. The typical goal of the ambush force is the death or capture of all enemy personnel located within the kill zone. Another goal could be to destroy certain designated vehicles, such as all missile transporter-erector launchers. Ideally, the ambush force can destroy the ambushed enemy so quickly that he is unable to report the engagement while the ambush force accomplishes its mission.

### **Organization of Forces**

5-127. A typical ambush is organized into three elements: assault, support, and security. The assault element fires into the kill zone. Its goal is to destroy the enemy force. When used, the assault force attacks into and clears the kill zone and may be assigned additional tasks, to include searching for items of intelligence value, capturing prisoners, and completing the destruction of enemy equipment to preclude its immediate reuse. The support element supports the assault element by firing into and around the kill zone, and it provides the ambush's primary killing power. The support element attempts to destroy the majority of enemy combat power before the assault element moves into the objective or kill zone. The security element isolates the kill zone, provides early warning of the arrival of any enemy relief force, and provides security for the remaining ambush force. It secures the objective rally point and blocks enemy avenues of approach into and out of the ambush site, which prevents the enemy from entering or leaving.

### **Planning an Ambush**

- 5-128. Planning considerations for an ambush include—
- A “no-later-than” time to establish the ambush.
  - A tentative ambush formation or, for an area ambush, element locations.
  - Insertion and exit routes.
  - A forward passage of lines and movement to the ambush site in tactical formation.
  - Location of a rally point where the ambush force can reassemble and reorganize if required.
  - Actions if the ambush is prematurely detected.
  - A scheme of maneuver that maximizes engagement of the enemy's flank or rear, provides early warning of target approach, includes assault element actions in the kill zone, and details how the ambush element displaces from the ambush site.
  - Actions at the objective,
  - Obstacles to augment the effects of the friendly fire.
  - A fire support plan that integrates the direct fire and obstacle plans, which results in the enemy's isolation, inflicts maximum damage, and also supports forces in the rally point.
  - The criteria for initiating the ambush; for example, only engage enemy formations of the same or smaller size and withhold fire until the target moves into the kill zone.
  - Any required changes to the ambushing unit's fire distribution SOP, based on the factors of METT-TC.

- Rear security measures.

5-129. A point ambush usually employs a line or an L-shaped formation. The names of these formations describe deployment of the support element around the kill zone. **The kill zone is that part of an ambush site where fires are concentrated to isolate, fix, and destroy the enemy.** The ambush formation is important because it determines whether a point ambush can deliver the heavy volume of fire necessary to isolate and destroy the target. The commander determines the formation to use based on the advantages and disadvantages of each formation in relation to the factors of METT-TC.

5-130. The assault and support elements generally deploy parallel to the target's route of movement—the long axis of the kill zone—which subjects the target to flanking fire in the line formation. (See Figure 5-7.) The size of the target that can be trapped in the kill zone is limited by the

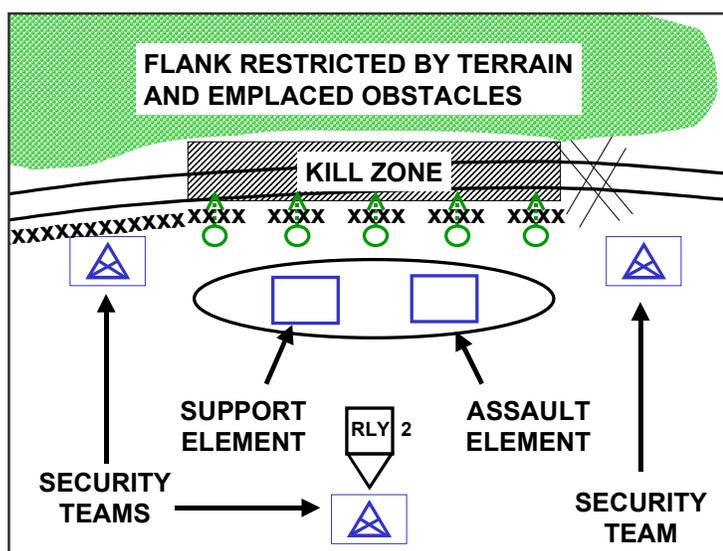


Figure 5-7. Linear Ambush

size of the area that can be covered by the support element's weapons. Natural, manmade, and military obstacles—reinforced with tactical obstacles integrated with direct and indirect fires—traps the target in the kill zone. A disadvantage of the line formation is that the target may be so dispersed that it is larger than the kill zone.

5-131. The line formation is effective in close terrain, which restricts the target's movement, and in open terrain where one flank is blocked by existing or reinforcing obstacles. The commander may place similar obstacles between the assault and support elements and the kill zone to protect the ambush force from the target's counterambush drills. When the ambush force deploys in a line formation, it leaves access lanes through these protective obstacles so that it can assault the target. An advantage of the line formation is that it is relatively easy to control under all conditions of visibility.

5-132. The L-shaped formation is a variation of the line formation. (See Figure 5-8, page 3-32.) The long leg of the "L" (assault element) is parallel to the kill zone and provides flanking fire. An advantage of the "L" formation is that the short leg (support element) is at the end of the kill zone and at a right angle to it and blocks the enemy's forward movement. It also provides enfilading fire that interlocks with fire from the other leg. The commander can

employ an L-shaped formation on a straight stretch of trail, road, stream, or at a sharp bend.

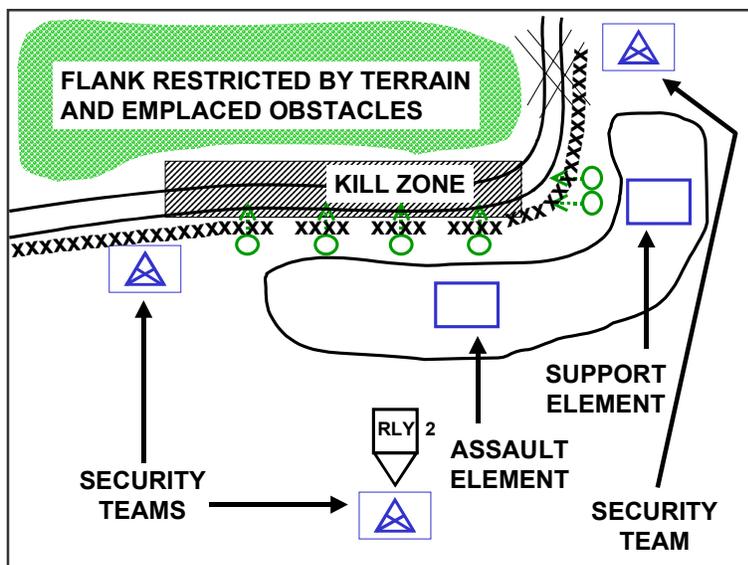


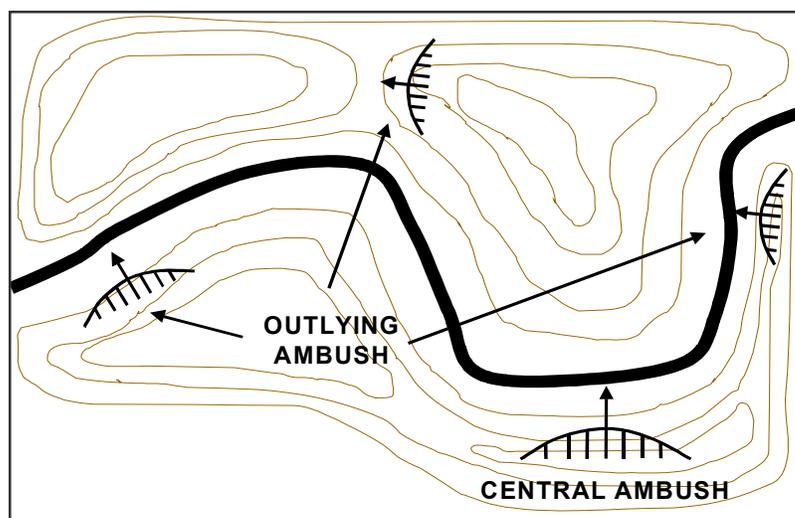
Figure 5-8. L-Shaped Ambush

5-133. An area ambush is most effective when enemy movement is largely restricted to trails or roads. The area should offer several suitable point ambush sites. The commander selects a central ambush site around which he can organize outlying ambushes. Once he selects his site, he must determine the enemy's possible avenues of approach and escape routes. He assigns outlying point ambush sites to his subordinates to cover these avenues. Once they occupy these sites, they report all enemy traffic going toward or away from the central ambush site to the commander. These outlying ambushes allow the enemy to pass through their kill zone until the commander initiates the central ambush. Once the central ambush begins, the outlying ambushes prevent enemy troops from escaping or entering the area. (See [Figure 5-9](#).)

5-134. The ambush unit commander normally specifies the signals required to control the ambush. He changes the meaning of audible and visual signals frequently to avoid setting patterns that the enemy can recognize. Otherwise, the enemy might recognize a signal and react in time to avoid the full effects of the ambush. For example, if a white star cluster is always used to signal withdrawal in a night ambush, an alert enemy might fire one and cause the ambush force to withdraw prematurely. The subordinate elements of the ambush unit must receive communications—in the form of signals—that relay the following information:

- Target approaching, normally given by a member of the security team to warn the ambush commander and the ambush elements of the target's progress.
- Initiate the ambush, given by the ambush unit commander. (This signal should be a mass casualty-producing signal, such as a main gun round from a tank, machine gun fire, the detonation of mines or explosives, or other direct fire crew-served weapons.)

- Lift or shift fire, given when the target is to be assaulted; all fires must stop or be shifted at once so that the assault element can attack before the target can react.
- Assault, given when the assault force is to move into the kill zone and complete its activities.
- Cease fire, given to cease all fires.
- Withdraw from the kill zone or ambush site, given when the ambush is completed or an enemy relief force is approaching.



**Figure 5-9. Area Ambush**

5-135. The commander uses a variety of signals to communicate this information, such as radio transmissions, voice commands, vehicle horns, whistles, or pyrotechnics. All signals must have at least one backup. For example, if the signal to shift fire fails, the assault element should not attack the target unless it receives the backup signal. Signals sent out before initiation of the ambush should not expose the ambush to detection by the enemy. The commander reviews SOP signals to see if they need to be revised or augmented to meet specific situational requirements.

### **Preparation for an Ambush**

5-136. Surprise, coordinated fires, and control are the keys to a successful ambush. Surprise allows the ambush force to seize control of the situation. If total surprise is not possible, it must be so nearly complete that the target does not expect the ambush until it is too late to react effectively. Thorough planning, preparation, and execution help achieve surprise.

5-137. The commander conducts a leader's reconnaissance with key personnel to confirm or modify his plan. This reconnaissance should be undetected by the enemy to preclude alerting him. If necessary, the commander modifies the ambush plan and immediately disseminates those changes to subordinate leaders and other affected organizations. The commander must maintain close control during movement to, occupation of, and withdrawal from the

ambush site. Control is most critical when the ambush unit is approaching the target. Leaders enforce camouflage, noise, and light discipline.

5-138. The ambush unit's security element remains at full alert and uses all available observation devices to detect the enemy's approach to the ambush site. Each soldier's duties within each element are rotated as necessary to maintain alertness.

5-139. All elements of the ambush force reconnoiter their routes of withdrawal to the selected rally point. When possible, soldiers or crews reconnoiter the route they will use.

5-140. The commander positions all his weapons, including mines and demolitions authorized by his rules of engagement, to obtain the maximum effectiveness against the target in the kill zone. He coordinates all fires, including those of supporting artillery and mortars. The goals of the support element are to isolate the kill zone, prevent the target's escape or reinforcement, and deliver a large volume of highly concentrated surprise fire into the kill zone. This fire must inflict maximum damage so the assault element can quickly assault and destroy the target.

### **Execution of an Ambush**

5-141. Fire discipline is a key part of any ambush. Fire must be withheld until the ambush commander gives the signal to initiate the ambush. That signal should be fire from the most deadly weapon in the ambush. Once initiated, the ambush unit delivers its fires at the maximum rate possible given the need for accuracy. Otherwise, the assault could be delayed, giving the target time to react and increasing the possibility of fratricide. Accurate fires help achieve surprise as well as destroy the target. When it is necessary to assault the target, the lifting or shifting of fires must be precise. The assault element does not conduct its assault until enemy fires or resistance has been negated or eliminated.

5-142. If the ambush fails and the enemy pursues the ambush force, it may have to withdraw by bounds. It should use smoke to help conceal its withdrawal. Activating limited-duration minefields along the withdrawal routes after the passage of the withdrawing ambush force can help stop or delay enemy pursuit. The commander positions the support element to assist in the withdrawal of the assault element.

5-143. On the commander's order, the ambush force withdraws to the rally point, reorganizes, and starts its return march. At a previously established location, it halts and disseminates any combat information obtained as a result of the ambush to all elements of the ambush force. However, future information systems should be able to disseminate this information without the need to halt a heavy force.

5-144. The commander or his representative debriefs the ambush force to help identify enemy patterns of response, activities, and procedures, both inside and outside the ambush area once the force returns from conducting the ambush. Patterns should be analyzed and reported to all appropriate organizations through intelligence channels. The commander adjusts his tactics, techniques, and procedures to account for these patterns.

## COUNTERATTACK

5-145. A *counterattack* is a form of attack by part or all of a defending force against an enemy attacking force, with the general objective of denying the enemy his goal in attacking (FM 3-0). The commander directs a counterattack—normally conducted from a defensive posture—to defeat or destroy enemy forces, exploit an enemy weakness, such as an exposed flank, or to regain control of terrain and facilities after an enemy success. A unit conducts a counterattack to seize the initiative from the enemy through offensive action. A counterattacking force maneuvers to isolate and destroy a designated enemy force. It can attack by fire into an engagement area to defeat or destroy an enemy force, restore the original position, or block an enemy penetration. Once launched, the counterattack normally becomes a decisive operation for the commander conducting the counterattack.

5-146. The commander plans and conducts a counterattack to attack the enemy when and where he is most vulnerable, while he is attempting to overcome friendly defensive positions. Normally, the commander attempts to retain his reserve or striking force to conduct a decisive counterattack once the enemy commits his main force to the attack. The commander assigns objectives to counterattacking forces when he intends for them to assault the enemy. He normally assigns attack-by-fire positions when he intends to counterattack using primarily direct and indirect fires.

5-147. The two levels of counterattacks are major and local counterattacks. In both cases, waiting for the enemy to act first may reveal the enemy's main effort and create an assailable flank to exploit. A defending unit conducts a major counterattack to seize the initiative from the enemy through offensive

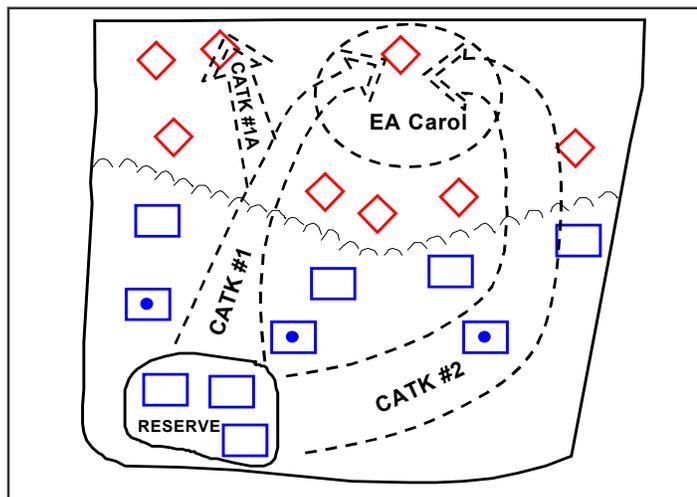


Figure 5-10. Major Counterattack

action after an enemy launches his attack. A commander also conducts major counterattacks to defeat or block an enemy penetration that endangers the integrity of the entire defense, or to attrit the enemy by the defeat or destruction of an isolated portion of the attacking enemy. (See Figure 5-10.)

### Organization of Forces

5-148. The commander of a major counterattack force typically organizes his combined arms assets into security, reconnaissance, main body, and reserve forces. He uses those defending forces already in contact with the enemy to fix or contain those same enemy forces. The commander may use a force

committed to the counterattack, such as the striking force in a mobile defense, his reserve, another echelon's reserve, or designate any other force he deems appropriate to be the counterattack force. Any changes in task organization should be completed in time to allow units to conduct rehearsals with their attached or supported unit.

5-149. A commander conducts a local counterattack with whatever forces are immediately available to retake positions that have been lost to enemy action or to exploit a target of opportunity. The forces often consist of the reserves of subordinates and defending forces that survive after completing their withdrawal from lost positions. While it is unlikely that the commander changes the task organization of the forces conducting a local counterattack, he organizes the force into a security force and a main body. He may be able to designate an element to conduct reconnaissance.

5-150. The counterattack force is a committed force from the beginning of the defensive operation if the commander's defensive scheme hinges on a counterattack as the defeat mechanism, such as the strike force in a mobile defense. In this case, the commander should designate another force as his reserve.

### **Planning a Counterattack**

5-151. The commander plans the counterattack to strike the enemy when the enemy force is vulnerable. As the enemy force advances, the defense may create gaps between enemy units, exposing the flanks and rear of elements of the attacking force. Immediately after an enemy force occupies a defended position, it is often disorganized and ill prepared to meet a sudden counterattack. Opportunity for effective counterattacks are usually brief; the commander must assess the situation rapidly, and the force must execute the counterattack swiftly. The commander assigns objectives or attack-by-fire positions to counterattacking forces, depending on whether he intends for the counterattacking force to close with and assault the enemy.

5-152. Major counterattack plans are normally developed as a branch or sequel to the main defensive plan. A major counterattack may achieve surprise when it strikes the enemy from an unanticipated direction. For that reason the force directed to conduct a major counterattack, such as the strike force in a mobile defense, should be involved in developing those plans as well as any plans to exploit potential success. Local counterattacks may or may not be the result of previous deliberate planning.

### **Preparing a Counterattack**

5-153. Surprise, coordinated fires, and control are the keys to a successful counterattack. Surprise allows the counterattacking force to seize control of the situation. If total surprise is not possible, it must be so nearly complete that the targeted enemy force does not expect the attack until it is too late to react effectively. Thorough planning and preparation help achieve surprise. The commander adjusts the positioning of his ISR assets and the taskings he gives those assets so he can determine the location and targets for his counterattack.

5-154. The commander conducts a leader's reconnaissance with key personnel to confirm or modify his counterattack plan. If necessary, the commander modifies the plan and disseminates those changes to subordinate leaders and other affected organizations. Each element of the counterattack force reconnoiters its planned axis of advance and routes it will take if possible. The commander maintains close control during movement to and occupation of hide positions and this reconnaissance process so the enemy does not detect the counterattack force prior to initiating the counterattack. Leaders enforce camouflage, noise, and light discipline.

5-155. The commander adjusts the planned positions of his weapon systems to obtain the maximum effectiveness against targets in the planned engagement area. He coordinates all fires, including those of supporting artillery and mortars. He wants his fires to isolate the targeted enemy force in the planned engagement area while preventing the target's escape or reinforcement. These fires must inflict maximum damage quickly before the enemy can respond to the counterattack.

### **Executing a Counterattack**

5-156. A commander should not counterattack unless he has a reasonable chance of success. The commander attempts to retain his reserve for his decisive operation, conducted after the enemy reveals his main effort by committing the majority of his combat power. If the commander orders his reserve to conduct a planned counterattack, the reserve becomes a committed force and the commander should take measures to designate or reconstitute a new reserve.

5-157. The commander conducts the counterattack in the same manner in which he conducts any other attack. He shifts support and priorities of fire, designates targets to be engaged by offensive information operations. The counterattack force also performs those activities discussed in paragraphs [5-61](#) to [5-122](#).

5-158. Subordinate commanders initiate local counterattack with the forces on hand when it fits within the higher commander's intent. The conduct of a local counterattack should be swift and violent. It should exploit any disorganization on the part of the enemy, such as the confusion that temporarily exists in an attacking force after it seizes a defended position. A rapidly mounted local counterattack may yield better results than a more deliberate counterattack executed by a higher echelon because of the speed at which it can be launched.

5-159. In the face of a strong enemy penetration, a commander may conduct local counterattacks to retain or seize positions on the shoulders of the enemy's penetration. This prevents the enemy from widening the penetration while forces from other defending units engage the penetrating enemy forces. Holding the shoulders can also prevent the sacrifice of positional depth because the limited gap in the defensive position prevents an attacking enemy from fully exploiting his success.

## DEMONSTRATIONS AND FEINTS

5-160. A *demonstration* is a form of attack designed to deceive the enemy as to the location or time of the decisive operation by a display of force. Forces conducting a demonstration do not seek contact with the enemy (FM 3-0). A *feint* is a form of attack used to deceive the enemy as to the location or time of the actual decisive operation. Forces conducting a feint seek direct fire contact with the enemy but avoid decisive engagement (FM 3-0). A commander uses them in conjunction with other military deception activities. They generally attempt to deceive the enemy and induce him to move reserves and shift his fire support to locations where they cannot immediately impact the friendly decisive operation or take other actions not conducive to the enemy's best interests during the defense. Both forms are always shaping operations. The commander must synchronize the conduct of these forms of attack with higher and lower echelon plans and operations to prevent inadvertently placing another unit at risk.

5-161. The principal difference between these forms of attack is that in a feint the commander assigns the force an objective limited in size, scope, or some other measure. Forces conducting a feint make direct fire contact with the enemy but avoid decisive engagement. Forces conducting a demonstration do not seek contact with the enemy. The planning, preparing, and executing considerations for demonstrations and feints are the same as for the other forms of attack.

## RAID

5-162. A *raid* is a form of attack, usually small scale, involving a swift entry into hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or destroy installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal from the objective area on mission completion (FM 3-0). A raid can also be used to support operations designed to rescue and recover individuals and equipment in danger of capture.

5-163. A simplified chain of command is an essential organizational requirement. A raid usually requires a force carefully tailored to neutralize specific enemy forces operating in the vicinity of the objective and to perform whatever additional functions are required to accomplish the objective of the raid. These additional functions can consist of the demolition of bridges over major water obstacles or the recovery of an attack helicopter pilot shot down forward of the forward line of own troops (FLOT). The commander incorporates any necessary support specialists during the initial planning stage of the operation.

5-164. When a commander and his staff plan a raid, they develop COAs that meet ethical, legal, political, and technical feasibility criteria. Planners require precise, time-sensitive, all-source intelligence. The planning process determines how C2, sustainment, target acquisition and target servicing will occur during the raid. Techniques and procedures for conducting operations across the FLOT, given the specific factors of METT-TC expected to exist during the conduct of the raid, are also developed. The commander and his staff develop as many alternative COAs as time and the situation permit. They carefully weigh each alternative. In addition to those planning considerations

associated with other offensive operations, they must determine the risks associated with conducting the mission and possible repercussions.

5-165. Time permitting, all elements involved in a raid should be fully rehearsed in their functions. The key elements in determining the level of detail and the opportunities for rehearsal prior to mission execution are time, OPSEC, and deception requirements.

### **The Raid in Mogadishu, 3–4 October 1993**

At 1530 on 3 October 1993, Task Force (TF) RANGER launched another of a series of air assault raids designed to capture key lieutenants of Mohammed Aidid, a clan leader and self-proclaimed general. Aidid and his clan were waging combat operations against UN and US forces and impeding ongoing humanitarian efforts in Somalia. Within 30 minutes TF RANGER had captured several key Aidid lieutenants. The raiding force's HMMWV-equipped ground element was notified to proceed from its assembly area and pick up the prisoners. The ground convoy arrived at the target house, and the prisoners were loaded for the short trip back to the US compound. However, the situation changed drastically during the time it took for the ground convoy to arrive. Two UH-60 Black Hawks had been shot down. In response, TF RANGER attempted to secure the crash sites and was immediately drawn into a series of intense ambushes. The ground convoy with their prisoners could never link up with other task force elements. After several attempts, it arrived with its prisoners back at the US compound at 1818, having suffered almost 70-percent casualties. The commitment of the reaction force was delayed due to the fact that it was not fully briefed (for OPSEC reasons) and was not under direct US control. Failure to maintain a substantial reserve when the situation is not well known and lack of unity of command contributed significantly to TF RANGER's losses that day when the operation quickly transitioned from a raid to a relief of an encircled force.

## **SPOILING ATTACK**

5-166. A *spoiling attack* is a form of attack that preempts or seriously impairs an enemy attack while the enemy is in the process of planning or preparing to attack (FM 3-0). The objective of a spoiling attack is to disrupt the enemy's offensive capabilities and timelines while destroying his personnel and equipment, not to secure terrain and other physical objectives. (See Figure 5-11, page 3-40.) A commander conducts a spoiling attack whenever possible during friendly defensive operations to strike the enemy while he is in assembly areas or attack positions preparing for his own offensive operation or is temporarily stopped. It usually employs heavy, attack helicopter, or fire support elements to attack enemy assembly positions in front of the friendly commander's main line of resistance or battle positions.

5-167. The commander's reasons for conducting a spoiling attack include—

- Disrupt the enemy's offensive preparations.
- Destroy key assets that the enemy requires to attack, such as his fire support systems, fuel and ammunition stocks, and bridging equipment.
- Gain additional time for the defending force to prepare its positions.
- Reduce the enemy's current advantage in the correlation of forces.

The commander synchronizes the conduct of the spoiling attack with his other defensive operations.

5-168. The commander can employ his reserves in a spoiling attack to throw the enemy's offensive preparations off stride. He assumes the risk of not having a reserve or designates another force as his reserve in this case. The following basic considerations affect the spoiling attack:

- The commander may want to limit the size of the force used in executing the spoiling attack.
- Spoiling attacks are not conducted if the loss or destruction of the friendly attacking force would jeopardize the commander's ability to accomplish his defensive mission.
- The mobility of the force available for the spoiling attack should be equal to or greater than that of the targeted enemy force.
- Operations by artillery or aviation systems to prevent enemy elements not in contact from interfering with the spoiling attack are necessary to ensure the success of the operation.

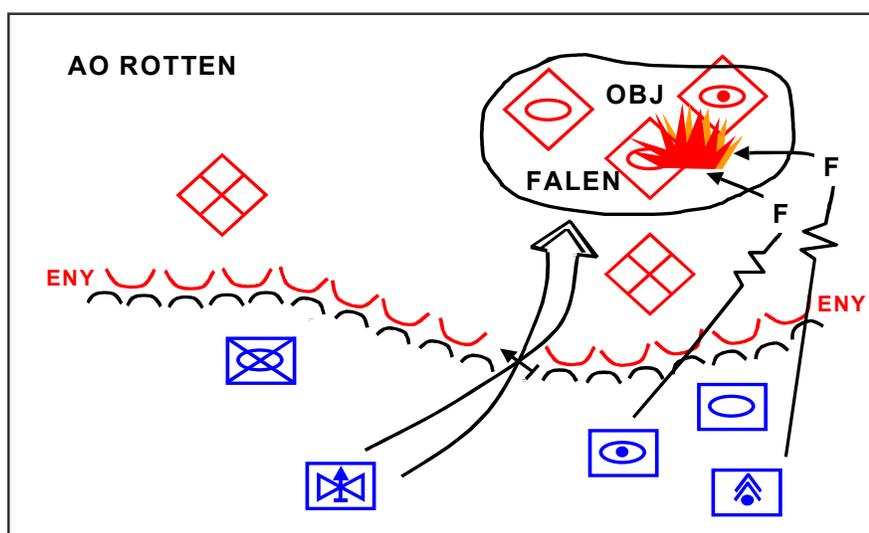


Figure 5-11. Spoiling Attack

5-169. There are two conditions that must be met to conduct a successful and survivable spoiling attack:

- The spoiling attack's objective must be obtainable prior to the enemy being able to respond to the attack in a synchronized and coordinated manner.
- The commander must prevent the force conducting the spoiling attack from becoming overextended.

If the spoiling attack fails to meet both conditions, it will likely fail, with grave consequences to the defense.

## Chapter 6

# Exploitation

*The most important goal of our action is the destruction of the enemy to the last limit of possibility*

Field Marshal Prince Mikhail I. Kutuzov

*Exploitation* is a type of offensive operation that usually follows a successful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth (FM 3-0). Commanders at all echelons exploit successful offensive actions. Attacks that succeed in annihilating a defending enemy are rare. Failure to aggressively exploit success at every turn may give the enemy time to reconstitute an effective defense by shifting his forces or by regaining the initiative through a counterattack. Therefore, every offensive operation not restricted by higher authority or lack of resources should be followed without delay by bold exploitation. The commander designs his exploitation to maintain pressure on the enemy, compound and take advantage of his disorganization, shatter his will to resist, and seize decisive or key terrain.

6-1. Exploitation is the primary means of translating tactical success into operational advantage. It reinforces enemy force disorganization and confusion in the enemy's command and control (C2) system caused by tactical defeat. It is an integral part of the concept of the offense. The psychological effect of tactical defeat creates confusion and apprehension

throughout the enemy C2 structure and reduces the enemy's ability to react. Exploitation takes advantage of this reduction in enemy capabilities to make permanent what would be only a temporary tactical effect if exploitation were not conducted. Exploitation may be decisive.

6-2. Those plan, prepare, and execute concepts introduced previously continue to apply during an exploitation. Assessment concepts described in FM 6-0 and FM 6-22 also apply. The commander modifies these concepts as necessary to reflect the specific existing factors of METT-TC.

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6-3. Local exploitation by the committed force follows a successful attack. A unit conducts a local exploitation when it capitalizes on whatever tactical opportunities it creates in the course of accomplishing its assigned offensive mission. Whenever possible, the lead attacking unit transitions directly to the exploitation after accomplishing its mission in a local exploitation. If this is not feasible, the commander can pass fresh forces (follow and assume) into the lead. The commander acts quickly to capitalize on local successes. Although such local exploitations may appear insignificant, their cumulative effects can be decisive. Subordinate commanders, working within a higher commander's intent, can use their initiative to launch an exploitation. When a commander initiates a local exploitation, he informs his higher headquarters to keep that commander informed of his intentions. This prevents the inadvertent disruption of the higher echelon's battle or campaign and allows the higher headquarters to assess the possibility of general collapse and to direct the initiation of pursuit operations.

6-4. Conduct of a major exploitation is a specific contingency mission assigned to a large unit in anticipation of offensive success by another unit of equivalent size. Divisions and brigades are the echelons that conduct a major exploitation although a corps can conduct a major exploitation as part of a multicorps operation.

## **ORGANIZATION OF FORCES**

6-5. The forces conducting an attack are also the forces that initially exploit that attack's success. Typically, the commander does not assign a subordinate unit the mission of exploitation before starting a movement to contact (MTC) or an attack. The commander reorganizes his unit internally to reflect the existing factors of METT-TC when the opportunity to exploit success occurs. He uses fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) to conduct actions on contact. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of actions on contact.) If a commander needs additional resources to support the exploitation, he requests them from the appropriate headquarters. The additional resources may include intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to help identify targets for attack, as well as attack helicopters and controlled munitions, such as the Army tactical missile system, to attack identified targets. Each exploitation force should be large enough to protect itself from those enemy forces it expects to encounter. It should also be a reasonably self-sufficient combined arms force capable of operations beyond the supporting range of the main body.

6-6. The units that create an opportunity to exploit should not be expected to perform the exploitation to an extended depth. If the commander plans to exploit with a specific subordinate unit, he must specify the degree of damage or risk to that force he is willing to accept in the course of the current operation. If the initially attacking units incur significant losses of combat power, the commander should replace them as soon as possible. When the exploiting force's combat power weakens because of fatigue, disorganization, or attrition, or when it must hold ground or resupply, the commander should continue the exploitation with a fresh force. In both cases, the replacement force should have a high degree of tactical mobility so it can conduct the exploitation.

6-7. The exploitation may be more effective if the commander can commit additional forces and assign them the task of either follow and support or follow and assume. The commander assigns follow and support missions to units designated to assist exploiting forces by relieving them of tasks that would slow their advances. The lead unit and any follow and assume or follow and support units exchange liaison teams to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities. Units designated to follow and assume conduct a forward passage of lines and replace the initial exploiting forces when they approach their culminating point. Normally, the next higher commander retains control of the forces performing the tasks of follow and support or follow and assume. (Appendix B expands the discussion of these tasks.) When possible, units assigned these tasks should possess mobility equal to that of the exploiting unit or receive additional engineers and transportation assets to provide the necessary mobility. Once organized, they are committed forces and should receive habitually associated artillery, air defense, engineer, and other combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) forces in accordance with the factors of METT-TC. In an exploitation operation projected to cross significant distances, the commander may attach elements of a follow and support unit to the exploiting force to ensure unity of command and effort.

6-8. Since an exploitation operation typically covers a wider front than an attacking force, fire support assets may find their supported elements operating outside normal supporting ranges. They must displace forward to ensure the continued provision of fires on and beyond enemy formations, which may cause some difficulty in supporting the exploiting force's flank elements. To provide the required support, these fire support units, as well as independently operating assets, can be attached to subordinate elements of the exploiting force. Otherwise, the commander can move additional reinforcing fire support units and systems forward to fill the void.

6-9. Responsive air defense coverage provides rapid transition to an exploitation without the loss of momentum. The commander plans on repositioning his air defense artillery assets to ensure this responsiveness. Adequate mobile air defense units should accompany exploiting forces. Air defense arrangements for the initial attack are likely to remain effective throughout the exploitation. However, when the commander extends his formations and assets to cover more area, the air defense coverage becomes less effective. The commander needs to consider the risks associated with moving out from under his air defense artillery umbrella. Alternatively, he can request adjustments in the air defense coverage of higher echelons. Counterair operations by the other services (USAF, USN, and USMC) may provide the desired degree of air defense protection. The commander can use available air interdiction and close air support by fixed-wing aircraft to augment or replace Army fire support assets during an exploitation.

6-10. The exploitation mission demands a force with a significant mobility advantage over the enemy. Attack helicopters and air assault assets may constitute a portion of the exploiting force's combat power. They are extremely useful in seizing defiles, crossing obstacles, and otherwise capitalizing on their mobility to attack and cut off disorganized enemy elements. They can also seize or control key terrain such as important river-crossing sites or vital enemy transportation nodes along the exploiting force's route of advance into

and through the enemy's rear area. The commander integrates combat engineers into the exploiting force to help breach obstacles; keep ground forces maneuvering, and provide countermobility protection to the flanks. Typical problems that degrade an exploiting force's mobility are minefields and other obstacles. The commander also uses engineers to keep his supply routes open.

6-11. The commander retains only those reserves necessary to ensure his flexibility of operation, continued momentum in the advance, and likely enemy responses to the exploitation. (Chapter 5 discusses employment considerations for the reserve.)

## RECONNAISSANCE AND SECURITY

6-12. When a commander initiates an exploitation operation, the exact enemy situation may not be clearly known or understood. The commander establishes a reconnaissance force to gain and maintain enemy contact. He complements his reconnaissance effort with sensors and surveillance assets and intelligence products produced by adjacent, higher, and lower echelons to maintain his situational understanding of the strength, dispositions, capabilities, and intentions of all significant enemy elements within his area of interest. The commander normally emphasizes reconnaissance more than security operations when conducting an exploitation. Nevertheless, since the exploiting force moves independently, he addresses the security needs of that force.

6-13. The commander assigns the appropriate security missions to his designated security forces the same way he would for an MTC. (See Chapter 4.) An exploiting corps or division commander typically organizes his forward-most security element into a covering force to protect the main body's movement and develop the situation before he commits his main body. These security elements respond directly to him.

6-14. If an exploiting force is unable to resource a covering force for independent operations, it may use an advance guard in place of a covering force. This is typical for a brigade conducting an exploitation on its own. In some cases when the higher echelon (corps or division) creates a covering force, a brigade may still push out an advance guard behind the covering force. This normally occurs when subordinate units in an exploitation advance in multiple parallel columns.

## COMBAT SUPPORT AND COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

6-15. Combat support and combat service support arrangements must be extremely flexible during exploitation operations. In the conduct of exploitation operations directed against uncommitted enemy forces or in exploitation operations directed along diverging lines of advance, the commander commonly attaches CS and CSS units to the exploiting maneuver force. Alternatively, the support assets can follow the exploiting force in an echeloned manner along main supply routes (MSRs). Transportation and supplies to sustain the force become increasingly important as the exploitation progresses. As supply lines lengthen, the condition of lines of communications and the conduct of route and convoy security can become problems. The largest possible stocks of fuel, spare parts, and ammunition should accompany the force so that it does not lose momentum because of a lack of support. The exploitation effort may



point or some other restriction, such as political considerations regarding an international border, which requires its establishment.

6-18. A commander normally employs permissive fire support control measures during an exploitation. A coordinated fire line (CFL) ensures rapid response. Movement of the CFL is particularly important to provide adequate support as the force continues to advance. Even if the culmination of the exploitation is not anticipated, establishing a forward boundary is important to facilitate operations beyond that boundary by a higher headquarters. The commander can use additional control measures, such as targets and checkpoints, as required.

## PLANNING AN EXPLOITATION

6-19. The commander's ability to deny the enemy options by proactive use of his battlefield operating systems is critical to a successful exploitation. He does this by arranging his battlefield operating systems within his opponent's time and space relationship in accordance with the factors of METT-TC.

6-20. The commander must plan for the decentralized execution of an exploitation. His commander's intent is especially important because subordinates must be able to exercise initiative in a rapidly changing, fluid situation. The commander must state the purpose of the exploitation, which may be to force the retrograde of enemy forces from an area, encircle enemy forces so they cannot withdraw, or destroy enemy artillery and other fire support systems. The intent must describe the desired end state. That intent will also determine his decisive and shaping operations and guide the designation of his main effort at any given point.

6-21. A clear commander's intent provides subordinates with guidance on how to integrate their operations into the overall operations of the higher headquarters. Only subordinates who can act quickly can seize all opportunities to damage the enemy or accelerate the tempo of operations. A commander should place minimal restrictions on his subordinates. These may include clear instructions regarding the seizure of key terrain and the size of enemy forces that may be bypassed. Reliable, secure communications between the exploiting force, the follow and support force, and the commander facilitate coordination that can maximize the impact of the exploitation. However, all subordinates should have a clear picture of the desired end state to conduct operations that support it, even if communications are lost.

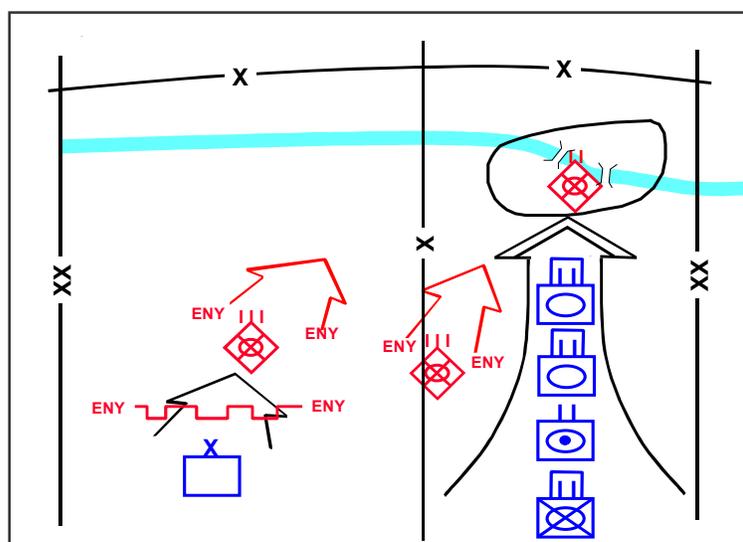
6-22. Planning for an exploitation begins during the preparation phase of all offensive operations. To avoid losing critical time during the transition from an MTC or an attack to an exploitation, the commander tentatively identifies forces, objectives, and AOs for subordinate units before the offensive operation begins. When the opportunity to exploit occurs, brigade and higher-echelon commanders should initiate the exploitation, either as a branch of or a sequel to the existing operation. The commander's plan should attempt to avoid driving the enemy back in the direction of his own sustaining base.

6-23. During exploitation planning and execution, the commander balances the exploiting force's need for speed and momentum against its need for security as it begins to move beyond supporting range of the rest of the force.

The commander must be careful not to allow an exploiting force to move outside of his main body's supporting distance. Determining the supporting distance requires some knowledge of the enemy's remaining capabilities. Generally, the commander should approach exploitation planning with a sense of guarded optimism. It is an excellent opportunity to shatter enemy cohesion and gain a position of advantage over the enemy. However, the commander cannot allow the exploiting force to fall into an enemy trap where it could be drawn into a salient and destroyed in detail.

6-24. The exploitation may take the form of an MTC with a series of hasty attacks. The commander usually issues a series of FRAGOs that designate—

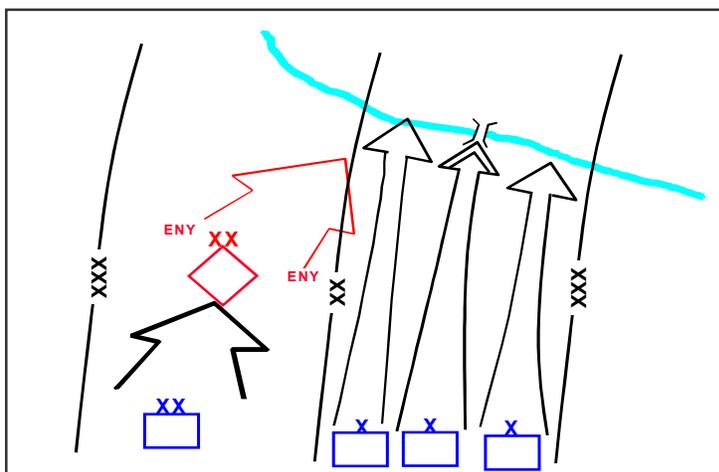
- Movement formation.
- The position of each major element of the exploiting force within that formation.
- Any required modifications to task organization.
- Bypass criteria.
- Revised or new control measures that assist with the maneuver, such as objectives, boundary changes, a limit of advance (LOA), and FSCM.



**Figure 6-2. Brigade Exploitation: Battalions in Column Formation**

6-25. Exploiting forces normally maneuver on a wide front and on at least two axes. The forces on each axis are capable of independent action, depending on the mobility of the force, the road net, and other aspects of the terrain. In some cases, rather than assigning subordinates their own AOs, the commander may designate a movement formation for his entire unit so he can concentrate all his combat power against a specific enemy element. In this case, the commander normally adopts a variation of the column, line, or vee formation. (Chapter 3 discusses combat formations.) (Figure 6-2 shows a brigade conduct an exploitation with its battalions in column.) Movement on parallel routes is preferred; however, the terrain and the enemy situation may force the exploiting force to advance in a column formation. Generally, using a column in the exploitation emphasizes flexibility at the expense of placing maximum firepower forward.

6-26. In exceptional circumstances, when the enemy is clearly incapable of effectively resisting, the commander can choose temporarily not to retain a reserve but commit all his forces to the exploitation. He may employ a line formation with two or more elements abreast without a reserve when the approach to the objective must be made on as wide a front as possible. For example, a commander could use this formation when attempting to secure crossing sites over a major river. (See Figure 6-3.) He could also employ this formation against sporadic and weakening resistance when the enemy lacks a significant counterattack capability or when the counterattack can be blocked by means other than employing the reserve. Despite the lack of a constituted reserve, other actions, such as the effective employment of massed indirect fires, can provide the commander with the flexibility usually provided by the reserve for influencing actions during an exploitation.



**Figure 6-3. Division Exploitation: Brigades Abreast, No Reserve**

6-27. A vee formation with two or more elements abreast and a reserve allows the unit to advance on a reasonably wide front with the bulk of the unit's direct firepower oriented forward. This configuration helps when creating gaps in the enemy's defenses. While the bulk of the unit is committed, the reserve is available to exploit the success of the attacking elements, assume the mission of the attacking elements, or counter enemy threats as they develop. (See Figure 6-4.)

6-28. Because of the need to rapidly transition from an attack to an exploitation, fire support planning for the exploitation must take place as part of the planning for the attack. The commander establishes links between his military intelligence, reconnaissance, attack aviation, field artillery, offensive information operations, and supporting fixed-wing assets to expedite the detection and delivery of effects against situationally dependant high-priority targets. He selects those targets regardless of their location within the enemy's defensive area to support the exploitation. During the exploitation, there is little time to revise target lists. Target considerations are similar in nature to those of an MTC. In addition, the exploitation requires a flexible, responsive, and redundant fire control net that must be planned in advance. Coordination with the echelon intelligence officer is critical as the situation develops



attack, thereby allowing his CS and CSS elements to keep pace with the operation. Planning must address how to rapidly resupply air defense missiles as they are used. It must also allow for adjustments in the priority of protection assigned to different elements during the exploitation.

6-33. The commander must anticipate the exploitation and ensure that his logistics plan supports the force all the way to the LOA. Planning for CSS in the exploitation includes designating future MSRs, logistics release points, unit maintenance collection points, casualty collection points, medical treatment facilities, ambulance exchange points, and the depositing of enemy prisoners of war. In sustaining the exploitation, petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) consumption and vehicle maintenance are primary concerns of CSS planners. A significant factor is that an exploiting force tends to travel on a broad front, which may necessitate designating one or more lateral MSRs to handle the dispersion. Logistics operations must be prepared to bound their CSS assets farther forward and move them more often than in an attack.

6-34. Selecting a flexible MSR is critical because it must be able to respond to changes in the direction of the exploitation. Maintaining the MSR is a responsibility of the force engineer. During planning, the commander must specifically address the control of logistics units and convoys. He calls them forward and redirects them as needed. He may have to plan for guides to assist their movement around bypassed enemy positions and obstacles. He may assign some combat elements from the reserve an "on-order" mission to conduct rear area security to help protect CSS elements or secure the MSR. The commander must also ensure adequate plans exist for controlling displaced civilians on the battlefield so that they do not interfere with follow-on maneuver, CS, and CSS assets. This is a critical function of civil-military operations.

## EXECUTING AN EXPLOITATION

6-35. Exploitation requires physical and mental aggressiveness to combat the friction of limited visibility, fatigue, bad weather, dangers of fratricide, and extended operations. It requires bold and aggressive reconnaissance, prompt use of firepower, and rapid employment of previously uncommitted units. Exploiting forces maneuver swiftly toward their objectives, sever escape routes, and strike at enemy command posts, communications nodes, reserves, artillery, and CS units to prevent the enemy from reorganizing an effective defense. Well supported by tactical air support, air cavalry, and attack helicopters, exploiting forces should be able to change direction on short notice.

6-36. To maintain sufficient forces to conduct an exploitation, the commander must ensure that his subordinates focus on his intent. They should not dissipate his combat power by seeking minor tactical successes or reducing inconsequential enemy forces. His aim is to reach the final objective with the maximum possible strength as rapidly as possible. The commander must provide his exploiting forces with mobile support, including air resupply, to move emergency lifts of POL and ammunition.

6-37. The transition from attack to exploitation may be so gradual that it is hardly distinguishable; it may also be abrupt. The abrupt transition may occur when a force uses massed quantities of precision munitions, achieves surprise, or overwhelms a much weaker enemy force. Normally, exploitation

occurs after the force secures its objective. With adequate support, the commander can launch the exploitation with his initial assault or at any time after that, depending on the effects of the fires and his desires.

6-38. Since the exploitation takes advantage of previous success, forces previously allocated toward attacking enemy forces normally continue their ongoing activities. These activities include—

- Attrition or defeat of enemy reserves prior to their commitment.
- Destruction of enemy countermobility assets prior to their employment on a friendly avenue of advance for the exploiting force.
- Disruption of enemy units attempting to reestablish a coherent defense.
- Disruption of enemy sustaining operations.

This assumes the commander has accurate intelligence data to target these enemy actions.

6-39. Generally, as one part of the attacking force finishes clearing an objective, the commander orders the remaining elements to exploit that success. To accomplish this with minimal confusion, the commander must know where each of his elements is and what combat formation each has adopted. If the commander has previously trained and rehearsed his force to change rapidly from one combat formation to another, to change missions, and to change the direction of advance, he can time the execution of such changes to maintain the initiative over an enemy.

6-40. The commander can also initiate an exploitation when he realizes that the enemy force is having difficulty maintaining its position or cohesion. Updated intelligence is crucial to the commander since it is difficult to accurately predict the exact conditions required to transition from an attack to an exploitation. Therefore, the commander and his subordinates watch the enemy's defenses for indications of disintegration that may signal the opportunity to transition to exploitation. Such indicators include—

- The threat or use of weapons of mass destruction by enemy forces, despite the probable US retaliation, may signal impending enemy collapse.
- Enemy reconnaissance intensifies.
- Rearward movement increases, especially by fire support and reserves.
- The enemy prepares to demolish or destroy his facilities, installations, equipment, and supply stockpiles.
- Various units intermix their vehicles and personnel in combat formations or march columns.
- Number of prisoners captured increases significantly.
- Enemy fire decreases in intensity and effectiveness.
- Fires increase in one or more individual sectors of the front that do not appear to be synchronized with the developing situation and at a time when the amount of defensive fires appears to be decreasing.
- Enemy resistance decreases considerably, or the enemy lacks any type of organized defense.
- Amount of abandoned enemy war materiel encountered increases significantly.

- Reports confirm the capture or absence of enemy leaders.
- Friendly forces overrun enemy artillery, C2 facilities, and supply points.
- Enemy units disintegrate and friendly companies and battalions can defeat enemy battalion- and brigade-size units, respectively.

In any case, the commander ruthlessly exploits vulnerable enemy forces after weighing and accommodating the risks.

## **GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT**

6-41. The exploiting force must gain and maintain contact with the enemy. This is a critical aspect of the exploitation since the enemy may be trying to break contact and distance himself from the friendly force to give him time to recover. After a successful attack, the exploiting force must perform aggressive reconnaissance to both its front and flanks. Mission and intent of exploitation determine how much enemy contact is required to maintain pressure on him, compound his disorganization, shatter his will, and seize key or decisive terrain. As discussed in Chapter 5, this reconnaissance effort must start almost immediately after an attacking unit secures its objective. If the commander has dedicated reconnaissance assets, he uses them to maintain enemy contact, observe the enemy's movements, and search for weakly defended enemy positions. If those assets are not available, other maneuver units perform those reconnaissance tasks. While maintaining contact with the enemy, the reconnaissance force tries to locate enemy reserves, uncommitted forces, and blocking positions. This effort helps the exploiting force avoid being led into ambushes as the enemy seeks to recover the initiative by counter-attacking.

6-42. When the previously assigned offensive mission is accomplished, units at all echelons push out their reconnaissance and security forces to discover whether the opportunity exists to initiate an exploitation. At brigade and battalion echelons, these reconnaissance and security forces must gain and maintain enemy contact while remaining within the supporting range of their parent brigade or battalion.

6-43. The commander uses air reconnaissance to augment his ground reconnaissance. He can employ aerial sensors, such as JSTARS, air cavalry, and unmanned aerial vehicles in advance of ground maneuver reconnaissance. This allows aerial observation of named and targeted areas of interest that facilitate the unit's movement and cue the attack of high-payoff targets. Scout and attack helicopters can locate enemy positions and engage the enemy to disrupt his movement and preparations. Aviation assets surge to maintain constant contact with the enemy and keep pressure on him.

## **DISRUPT THE ENEMY**

6-44. Exploitation presumes the enemy has already been somewhat disrupted. An exploitation seeks to maintain or increase this disruption by preventing the enemy from effectively reconstituting his defenses. At the division and corps levels, the commander combines the effects of his operations against enemy reserves and uncommitted forces with the rapid maneuver of his close combat forces to maintain this disruption. Attack

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helicopters can maneuver in front of exploiting ground maneuver forces to destroy high-payoff targets. The commander integrates available fixed-wing aircraft into his plan for attacking these targets. Rapid advances by the exploiting force keep the enemy force off balance and degrade his intelligence and surveillance capabilities, thus providing some security from attack. The commander uses all available resources to maintain pressure on the enemy, using both overwhelming combat power and asymmetric weapon systems. The commander never allows the enemy an opportunity to recover from the initial blow. The exploiting force's fire support system must deliver massed fires quickly to respond to any contingencies that arise during the exploitation.

### **FIX THE ENEMY**

6-45. An exploiting force has three goals in fixing an enemy force. First, it tries to break down the enemy's combined arms organization by fixing enemy units in positions out of supporting distance of each other. This allows the exploiting force to defeat the enemy in detail. Second, the commander attacks out-of-contact enemy forces before they can adversely affect the exploitation. By attacking these enemy forces, the commander seeks to fix them in their current positions or force them to move to locations where they can be harmlessly contained until the exploiting force or a follow and support force can engage and defeat them. Third, it achieves a specific targeting effect—such as causing 15-percent casualties—that disrupts the enemy commander's plan.

### **MANEUVER**

6-46. During an exploitation, the exploiting force maneuvers to maintain pressure on the enemy. The commander can use any heavy and mobile light forces, such as airborne and air assault elements, to secure terrain objectives or choke points critical to the advance and to cut enemy lines of escape. The commander takes advantage of available vertical envelopment capabilities. The exploiting force clears only enough of its AO to permit its advance. It cuts through enemy logistics units and LOCs to seize objectives vital to the enemy's defense. It attacks from the march to overrun weak enemy formations. In accordance with the bypass criteria, the exploiting force can contain and bypass those enemy pockets of resistance too small to jeopardize the mission while its commander reports these enemy forces to adjacent units, following units, and higher headquarters.

6-47. If an enemy unit is too strong for the leading elements of the exploiting force to overrun and destroy, succeeding elements of the force conduct a hasty attack based on the combat information provided by its leading elements. Such enemy forces are rarely attacked frontally. In almost all cases, the commander uses another form of maneuver to produce faster and better results with fewer casualties. While the exploiting force is seeking one or more available flanks, available fire support systems continue to engage the enemy to divert attention from the attempted envelopment and destroy as much enemy combat power as possible.

6-48. The exploiting force may face prepared belts of defensive positions in depth when it is exploiting the initial success of the attack. Therefore, the exploiting force must move rapidly to attack and destroy the enemy before he

can settle into his subsequent or supplemental positions. The more rapidly this can be done, the less likely it is that succeeding defensive lines will be fully prepared and the less effort it will take to penetrate each successive defensive position. The exploiting force repeats this process as many times as necessary until it breaks completely through the enemy's defenses.

6-49. The commander's primary concern when initiating an exploitation resulting from a successful attack is to shift his force into the appropriate combat formation and task-organize it with additional capabilities and resources to take advantage of a short window of opportunity. Assuming that the force accomplishes this with relative ease, he must control the formation as it moves and prevent its overextension. The commander must anticipate the enemy's reaction to his actions. The real danger to the exploiting force is not the immediate enemy but the enemy not yet engaged. Overextension is a risk inherent in exploitation. While the commander must be concerned with this, he must also guard against being overcautious.

6-50. Surrender appeals and ultimatums are particularly effective when directed against enemy units that have been surrounded, isolated, or bypassed. JP 3-53 and FM 3-05.30 detail the techniques for communicating with the enemy.

6-51. While the exploiting force is conducting its operations, the follow and support force, if available—

- Widens or secures the shoulders of a penetration.
- Destroys bypassed enemy units.
- Relieves supported units that have halted to contain enemy forces.
- Blocks the movement of enemy reinforcements.
- Opens and secures lines of communications.
- Guards prisoners, key areas, installations, and lines of communication.
- Controls dislocated civilians.

## **FOLLOW THROUGH**

6-52. Once the exploitation begins, forces move to attack enemy forces without any operational pauses. Exploitation continues around the clock so the enemy cannot escape the relentless offensive pressure. The exploiting force retains terrain only as necessary to accomplish its mission. The commander must be careful not to dissipate combat power to achieve minor tactical successes or to reduce small enemy forces. Once he reaches the LOA, the commander quickly shifts his attention to survivability and countermobility because of the possibility of an enemy counterattack.

6-53. At some point a unit conducting an exploitation reaches a culminating point or transitions to a pursuit. Culmination can occur for the variety of reasons, such as friendly losses or the enemy's commitment of his reserve. The commander, when he makes an assessment that his force is approaching culmination, should transition to another type of operation. On the other hand, a pursuit enables the commander to complete his destruction of the enemy.