## Chapter 7

# Pursuit

*In pursuit you must always stretch possibilities to the limit. Troops having beaten the enemy will want to rest. They must be given as objectives, not those that you think they will reach, but the farthest they could possibly reach.*

Field Marshal Viscount Allenby of Meggido, Order to XXI Corps, 1917

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). Pursuit operations begin when an enemy force attempts to conduct retrograde operations. At that point, it becomes most vulnerable to the loss of internal cohesion and complete destruction. A pursuit aggressively executed leaves the enemy trapped, unprepared, and unable to defend, faced with the options of surrendering or complete destruction. The rapid shifting of units, continuous day and night movements, hasty attacks, containment of bypassed enemy forces, large numbers of prisoners, and a willingness to forego some synchronization to maintain contact with and pressure on a fleeing enemy characterize this type of offensive operation. Pursuit requires swift maneuver and attacks by forces to strike the enemy's most vulnerable areas. A successful pursuit requires flexible forces, initiative by commanders at all levels, and the maintenance of a high operational tempo during execution.

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7-1. The enemy may conduct a retrograde when successful friendly offensive operations have shattered his defense. In addition, the enemy may deliberately conduct a retrograde when—

- He is reacting to a threat of envelopment.
- He is adjusting his battlefield dispositions to meet changing situations.
- He is attempting to draw the friendly force into fire sacks, kill zones, or engagement areas.
- He is planning to employ weapons of mass destruction.

Therefore, the friendly force must always consider the enemy's actions whenever it sees an opportunity to conduct a pursuit.

7-2. Division is the lowest echelon equipped with the intelligence assets to determine if the enemy is conducting a retrograde under Army of Excellence tables of organization and equipment. When faced with enemy attempts to break contact, lower echelons act to maintain contact until a division or corps commander directs them to initiate a pursuit operation.

7-3. Unlike an exploitation, which may focus on seizing key or decisive terrain instead of the enemy force, the pursuit always focuses on destroying the fleeing enemy force. This is seldom accomplished by directly pushing back the hostile forces on their lines of communication (LOCs). The commander in a pursuit tries to combine direct pressure against the retreating forces with an enveloping or encircling maneuver to place friendly troops across the enemy's lines of retreat. This fixes the enemy in positions where he can be defeated in detail. If it becomes apparent that enemy resistance has broken down entirely and the enemy is fleeing the battlefield, any type of offensive operation can transition to a pursuit.

7-4. Conducting a pursuit is a calculated risk. Once the pursuit begins, the commander maintains contact with the enemy and pursues retreating enemy forces without further orders. The commander maintains the pursuit as long as the enemy appears disorganized and friendly forces continue to advance. Like exploitation, pursuit tests the audacity and endurance of soldiers and leaders. In both operations, the attacker risks becoming disorganized. Extraordinary physical and mental effort is necessary to sustain the pursuit, transition to other operations, and translate tactical success into operational or strategic victory.

7-5. The commander must be aware of any approaching culmination point. The enemy is usually falling back on his supply base, and potentially on fresh units, while friendly forces become less effective as they expend resources faster than they can be replaced. Reasons to discontinue the pursuit include the presence of fresh enemy forces, greatly increased resistance, fatigue, dwindling supplies, diversion of friendly units to security missions, and the need to contain bypassed enemy units.

7-6. Those plan, prepare, and execute concepts introduced previously continue to apply during a pursuit. Assessment concepts described in FM 6-0 and FM 6-22 also apply. The commander modifies them as necessary to account for the specific existing factors of METT-TC.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

7-7. Normally, the commander does not organize specifically for a pursuit ahead of time, although he may plan for a pursuit as a branch or sequel to his offensive operation. Therefore, he must be flexible to react when the situation presents itself. The commander's maneuver and sustainment forces continue their ongoing activities while he readjusts their priorities to better support the pursuit. He acquires additional support from his higher headquarters in accordance with the factors of METT-TC. For most pursuits, the commander organizes his forces into security, direct-pressure, encircling, follow and

support, and reserve forces. The commander can employ available airborne and air assault units as part of his encircling force because of their ability to conduct vertical envelopments. Given sufficient resources, there can be more than one encircling force. The follow and support force polices the battlefield to prevent the dissipation of the direct-pressure force's combat power. Appendix B addresses the duties of a follow and support force. The reserve allows the commander to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities or respond to enemy counterattacks.

7-8. There are two basic organizational options in conducting a pursuit; each involves a direct-pressure force. The first is a frontal pursuit that employs only a direct-pressure force. The second is a combination that uses a direct-pressure force and an encircling force. The combination pursuit is generally more effective. Either the direct-pressure force or the encircling force can conduct the decisive operation in a combination pursuit.

## FRONTAL

7-9. In a frontal pursuit, the commander employs only a direct-pressure force to conduct operations along the same retrograde routes used by the enemy. (See Figure 7-1.) The commander chooses this option in two situations. The first is when he cannot create an encircling force with enough mobility to get behind the enemy force. The second is when he cannot create an encircling force capable of sustaining itself until it links up with the direct-pressure force. Either situation can occur because of restrictive terrain or because an enemy withdraws in a disciplined, cohesive formation and still has significant available combat power.

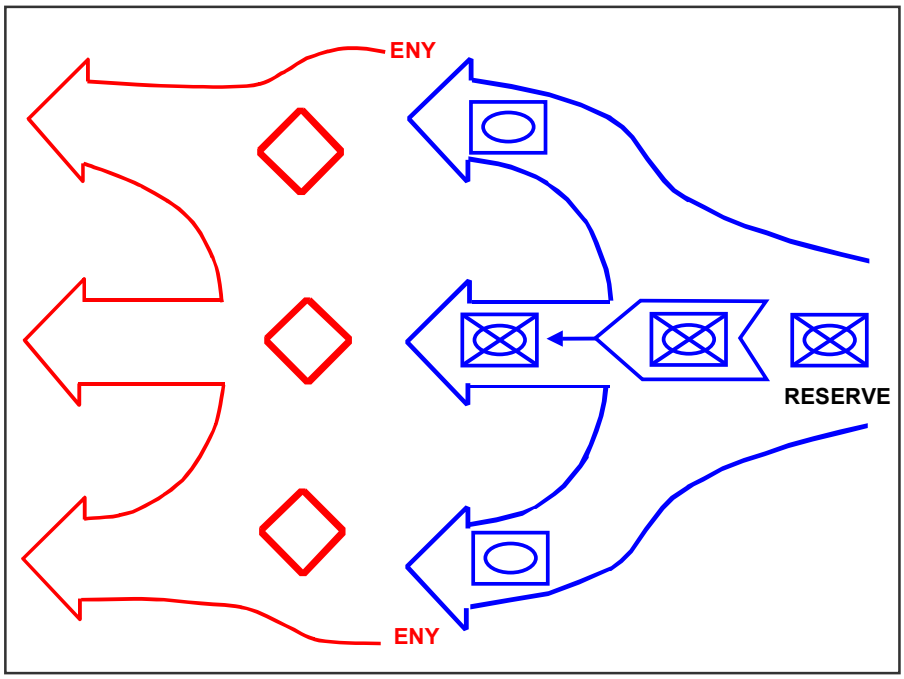


**Figure 7-1. Frontal Pursuit**

## COMBINATION

7-10. In the pursuit, the most decisive effects result from combining the frontal pursuit with encirclement. (See Figure 7-2.) In the combination pursuit, the direct-pressure force initiates a frontal pursuit immediately on discovering the enemy's initiation of a retrograde operation. This slows the tempo of the enemy's withdrawal (or fixes him in his current position if possible), and may destroy his rear security force. The direct-pressure force's actions help to set the conditions necessary for the success of the encircling force's operation by maintaining constant pressure. The encircling force conducts an envelopment or a turning movement to position itself where it can block the enemy's escape and trap him between the two forces, which leads to complete annihilation.

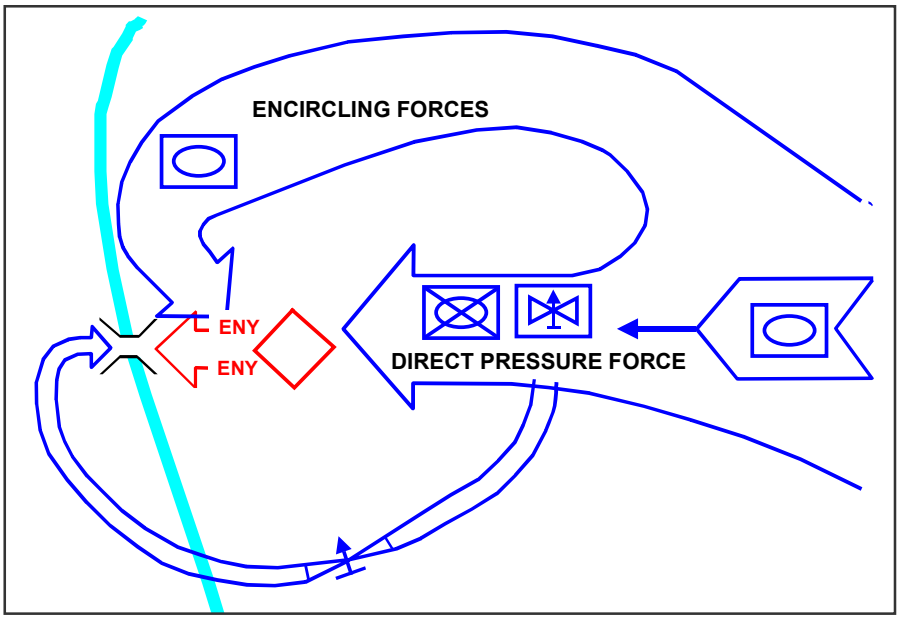


**Figure 7-2. Combination Pursuit**

7-11. The direct-pressure force conducts hasty attacks to maintain contact and apply unrelenting pressure until it destroys the enemy force. The direct-pressure force prevents enemy disengagement and subsequent reconstitution of the defense and inflicts maximum casualties. It forces the enemy to deploy frequently to delay the direct-pressure force and restricts his ability to disengage and rapidly move away. The direct-pressure force must be at least as mobile as the enemy. Heavy forces are ideally suited to this role, but the commander can employ light forces if the enemy is also foot-mobile. The direct-pressure force organizes to conduct a movement to contact and must be able to conduct a series of hasty attacks. It must be powerful enough to defeat enemy rear guard actions and maintain pressure on the enemy's main body.

7-12. The mobility of the encircling force must be equal—preferably superior—to the withdrawing enemy. If there is no inherent mobility differential, the commander must create one. This differential can also result from the direct-pressure force forcing the enemy to deploy. The commander can

enhance, and sometimes create, this mobility advantage by conducting countermobility operations against the enemy, specifically targeting locations such as choke points or bridges that will hinder the fleeing enemy's withdrawal. Heavy, air assault, and airborne forces are well suited for this mission. Attack helicopters are also effective when used as part of the encircling force. The encircling force must be strong enough to protect itself from the enemy's main body and slow or stop it until the friendly direct-pressure force can combine with the encircling force to destroy the enemy. It must be capable of mounting a hasty defense without placing itself at risk of annihilation. The encircling force must be self-contained since it normally operates out of supporting range of friendly indirect-fire systems. Therefore, it frequently has its supporting artillery attached. The primary mission of the encircling force is to prevent the enemy's escape by trapping him between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force. The commander can assign other missions to the encircling force, such as—

- Destroying the enemy's weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means.
- Linking up with airborne or air assault forces in their airheads.
- Reporting terrain conditions and other combat information beyond that normally addressed in the unit standing operating procedures.

The commander can assign the encirclement mission, wholly or in part, to available airborne or air assault units because their vertical envelopment capabilities allow friendly forces to be inserted deeper into enemy-controlled territory than would be possible with ground operations. The time required to plan airborne operations and stage airlift platforms impacts on the utility of airborne forces in small-scale pursuit operations.

7-13. The direct-pressure and encircling forces require engineer support to create lanes through obstacles, which enables them to move rapidly and continuously. The commander should place his engineers well forward in his movement formations to quickly breach any obstacles that cannot be bypassed. Engineers accompanying the encircling force must also be prepared to conduct countermobility and survivability tasks.

## CONTROL MEASURES

7-14. The commander uses control measures to retain his tactical options to converge on the most important axis or to redirect his pursuit effort on a new axis. These control measures should be flexible and capable of rapid adjustments to reflect changing conditions. This flexibility is also necessary when engaging advancing enemy reserves or counterattack forces.

7-15. Centralized planning and decentralized execution characterize the pursuit. The commander balances the need to prevent fratricide with the need to allow subordinates to take advantage of fleeting opportunities in a pursuit with rapidly moving forces and a rapidly changing situation. The commander designates an area of operations (AO) for each maneuver unit involved in the pursuit. He establishes few control measures for the direct-pressure force other than phase lines and checkpoints because of the pursuit's nature. He uses these phase lines to designate a forward and rearward boundary for the direct-pressure force. The forward boundary relieves the direct-pressure force

of any responsibility beyond the forward boundary. It also gives the higher headquarters flexibility to deal with the encircling force and enemy elements located beyond that forward boundary. The rear boundary becomes the boundary between the direct-pressure force and the follow and support force.

7-16. If the encircling force is a ground element, the control measures are almost identical to those of an envelopment. The commander must designate a route, an axis of advance, or an AO adjacent to that of the direct-pressure force to allow the encircling force to move parallel to and eventually get ahead of the fleeing enemy force. He designates a terrain objective as a guide for the encircling force. (See Objective HAWKE in Figure 7-3.) However, he may change this objective rapidly and frequently, based on the progress of the encircling force and the enemy. The objective should be a piece of ground that provides the encircling force good, defensible terrain that the enemy cannot easily bypass. The commander often selects choke points, such as defiles and bridges, as objectives for his encircling force.

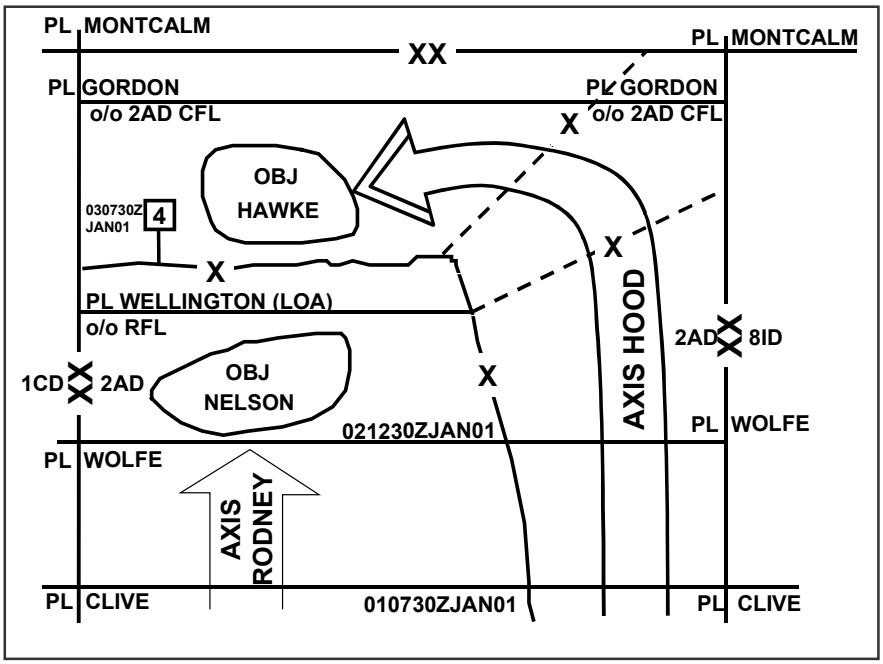


**Figure 7-3. Pursuit Control Measures**

7-17. The commander establishes a boundary or a restricted fire line between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force before the encircling force reaches its objective. He establishes other fire support coordinating measures (FSCM) around the area currently occupied by the encircling force to relieve it of unnecessary fire support coordination responsibilities. He directs security operations beyond the encircling force, allowing it to engage the withdrawing enemy without devoting resources to flank and rear security. The commander establishes additional control measures to control the convergence of both elements of the friendly force, such as phase lines and contact points.

## PLANNING A PURSUIT

7-18. The commander anticipates an enemy retrograde operation as either a branch or a sequel to the plan. The plan should identify possible direct-pressure, encircling, follow and support, and reserve forces and issue on-order or be-prepared missions to these forces. The commander should employ the maximum number of available combat troops in the pursuit. He bases the details of his plan on the enemy's anticipated actions, the combat formation of the attacking troops, and the amount of planning time available. The commander also considers—

- Possible routes the enemy might use to conduct his retrograde operations.
- Availability of his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to detect enemy forces and acquire targets in depth.
- Scheme of maneuver.
- Availability and condition of pursuit routes.
- Availability of forces to keep the pressure on the enemy until his destruction is complete.
- Critical terrain features.
- Use of reconnaissance and security forces.
- Allocation of precision-guided munitions and aviation support.
- Availability of CS and CSS resources.

Pursuit planning must address the possibility of defending temporarily during operational pauses while making preparations to continue the pursuit or to consolidate gains. However, the use of an operational pause generally results in the abandonment of the pursuit because the enemy is able to use that time to organize a coherent defense.

7-19. The commander must specifically address how to detect the enemy retrograde operations; otherwise, the enemy may succeed in breaking contact. The commander relies on active reconnaissance, an understanding of enemy tactics, and knowledge of the current tactical situation. He must watch for signs that indicate the enemy is preparing to conduct a retrograde, such as when the enemy—

- Lacks the capability to maintain his position or cohesion.
- Conducts limited local counterattacks.
- Intensifies his reconnaissance and intelligence efforts.
- Increases the amount of rearward movements and changes the type of elements conducting them, especially by fire support and reserves.
- Prepares his facilities, installations, equipment, and supply stock-piles for demolition and destruction.
- Decreases fire in intensity and effectiveness through the AO.
- Increases his fires in one or more individual sectors of the front, which does not appear to be in accordance with the developing situation, and at a time when the amount of defensive fires seems to be decreasing.

The presence or absence of any of the above signs may not necessarily indicate the start of a retrograde operation. The enemy could be attempting to draw friendly forces into an ambush or setting up a counterattack as part of his defense. The decision of when to start a pursuit is part of the art of tactics.

7-20. When the commander initiates a pursuit, he often creates the encircling force from uncommitted or reserve elements. Normally, these forces do not have fire support assets allocated to them. The commander must plan how to redistribute his fire support assets to properly support the encircling force. Attack helicopters and close air support are well suited to support the encircling force.

7-21. Engineer mobility and countermobility assets are instrumental in sustaining the rate of advance and hindering the enemy's withdrawal. Engineers prepare the route of advance and support the lateral dispersion of units transitioning to the pursuit and the movement of the reserve. During the pursuit, the commander must plan for his engineers to provide assault bridging and emergency road repairs to sustain the tempo of the pursuit. The commander also plans to use his engineer assets to block any bypassed enemy's withdrawal routes by using antitank and command-operated mines, demolitions, and obstacles.

7-22. Logistics units should plan for increases in the demand for fuel and maintenance as the tempo of operations increases. In the pursuit, priority of logistics normally goes to units having the greatest success. Logistics planners need to anticipate success since the depth of the pursuit depends on the capability of logistics assets to support the operation. The logistics elements supporting the pursuing force should be as mobile as possible. Logistics planners are particularly concerned with supporting the encircling force, such as casualty evacuation over possibly unsecured LOCs. The commander may need aerial resupply or heavily guarded convoys to support this force. Security for logistics convoys and LOCs are major planning considerations.

7-23. The commander uses all available logistics assets to provide essential support to the force pursuing the enemy. His pursuit plan must result in a force prepared to conduct wide-ranging operations using all available maneuver assets throughout his AO to complete the destruction and morale collapse of the enemy force.

## EXECUTING A PURSUIT

7-24. The decisive operation in a pursuit destroys the withdrawing enemy. This generally occurs as a result of encircling the enemy between the direct-pressure and the encircling forces or a major geographic barrier—such as an unfordable river—and his defeat in detail. The timely and correct decision to initiate a pursuit is critical to its success. If the enemy begins a retrograde undetected, he avoids the constant pressure that results in disrupting that operation. The commander expects the enemy forces to conduct retrograde operations at times advantageous to them—usually at night or during bad weather.

7-25. A pursuit is often conducted as a series of encirclements in which successive portions of the fleeing enemy are intercepted, cut off from outside support, and captured or destroyed. (Appendix D discusses encirclement operations.) The direct-pressure force conducts a series of hasty attacks to destroy the enemy's rear security force, maintain constant pressure on the enemy's main body, and slow the enemy's withdrawal. At every opportunity, the direct-pressure force fixes, slows down, and destroys enemy elements,

provided such actions do not interfere with its primary mission of maintaining constant pressure on the enemy's main body. The direct-pressure force can bypass large enemy forces if it can hand them off to follow and support units, or if they do not pose a risk to the direct-pressure force.

7-26. As soon as the commander designates a unit as the encircling force and directs its actions, the force moves as swiftly as possible by the most advantageous routes to cut off the enemy's retreat. If the encircling force cannot move farther and faster than the enemy, it attacks the enemy's main body from the flank. When this occurs, the commander should constitute and dispatch a new encircling force.

## GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

7-27. At the first indication of an enemy retrograde, the brigade or lower-echelon commander who discovers the enemy's rearward movement acts to maintain contact with the enemy across a wide area without waiting for orders from higher headquarters. This ensures that the enemy does not break contact and conduct an orderly retirement. These forces in contact constitute the nucleus of the direct-pressure force. As the situation permits, they reform into a movement column with reconnaissance and security elements in the lead and, if necessary, to the flank.

7-28. During a pursuit, the reconnaissance effort is intensive. Reconnaissance elements concentrate on all routes the enemy could use when conducting a retrograde operation. These elements provide information on the disposition of retreating enemy formations and on the forward movement of his reserves as the pursuit develops. The tactical situation during a pursuit may become obscure because of its potential depth. Much of the combat information needed during a pursuit is located behind the fleeing enemy force. Therefore, air reconnaissance, backed by technical intelligence systems, is vital to the overall reconnaissance effort. It can determine—

- The beginning of the rearward movement of enemy sustainment forces.
- The composition of retrograding forces and their direction of movement.
- The composition and direction of enemy reserve forces moving forward.
- The nature of obstacles and intermediate defensive positions.

Information about fresh enemy reserves and prepared positions is vital at the stage when a pursuit force may be approaching a culminating point; it may be the basis for terminating the pursuit.

7-29. The primary mission of the encircling force's reconnaissance assets is to find routes for the encircling force to allow it to move behind withdrawing enemy units and establish blocking positions. This mission may force these reconnaissance assets to operate outside the supporting range of the main body as they try to maneuver behind the retrograding enemy force. The encircling force avoids combat when possible until it reaches its assigned objective area. However, en route to its objective, it overruns any small enemy positions while bypassing larger enemy units. Forward security elements of the encircling force conduct activities to prevent the enemy from interfering with the forward movement of the encircling force's main body. These security elements move rapidly along all available roads or routes and overrun or bypass

small enemy pockets of resistance. If they encounter strongly held enemy positions, they attempt to find routes around or through these positions. The encircling force can then avoid these enemy positions and occupy blocking positions before withdrawing enemy forces can reach them. If necessary, the encircling force organizes a hasty defense behind the enemy to block his retreat.

## DISRUPT THE ENEMY

7-30. Keeping the enemy from reconstituting an effective defense is critical to success. Constant pressure by direct-pressure forces and echelon fire support systems disrupts and weakens the enemy. The commander uses lethal and nonlethal direct and indirect fires to keep pressure on the enemy. The enemy commander must not be allowed to freely adjust his dispositions to counter the actions of the friendly force. Artillery fire and air strikes harass and disrupt the enemy's attempts to move engaged forces to the rear or bring previously uncommitted forces into action. In a pursuit, decisive operations may include the ground maneuver of the direct-pressure or the encircling force. Fire support targets in a pursuit include fires on enemy columns and troop or vehicle concentrations at road junctions, defiles, bridges, and river crossings. They also include the repulsion of enemy counterattacks, destruction or delay of enemy reserves, and destruction of the enemy's fire support means. The commander conducts offensive information operations against the enemy's command and control (C2) system as an integral part of this disruption process, with emphasis on destroying or degrading the enemy's capability to reconstitute and synchronize an effective defense.

## FIX THE ENEMY

7-31. Using movement and fire effects or fire potential, the commander fixes a withdrawing enemy. If the direct-pressure force disrupts the enemy's C2 system, his ability to counter friendly efforts is significantly degraded, and the goal of fixing the enemy is much easier to accomplish.

7-32. The enemy attempts to use his reserves to restore the integrity of his defenses or prevent his withdrawing force from being overrun. Fixing enemy reserves is essential to the pursuit's success and is normally the focus of echelon shaping operations. The direct-pressure force fixes enemy reserves in place or slows them down so that they remain outside supporting distance until the withdrawing enemy force is completely annihilated.

## MANEUVER

7-33. To execute the pursuit, the commander normally combines a frontal pursuit with an encirclement. The direct-pressure force conducting the frontal pursuit advances in a column formation as quickly as possible. After a penetration, existing gaps between the different units of the direct-pressure force are likely to increase in size. Aware of the vulnerability of his open flanks in this situation, the commander must deploy his reserves where they can respond to dangers on his flanks. He does not expect a uniform rate of advance on all axes. Some columns may move rapidly while others are still engaged in penetrating the enemy's rear guard defensive positions or meeting enemy counterattacks.

7-34. The actions of the direct-pressure force should facilitate the commitment of an encircling force that moves parallel to the rearward-moving enemy. The depth of the pursuit depends on the size of the forces involved. It takes a division-level or higher commander to make the decision to initiate a pursuit because of the resources necessary to conduct a pursuit. The commander directing the initiation of a pursuit informs his higher commander of his intentions. This allows even greater resources to be devoted to the pursuit and avoids desynchronizing the higher headquarters' major operation or campaign.

7-35. The direct-pressure force normally employs an advance guard to prevent the enemy from ambushing the main body of the direct-pressure force and to overrun or bypass small enemy forces. The security element moves on multiple avenues of advance. If it encounters enemy units beyond its capacity to defeat, it conducts actions on contact to develop the situation. The commander uses combat information provided by these actions on contact to guide the main body of the direct-pressure force to destroy withdrawing enemy forces. These actions of the direct-pressure force may or may not be in conjunction with the actions of any encircling force.

7-36. The commander does everything possible to place his encircling force behind the withdrawing enemy and trap the bulk of that enemy force between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force. The direct-pressure force maintains enough pressure on the withdrawing enemy force so the encircling force can envelop it. To perform this task, the direct-pressure force must be strong enough to overcome any enemy rear guard before the enemy's main body can make a successful withdrawal. Once in position, the encircling force defends or attacks as necessary, responding to the enemy's actions and those of the direct-pressure force to complete the enemy's encirclement.

7-37. The pursuing force must not give the enemy time to reorganize for an all-around defense after it is encircled. If the enemy forms a perimeter, the pursuing commander must repeatedly split it into smaller elements until he destroys the encircled enemy force. If time is not critical, the commander can keep the encirclement closed, defeat enemy breakout attempts, and weaken the enemy by fires alone. He can greatly accelerate the collapse of a large, encircled enemy force by using psychological operations, precision-guided weapons, and improved conventional munitions in mass. (Appendix D addresses the reduction of an encircled enemy force.) If the resulting encirclement does not destroy the withdrawing enemy force, the commander conducts additional pursuit operations until the enemy is destroyed.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

7-38. Once the commander initiates a pursuit, he continues pursuing the enemy until a higher commander terminates the pursuit. Conditions under which a higher commander may terminate a pursuit include the following—

- The pursuing force annihilates or captures the enemy and resistance ceases.
- The pursuing force fixes the enemy for follow-on forces.
- The high commander makes an assessment that the pursuing force is about to reach a culminating point.

7-39. A pursuit often transitions into other types of offensive and defensive operations. If the enemy attempts to reorganize, forces conducting a pursuit execute hasty attacks. They conduct an exploitation to capitalize on the success of these attacks and then move back into pursuit. Forces conducting a pursuit may also transition into a defensive operation if the pursuing force reaches a culminating point. This usually occurs when the enemy introduces strong reinforcements to prepare for a counteroffensive.

PART THREE

# Defensive Operations

## Chapter 8

## Basics of Defensive Operations

*So the defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows.*

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

*Defensive operations* defeat an enemy attack, buy time, economize forces, or develop conditions favorable for offensive operations. Defensive operations alone normally cannot achieve a decision. Their purpose is to create conditions for a counteroffensive that allows Army forces to regain the initiative (FM 3-0). Other reasons for conducting defensive operations include—

- Retaining decisive terrain or denying a vital area to the enemy.
- Attritting or fixing the enemy as a prelude to offensive operations.

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- Surprise action by the enemy.
- Increasing the enemy's vulnerability by forcing him to concentrate his forces.

8-1. While the offense is the most decisive type of combat operation, the defense is the stronger type. The inherent strengths of the defense include the defender's ability to occupy his positions before the attack and use the available time to prepare his defenses. Preparations end only when the defender retrogrades or begins to fight. The defender can study the ground and select defensive positions that mass the effects of his fires on likely approaches. He combines natural and manmade obstacles to canalize the attacking force into his engagement areas (EAs). He can coordinate and rehearse his defensive plan while gaining intimate familiarity with the terrain. The defender does not wait passively to be attacked. He aggressively seeks ways of attriting and weakening attacking enemy forces before the initiation of close combat. He maneuvers to place the enemy in a position of disadvantage and attacks him at every opportunity, using his direct and indirect fires. The fires include the effects of offensive information operations and joint assets, such as close air support. The static and mobile elements of his defense combine to deprive the enemy of the initiative. He contains the enemy while seeking every opportunity to transition to the offense.

## HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

8-2. The following historical example illustrates how conducting a defense can attrit and fix an enemy as a prelude to offensive actions.

### The Battle of Kursk, July 1943

Using an area defense, the Red Army defeated the German Army's last Eastern Front operational-level attack at Kursk. The Red Army maximized its defensive advantage using mass, security, objective, and offensive as principles of war.

Soviet intelligence discovered the German offensive objective and concept: a double envelopment of the Kursk salient by panzer-heavy forces. The Red Army massed forces in the most threatened areas. The Soviets reinforced the two fronts defending the salient, prepared defenses, and established a strategic reserve behind the salient. They weighted the forward defenses on the northern and southern shoulders within the salient. They developed their defenses in depth, carefully tying them to the terrain and organizing infantry positions for all-around defense. Above all, they organized an antitank defense, with mutually supporting positions and mobile counterattack forces at all levels. Nearly 6,000 antitank (AT) guns and 3,300 tanks packed the defense.

The German attack in the northern part of the salient would fall on the 13th Army. The 13th Army consisted of 12 rifle divisions (RDs) organized into four rifle corps (RCs) supported by 700 guns, separate tank brigades, assault gun regiments, and antitank regiments. Within 30 kilometers of the front, the 13th Army established three fortification belts. Within each belt there were large numbers of

mutually supporting antitank positions. Each position consisted of four to six AT guns, with protection provided by infantry, machine guns, and obstacles.

The 29th RC occupied the 13th Army's main defensive position in a sector 19 kilometers wide and 15 kilometers deep, with the 15th RC on its right, the 70th Army on its left, and the 17th Guards Rifle Corps (GRC) rearward in the army second echelon. At the start of the battle, the 29th RC consisted of three rifle divisions (the 15th, 81st, and 307th), with supporting tank and artillery units. It deployed the 15th RD and 81st RD, with 12 to 15 antitank positions each, as the corps' first echelon. The 307th RD was the corps' second echelon. Both first-echelon divisions also deployed in two echelons. Each division established a battalion security force to its front.

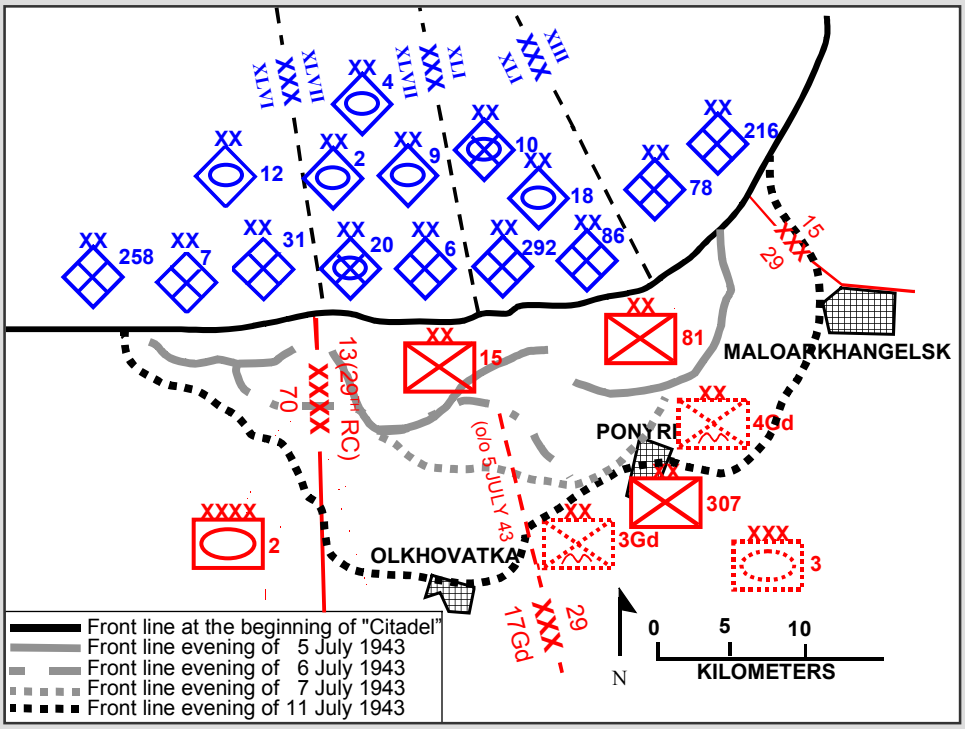


**Figure 8-1. Movements of an Area Defense**

During a week of intense defensive combat, the 29th RC conducted an area defense, making the Germans pay so dearly for every gain that they reached their culminating point short of Kursk. See Figure 8-1. Tested by nine German divisions, the 29th RC was able to keep German forces from breaking through its area of operations (AO), despite having its initial three divisions rendered combat-ineffective. In the course of the defense, the 29th RC inflicted 10,700 German casualties and destroyed an estimated 220 tanks and 71 guns. Key to the defense was the construction of those mutually supporting antitank positions, organized for all-around defense, with extensive engineer works to enhance the terrain. The 29th RC employed its attached forces aggressively, creating combined arms teams to hold terrain or maneuver against German forces within the defensive belt. It employed counterattacks to retake key terrain or gain time to develop defenses.

## TYPES OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

8-3. There are three basic types of defensive operations: the area defense, the mobile defense, and the retrograde. These three types have significantly different concepts and pose significantly different problems. Therefore, each type of defensive operations must be dealt with differently when planning and executing the defense. Although the names of these types of defensive operations convey the overall aim of a selected defensive operation, each typically contains elements of the other and combines static and mobile elements.

8-4. Although on the defense, the commander remains alert for opportunities to attack the enemy whenever resources permit. Within a defensive posture, the defending commander may conduct a spoiling attack or a counterattack, if permitted to do so by the factors of METT-TC. (Chapter 5 discusses these two forms of attack.)

### AREA DEFENSE

8-5. The *area defense* a type of defensive operation that concentrates on denying enemy forces access to designated terrain for a specific time rather than destroying the enemy outright (FM 3-0). The focus of the area defense is on retaining terrain where the bulk of the defending force positions itself in mutually supporting, prepared positions. Units maintain their positions and control the terrain between these positions. The decisive operation focuses on fires into EAs possibly supplemented by a counterattack. The reserve may or may not take part in the decisive operation. The commander can use his reserve to reinforce fires; add depth, block, or restore the position by counterattack; seize the initiative; and destroy enemy forces. Units at all echelons can conduct an area defense. (Chapter 9 discusses the area defense.)

### MOBILE DEFENSE

8-6. The *mobile defense* is a type of defensive operation that concentrates on the destruction or defeat of the enemy through a decisive attack by a striking force (FM 3-0). The mobile defense focuses on defeating or destroying the enemy by allowing him to advance to a point where he is exposed to a decisive counterattack by the striking force. The decisive operation is a counterattack conducted by the striking force. The striking force is a dedicated counterattack force constituting the bulk of available combat power. A fixing force supplements the striking force. The commander uses his fixing force to hold attacking enemy forces in position, to help channel attacking enemy forces into ambush areas, and to retain areas from which to launch the striking force.

8-7. A mobile defense requires an AO of considerable depth. The commander must be able to shape the battlefield, causing the enemy to overextend his lines of communication (LOCs), expose his flanks, and dissipate his combat power. Likewise, the commander must be able to move around and behind the enemy force he intends to cut off and destroy. Divisions and larger formations normally execute mobile defenses. However, subordinate echelons may participate as part of the fixing force or the striking force. (Chapter 10 discusses the mobile defense.)

### RETROGRADE

8-8. The *retrograde* is a type of defensive operation that involves organized movement away from the enemy (FM 3-0). The enemy may force these operations, or a commander may execute them voluntarily. The higher commander of the force executing the retrograde must approve the retrograde operation before its initiation in either case. The retrograde is a transitional operation; it is not conducted in isolation. It is part of a larger scheme of maneuver designed to regain the initiative and defeat the enemy. (Chapter 11 further discusses the retrograde.)

## COMMON DEFENSIVE CONTROL MEASURES

8-9. The commander controls the defense by using control measures to provide the flexibility needed to respond to changes in the situation and allow the defending commander to rapidly concentrate combat power at the decisive point. Defensive control measures within a commander's AO include designating his security area, the battle handover line (BHL), and the main battle area (MBA) with its associated forward edge of the battle area (FEBA). (Chapter 12 discusses security operations.) (Paragraph 8-13 defines the FEBA.) The commander can use battle positions and additional direct fire control and fire support coordinating measures (FSCM) in addition to those control measures introduced in Chapter 2 to further synchronize the employment of his combat power. He can designate disengagement lines to trigger the displacement of his forces.

### BATTLE HANDOVER LINE

8-10. **The *battle handover line* (BHL) is a designated phase line on the ground where responsibility transitions from the stationary force to the moving force and vice versa.** The common higher commander of the two forces establishes the BHL after consulting with both commanders. The stationary commander determines the location of the line. The BHL is forward of the FEBA in the defense or the forward line of own troops (FLOT) in the offense. The commander draws it where elements of the passing unit can be effectively supported by the direct fires of the forward combat elements of the stationary unit until passage of lines is complete. The area between the BHL and the stationary force belongs to the stationary force commander. He may employ security forces, obstacles, and fires in the area. (Figure 8-2, page 8-6, depicts a BHL used in conjunction with other control measures for a rearward passage of lines.)

### MAIN BATTLE AREA

8-11. **The *main battle area* (MBA) is the area where the commander intends to deploy the bulk of his combat power and conduct his decisive operations to defeat an attacking enemy**. In the defense, the commander's major advantage is that he normally selects the ground on which the battle takes place. He positions his forces in mutually supporting positions in depth to absorb enemy penetrations or canalize them into prepared EAs, defeating the enemy's attack by concentrating the effects of overwhelming combat power. The natural defensive strength of the position has a direct

bearing on the distribution of forces in relation to both frontage and depth. In addition, defending units typically employ field fortifications and obstacles to improve the terrain's natural defensive strength. The MBA also includes the area where the defending force creates an opportunity to deliver a decisive counterattack to defeat or destroy the enemy.

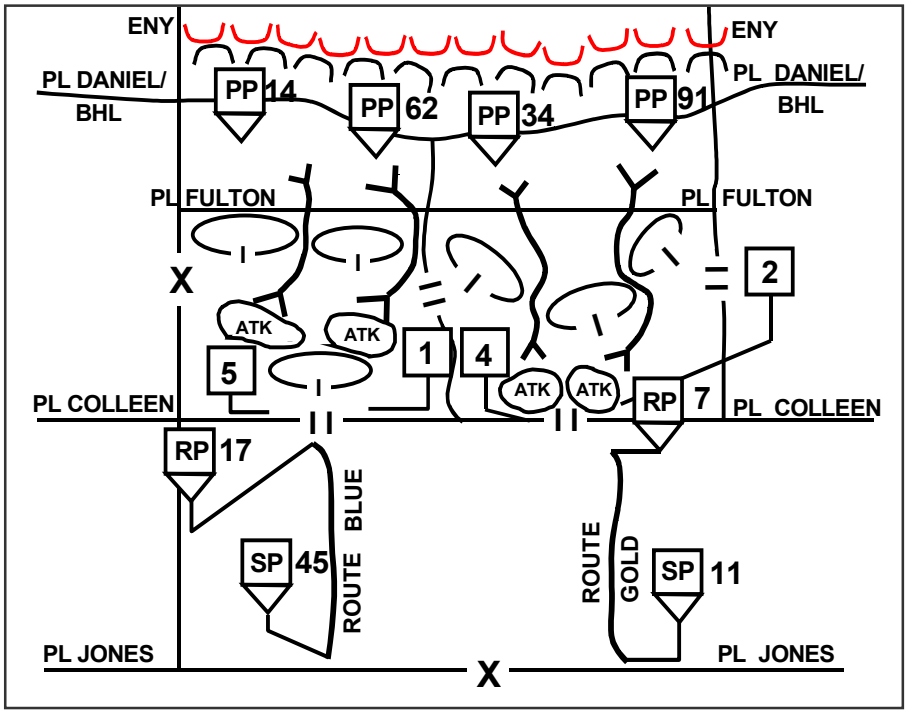


**Figure 8-2. Use of a BHL in a Rearward Passage of Lines**

8-12. The MBA extends from the FEBA to the unit's rear boundary. The commander locates his subordinate unit boundaries along identifiable terrain features and extends them out beyond the FLOT by establishing forward boundaries. Unit boundaries should not split avenues of approach or key terrain. The commander selects the MBA based on the products of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process and his own analysis using the factors of METT-TC. The IPB process indicates how the enemy will most likely use the available avenues of approach.

## FORWARD EDGE OF THE BATTLE AREA

8-13. The *forward edge of the battle area* (FEBA) is the foremost limits of a series of areas in which ground combat units are deployed, excluding the areas in which the covering or screening forces are operating, designated to coordinate fire support, the positioning of forces, or the maneuver of units (JP 1-02). The US Army uses a FEBA only in defensive operations. The FEBA is not a boundary, but conveys the commander's intent. It marks the foremost limits of the areas in which the preponderance of ground combat units deploy, excluding the areas in which security forces are operating. MBA forces can temporarily move forward of the FEBA to expedite the retrograde operations of security forces. The commander designates a FEBA to coordinate fire

support and to maneuver his forces. A phase line designating the forward-most point of the MBA indicates the FEBA. The FEBA shows the senior commander's planned limit for the effects of direct fires by defending forces. Defending units must address this area in their scheme of maneuver and exchange information regarding tactical plans at the coordinating points. (Figure 8-3 graphically depicts the current FEBA and a proposed FEBA.)

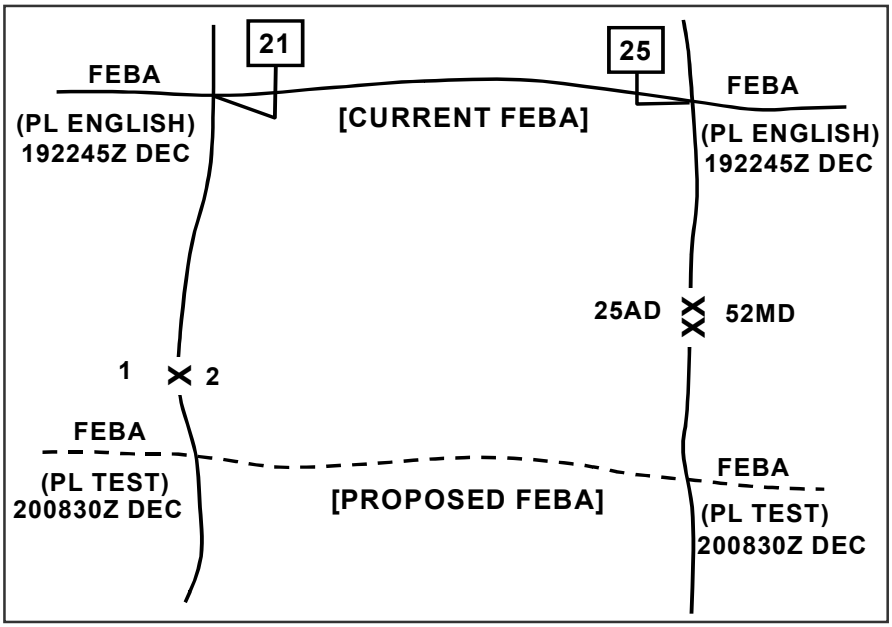


**Figure 8-3. Forward Edge of the Battle Area**

## BATTLE POSITIONS

8-14. **A *battle position* is a defensive location oriented on a likely enemy avenue of approach.** The battle position is an intent graphic that depicts the location and general orientation of the majority of the defending forces. A commander's use of a battle position does not direct the position of the subordinate's entire force within its bounds since it is not an AO. (See Figure 8-4, page 8-8.) Units as large as battalion task forces and as small as squads or sections use battle positions. They may occupy the topographical crest of a hill, a forward slope, a reverse slope, or a combination of these areas. The commander selects his positions based on terrain, enemy capabilities, and friendly capabilities. A commander can assign all or some of his subordinates battle positions within his AO. (See Figure 8-5, page 8-8.)

8-15. The commander may assign his subordinates battle positions in situations when he needs to retain a greater degree of control over the maneuver of his subordinate units than what he has with only an AO, as he controls maneuver outside the general location of the battle position. He may assign multiple battle positions to a single unit, which allows that unit to maneuver between battle positions. The commander specifies mission and engagement criteria to the unit assigned to a battle position. Security, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) forces may operate outside a unit's battle position.

8-16. Battle positions are not normally held at all costs. The commander assigning a unit to a battle position should specify when and under what conditions the unit displaces from the position. If a unit is ordered to defend a battle position, its commander has the option of moving off the battle position. If that unit is directed to retain a battle position, its commander needs to know the specific conditions that must exist before his unit can displace.

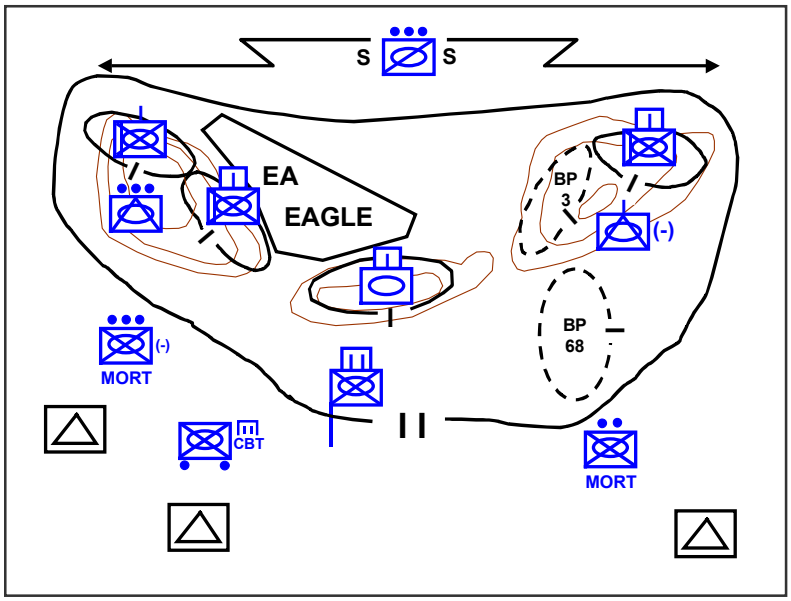


**Figure 8-4. Task Force Battle Position**

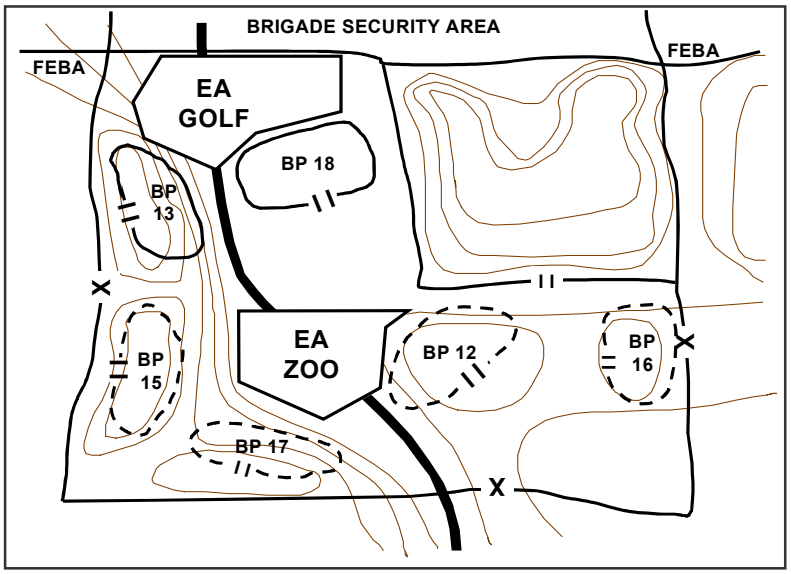


**Figure 8-5. AO and Battle Position Control Measures Used in Combination**

8-17. There are five kinds of battle positions—primary, alternate, supplementary, subsequent, and strong point. (See Figure 8-6.) When assigning battle positions, the commander always designates the primary battle position.

He designates and prepares alternate, supplementary, and subsequent positions as time and other resources permit and if the situation, especially terrain, requires them.

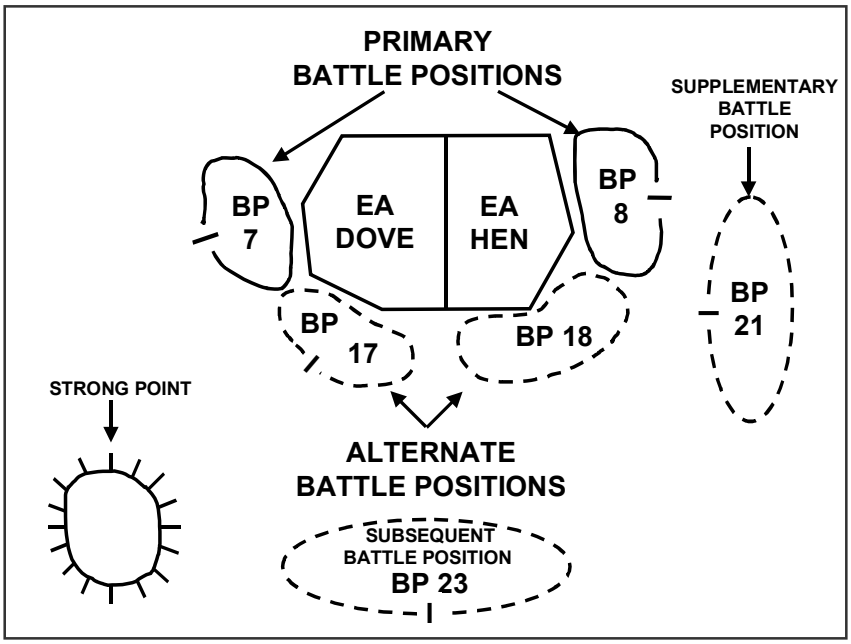


**Figure 8-6. Five Kinds of Battle Positions**

8-18. **The *primary position* is the position that covers the enemy's most likely avenue of approach into the AO.** It is the best position from which to accomplish the assigned mission, such as cover an EA.

8-19. **An *alternate position* is a defensive position that the commander assigns to a unit or weapon for occupation when the primary position becomes untenable or unsuitable for carrying out the assigned task.** It covers the same area as the primary position. He locates alternate positions so the occupant can continue to fulfill his original task, such as covering the same avenue of approach (AA) or EA as the primary position. These positions increase the defender's survivability by allowing him to engage the enemy from multiple positions. For example, a unit moves to its alternate positions when the enemy brings suppressive fires on the primary position.

8-20. **A *supplementary position* is a defensive position located within a unit's assigned AO that provides the best sectors of fire and defensive terrain along an avenue of approach that is not the primary avenue where the enemy is expected to attack.** For example, an AA into a unit's AO from one of its flanks normally requires establishing supplementary positions to allow a unit or weapon system to engage enemy forces traveling along that avenue.

8-21. **A *subsequent position* is a position that a unit expects to move to during the course of battle.** A defending unit may have a series of subsequent positions. Subsequent positions can also have primary, alternate, and supplementary positions associated with them.

8-22. **A *strong point* is a heavily fortified battle position tied to a natural or reinforcing obstacle to create an anchor for the defense or to deny the enemy decisive or key terrain.** The commander prepares a strong point for all-around defense. (See Figure 8-7.) He positions strong points on key or decisive terrain as necessary. The unit occupying the strong point prepares positions for its weapon systems, vehicles, soldiers, and supplies. The commander also establishes a strong point when he anticipates that enemy actions will isolate a defending force retaining terrain critical to the defense.

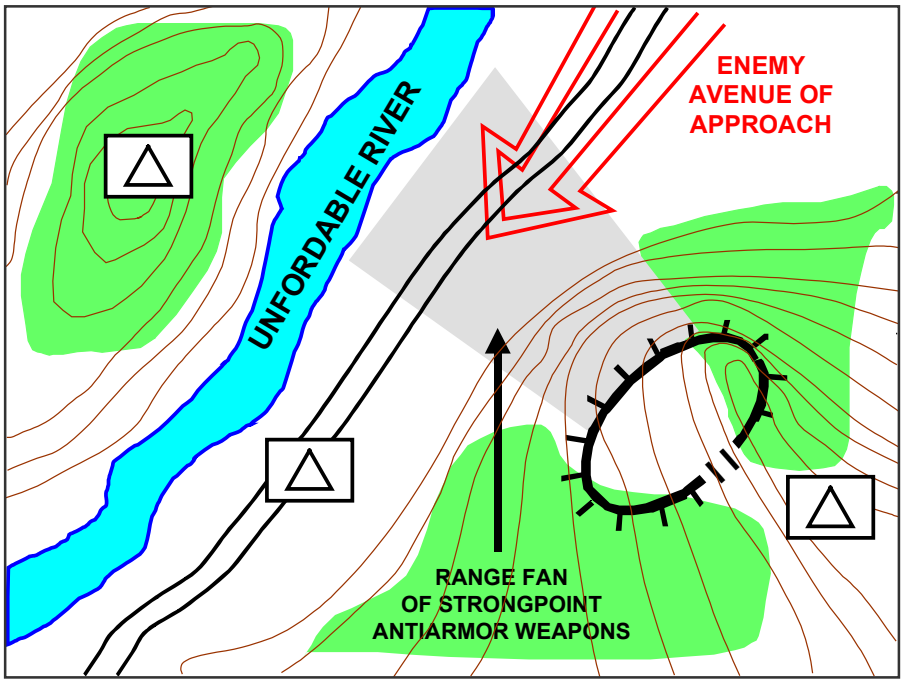


**Figure 8-7. Strong Point Defense**

8-23. Before assigning a strong point mission, the commander must ensure that the strong point force has sufficient time and resources to construct the position, which requires significant engineer support. A minimally effective strong point typically requires a one-day effort from an engineer unit the same size as the unit defending the strong point. Normally, companies and battalions occupy strong points, although brigades may construct them. The commander does not normally establish strong points for units smaller than company size. This is because a platoon or squad cannot secure a perimeter large enough to encompass all required assets and supplies.

## FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATING MEASURES

8-24. The commander tries to engage the enemy at extended ranges and attrit him as his attack advances. To control indirect fires in the defense, the commander uses those common FSCM introduced in Chapter 2. He can also employ final protective fires.

8-25. *Final protective fires* (FPFs) are immediately available preplanned barriers of fires designed to impede enemy movement across defensive lines or areas (JP 3-09). Both direct- and indirect- fire weapons can provide FPFs. The commander can only assign each firing battery or platoon a single FPF. A FPF is a priority target for an element or system, and those fire units are laid on that target when they are not engaged in other fire missions. When the enemy initiates his final assault into a defensive position, the defending unit initiates its FPFs to kill enemy infantry soldiers and suppress his armored vehicles. Selected crew-served weapons fire along predesignated final protective lines (FPLs) to break up infantry assaults. (Figure 8-8 depicts a FPF.)

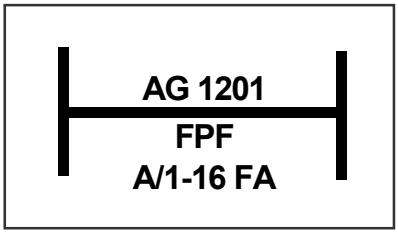


**Figure 8-8. Final Protective Fire**

## DIRECT FIRE CONTROL MEASURES

8-26. The commander engages the enemy force with all available defensive fires when they enter the defending unit's EA. Chapter 2 defines these direct fire control measures, such as target reference points and EAs. (See Figure 8-9.)

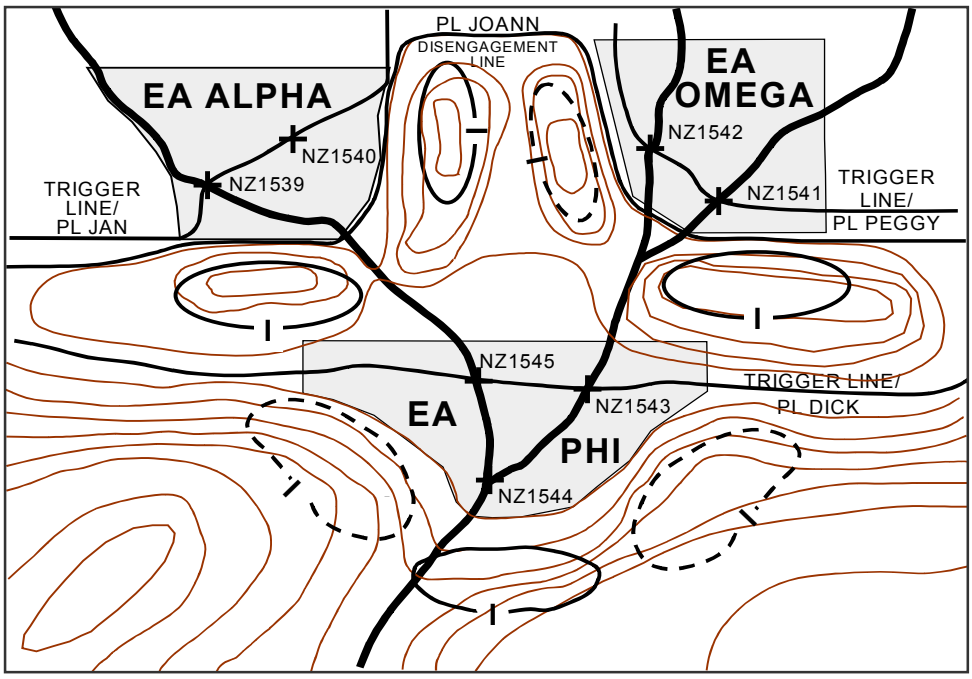


**Figure 8-9. Direct Fire Control Measures**

## DISENGAGEMENT LINE

8-27. **A *disengagement line* is a phase line located on identifiable terrain that, when crossed by the enemy, signals to defending elements that it is time to displace to their next positions.** Phase Line JOANN is a disengagement line in Figure 8-9. The commander uses these lines in the

delay and the defense when he does not intend for the defending unit to become decisively engaged. He establishes criteria for the disengagement, such as number of enemy vehicles by type, friendly losses, or enemy movement to flanking locations. Multiple disengagement lines, one for each system in the defense, may exist.

## COMMON DEFENSIVE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

8-28. At the onset of the attack, the defending commander yields the initiative to the enemy. However, he exploits prepared, mutually supporting positions organized for all-around defense and uses his knowledge of the terrain to slow the enemy's momentum. The defending force maintains its security and disrupts the enemy's attack at every opportunity. The defending commander hinders enemy offensive preparations by using long-range fires and deep maneuver to reduce the force of the enemy's initial blows and start the process of wresting the initiative from the enemy. He draws the enemy into EAs where he can initiate combat on his own terms. The commander surprises the enemy as concentrated and integrated fires violently erupt from concealed and protected positions. He then counterattacks the enemy, repeatedly imposing unexpected blows. The widespread application of highly accurate and lethal weapons, high degree of tactical mobility, dynamic situational changes, and extended spatial scope of unit AOs all characterize contemporary combined arms warfare. The commander exploits small tactical success and opportunities to build momentum rapidly. The commander first able to see the battlefield, understand the common operational picture's implications, and take effective action will defeat his opponent's combined arms team, shatter his cohesion, degrade his strength and ability to concentrate, and destroy his exposed forces.

8-29. The defending force does not have to kill every enemy soldier, squad, or combat system to be successful. It only has to destroy the enemy's ability to synchronize his combined arms team or his will to fight. Those events signal a transition period that affords the defending commander the opportunity to seize the initiative and return to the offense.

8-30. A defense is more effective when there is adequate time to thoroughly plan and prepare defensive positions. Lack of preparation time may cause the commander to maintain a larger-than-normal reserve force or accept greater risks than usual. All units must be capable of mounting a defense with minimal preparation, but a strong defense takes time to organize and prepare. If the enemy attack does not take place at the predicted time, the commander should use the additional time to improve his unit's defensive positions. He can increase the effectiveness of the security area, establish additional alternate and supplementary positions, refine the defensive plan to include branches and sequels, conduct defensive rehearsals, and maintain vehicles and personnel. To gain time to organize a defense, the commander may order his security force to conduct a delay while the main body disengages and moves to more advantageous positions. The security force must know how long it needs to delay the enemy for the main body to prepare its defense and be task organized to conduct a delay. (Chapter 11 discusses the delay.)

8-31. The common defensive planning considerations addressed in the following paragraphs apply to all types of defensive operations. In the defense, synchronizing the effects of his combat and supporting systems allows a commander to apply overwhelming combat power against selected advancing enemy forces to unhinge the enemy commander's plan and destroy his combined arms team. Defensive synchronization is normally the result of detailed planning and preparation among the various units participating in an operation. While these activities may be separated in time and space, they are synchronized if their combined consequences are felt at decisive times and places. All defensive operations are a mix of static and dynamic actions. As an operation evolves, the commander knows that he will probably be required to shift his decisive and shaping operations to press the fight and keep the enemy off balance. Synchronized prior planning and preparation bolster the commander's combat power, increasing the effectiveness of the defense. The commander must remain cognizant of the possibility of dislocated civilians attempting to move through his positions in an effort to escape approaching enemy forces throughout the defense.

## INTELLIGENCE

8-32. During the planning process, the commander uses intelligence products to identify probable enemy objectives and various approaches. He studies patterns of enemy operations and the enemy's vulnerability to counterattack, interdiction, electronic warfare, air attacks, and canalization by obstacles. The commander must also examine the enemy's capability to conduct air attacks against his force, insert forces behind friendly units, and employ nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. He must determine how soon follow-on forces can join the fight against an enemy attacking in echelons.

8-33. The commander uses his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and engineer assets to study the terrain. By studying the terrain, the commander tries to determine the principal enemy and friendly heavy, light, and air avenues of approach. He wants to determine the most advantageous area for the enemy's main attack, as well as other factors of observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, and cover and concealment (OAKOC). (See FM 6-0 for a detailed discussion of OAKOC.)

8-34. The commander approves an integrated ISR plan that provides early identification of as many of the following requirements as possible:

- Locations, composition, equipment, strengths, and weaknesses of the advancing enemy force.
- Enemy reconnaissance objectives or goals.
- Locations of possible enemy assembly areas.
- Location of enemy indirect fire weapon systems and units.
- Location of gaps, assailable flanks, and other enemy weaknesses.
- Location of areas for enemy helicopter and parachute assaults.
- Location of artillery and air defense gun and missile units.
- Location of enemy electronic warfare units.
- Location, numbers, and intentions of civilian populations.
- Effects of weather and terrain on current and projected operations.

- Likely withdrawal routes for enemy forces.
- Numbers, routes, and direction of movement of dislocated civilians.
- Anticipated timetable for the enemy's most likely COA.
- Locations of enemy command posts, fire direction control centers, electronic warfare sites, and target acquisition sensor and target fusion sites and the frequencies they are using.

It is unlikely that the commander has complete knowledge of the enemy's intentions; therefore, he must plan to continue his intelligence efforts during the battle. (FM 2-0 provides an overview of the intelligence process and the capabilities of technical surveillance systems. FM 3-55 discusses reconnaissance assets available at each echelon. FMs 3-11.9 and 3-34.170 discuss the specialized tasks associated with NBC and engineer reconnaissance.)

8-35. The commander's ability to see the enemy is critical to the conduct of all defensive operations. Defensive plans must address the sustainment, replacement, and reconstitution of ISR assets throughout the preparation and execution of the defense.

## MANEUVER

8-36. The commander's intent is to defeat the enemy force's attack by overwhelming it with repeated, unexpected blows before it conducts its final assault on friendly defensive positions. As the enemy attack fails, the enemy must attempt to withdraw or transition to a defense in the face of friendly counterattacks. If the enemy succeeds in overrunning a key defensive position, the defending force counterattacks to overwhelm the enemy before he can either organize that position for defense or exploit his success.

### Exploit the Advantages of Terrain

8-37. The defending commander exploits the defending force's advantages of occupying the terrain where the fight will occur. The defending force engages the attacker from locations that give the defending force an advantage over the attacking enemy. These locations include defiles, rivers, thick woods, swamps, cliffs, canals, built-up areas, and reverse slopes. Defensive positions in the MBA should make use of existing and reinforcing obstacles. The commander may choose to shape the battlefield by defending one area to deny terrain to the enemy while delaying in another area to deceive the enemy commander into believing he has achieved success.

8-38. The defending commander plans how to use key terrain to impede the enemy's movement. He seeks out terrain that allows him to mass the effects of his fires but forces the enemy to commit his force piecemeal into friendly EAs. This exposes portions of the enemy force for destruction without giving up the advantages of fighting from protected positions. Examples of key terrain include terrain that permits the defending force to cover a major obstacle system by fire, and important road junctions and choke points that impact troop movements, such as the movement of reserves and LOCs.

8-39. The commander determines the probable force ratios he will face and arrays his forces accordingly. The terrain impacts how fast the enemy can close on his positions and how much time is available to employ combat multipliers, such as indirect fires. Once the commander arrives at acceptable

force ratios—or the degree of risk he must take is clear—he allocates his available forces and begins planning his EAs.

8-40. On each enemy AA, the commander determines where he wants to destroy the enemy. He arrays forces allocated to that AA around this point to establish an EA. He uses obstacles and fires to canalize enemy forces into this EA. The commander takes actions to increase the kill probabilities of his various weapon systems at different ranges. This includes establishing range markers for direct fire weapons, confirming the zero on his weapons, or clearing obstacles that might snag the cables over which the commands of his wire-guided munitions, like the TOW missile, travel.

8-41. Generally, defending forces have the advantage of preparing the terrain by reinforcing natural obstacles, fortifying positions, and rehearsing operations. First, they prepare the ground to force the piecemeal commitment of enemy forces and their subsequent defeat in detail. Second, they prepare the ground to force the enemy to fight where he does not want to fight, such as in open areas dominated by terrain that offers adequate cover and concealment for the occupying friendly forces. The defending force tries to guide or entice the enemy into prepared EAs. Units employ and continuously strengthen obstacles and fortifications to improve the natural defensive strength of the position, which has a direct bearing on the distribution of forces, frontages, and depth of the defense.

8-42. Terrain features that favor defensive operations include—

- A series of parallel ridges across the line of hostile advance.
- Unfordable streams, swamps, lakes, and other obstacles on the front and flanks.
- High ground with good observation and long-range fields of fire.
- Concealed movement routes immediately behind defensive positions.
- Limited road network in front of the line of contact to confine the enemy to predictable avenues of approach.
- Good road network behind the line of contact that allows the commander to reposition his forces as the battle progresses.

The opposite of the terrain conditions listed above degrades a force's ability to conduct defensive operations. For example, terrain with a limited road net that canalizes the defending force allows the enemy to predict its movement and take steps to interdict that movement.

### Maintain Security

8-43. Security operations seek to confuse the enemy about the location of the commander's main battle positions, prevent enemy observation of preparations and positions, and keep the enemy from delivering observed fire on the positions. They also try to force the attacking enemy to deploy prematurely. They can offset the attacker's inherent advantage of initiative regarding the time, place, plan, direction, strength, and composition of his attack by forcing him to attack blind into prepared defenses. The commander must not permit enemy reconnaissance and surveillance assets to determine the precise location and strength of defensive positions, obstacles, EAs, and reserves. First, the defending force conducts reconnaissance to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. Second, each echelon normally establishes a security area

forward of its MBA. All units conduct aggressive security operations within their AO, including the rear area, to seek out and repel or kill enemy reconnaissance and other forces. Units implement operations security (OPSEC) measures and other defensive information operations to deny the enemy information about friendly dispositions. (See Chapter 12 for more information on security operations.)

### Disrupt the Enemy Attack at Every Opportunity

8-44. The defending force conducts operations throughout the depth of the enemy's formation in time and space to destroy his key units and assets, particularly his artillery and reserves, or disrupt their timely introduction into battle at the point of engagement. This allows the defending force to regain the initiative. It conducts spoiling attacks to disrupt the enemy's troop concentrations and attack preparations. The defending force counterattacks enemy successes rapidly with its reserve, the forces at hand, or a striking force before the enemy can exploit success. It conducts offensive information operations to assist this process.

### Mass the Effects of Combat Power

8-45. The defending force must mass the effects of its combat power to overwhelm the enemy and regain the initiative. The commander uses economy of force measures in areas that do not involve his decisive operation to mass the effects of his forces in the area where a decision is sought. This decisive point can be a geographical objective or an enemy force. In an area defense, defending units use EAs to concentrate the effects of overwhelming combat power from mutually supporting positions. In a mobile defense, the commander uses the striking force to generate overwhelming combat power at the decisive point. Another way he can generate the effects of mass is through committing his reserve.

### Ensure Mutual Support

8-46. Mutual support exists when positions and units support each other by direct, indirect, lethal, and nonlethal fire, thus preventing the enemy from attacking one position without being subjected to fire from one or more adjacent positions. Mutual support increases the strength of all defensive positions, prevents defeat in detail, and helps prevent infiltration between positions. Tactical positions achieve the maximum degree of mutual support between them when they are located to observe or monitor the ground between them or conduct patrols to prevent any enemy infiltration. At night or during periods of limited visibility, the commander may position small tactical units closer together to retain the advantages of mutual support. Unit leaders must coordinate the nature and extent of their mutual support.

### Heavy Forces

8-47. When the majority of a defending force consists of mechanized or armored units, the commander can conduct a defense designed to take advantage of the tactical mobility and protection offered by organic combat vehicles. Heavy forces can maneuver to delay the advance of a strong enemy force and then immediately change from a mobile to a static form of defense or

counterattack. Such forces are well suited for use as security and MBA forces. They are more suited for operations within an NBC contaminated environment than light forces because of their built-in protection.

### Light Forces

8-48. When facing enemy light forces, the commander deploys and uses defending light forces in the same manner as heavy forces are used against other heavy forces. Light forces facing a heavy enemy are primarily used in static roles within the MBA or in security roles within the rear area. When facing heavy enemy forces, light infantry forces are most effective when fighting from prepared defenses or in close terrain, such as swamps, woods, hilly and mountainous areas, and urban areas where they can take advantage of their foot mobility and short-range infantry and anti-armor weapons.

8-49. The commander uses an air assault unit in the same manner as other light forces once it deploys into its landing zones (LZs). (See Appendix C for a discussion of air assault operations.) However, there may be more problems in extracting such a force, particularly if it is in direct contact with the enemy. Because of its mobility and potential reaction speed, an air assault force is often well-suited for a reserve role during defensive operations. Its tasks might include—

- Rapid reinforcement of a threatened position.
- Occupation of a blocking position, possibly in conjunction with existing defensive positions.
- Rear area security operations, such as containment of an enemy airborne or helicopter assault.
- Reinforcement of encircled friendly forces.
- Flank protection.

### Rotary- and Fixed-Wing Aviation

8-50. Aviation assets are particularly valuable in the defense because of their speed, mobility, and versatility. Their tasks can include—

- Conducting reconnaissance and security operations.
- Conducting shaping operations to establish the necessary conditions for decisive operations by other forces through attritting, disrupting, and delaying the enemy.
- Conducting counterattacks and spoiling attacks.
- Controlling ground for limited periods where a commander does not wish to irrevocably commit ground forces; for example, forward of an executed obstacle.
- Blocking enemy penetrations.
- Closing gaps in a defense plan before the arrival of ground maneuver forces.
- Facilitating the disengagement of ground forces.
- Countering enemy activities in the rear area, in particular enemy airborne or air assault forces.
- Using available utility and cargo helicopters in their normal roles to support the defensive effort, such as resupplying the defending force with Class IV barrier material or facilitating casualty evacuation.

- Assisting in the countermobility effort.
- Providing long-range biological surveillance.

## FIRE SUPPORT

8-51. In the defense, the commander uses his fire support systems to neutralize, suppress, or destroy enemy forces; to delay or disrupt the enemy's ability to execute a given COA; and to enhance the effects of massed direct fires. Thus fire support systems support both the commander's decisive and shaping operations.

8-52. The defending force is more effective if it can locate and attack enemy forces while the enemy is stationary and concentrated in assembly areas or advancing along LOCs, as opposed to when he is deployed in combat formations within the MBA. To accomplish this, the defending force must employ its fire support system throughout its AO. It must be closely linked to target acquisition means, including ISR assets.

8-53. As the commander develops his defensive plans, he must visualize how to synchronize, coordinate, and distribute the effects of indirect and direct fire at the decisive time and place. He places permissive FSCM as close as possible to friendly positions to facilitate the rapid engagement of attacking enemy forces. Prior coordination facilitates the massing of the effects of fires before enemy targets concentrated at obstacles and other choke points can disperse. Proper distribution of fire effects ensures the massing of overwhelming combat power at the decisive point. Proper fire distribution also ensures that high-payoff targets are destroyed without wasting assets through repetitive engagement by multiple friendly systems.

8-54. Indirect fires have the greatest impact on the enemy when they are synchronized with direct fires and the use of obstacles, defensive positions, and counterattack plans. The commander must integrate the defensive fire and obstacle plans from the beginning. Indirect fires complement the effects of obstacles and can disrupt enemy attempts to breach or bypass these obstacles. For the plans to work, all elements in the fire support chain—from forward observers in fire support teams to the fire support coordinator including the supporting tactical air control party—must understand the commander's intent, the scheme of maneuver, and the obstacle plan.

8-55. There are various fire support considerations for each phase of the fight. As part of his shaping operations during defense preparations, a commander tries to disrupt the enemy's attack preparations by—

- Conducting harassing fires on choke points and likely enemy assembly areas.
- Employing air support on known, suspected, and likely enemy locations.
- Attritting his resources by continuously engaging high-payoff targets.
- Conducting offensive information operations to degrade the enemy's ability to command and control his forces.
- Employing counterfires to engage and destroy enemy artillery and mortar systems attempting to deliver suppressive fires.

- Providing fires in support of the unit's security operations, such as a unit conducting the tactical mission task of counterreconnaissance.

In some situations it may be better to wait to execute a counterfire mission until the fighting begins in the MBA. However, when defending forces enjoy qualitative advantages in fire support, the advantages accruing from a counterfire battle usually outweigh the risks to the defending maneuver force. The defender's ability to mass fires quickly and then rapidly reposition its forces is a major factor in disrupting the enemy and establishing the required conditions for successful decisive operations.

8-56. The commander employs fires to support his security forces, using precision and other munitions to destroy enemy reconnaissance and other high-payoff targets. This also helps to deceive the enemy about the location of the MBA. He supports the security force by planning the delivery of the effects of fires at appropriate times and places throughout his area of influence to slow and canalize the enemy forces as they approach the security area. This allows the security force to engage the enemy on more favorable terms. To prevent fratricide, he places no fire areas over his security forces. Finally, he uses fires to support the withdrawal of the security force once its shaping mission is complete and the defending unit is prepared to conduct MBA operations.

8-57. Air support can play an important part in delaying enemy forces following or attempting to bypass rearward-moving defending forces. Air operations contribute to overcoming the enemy's initial advantage of freedom of action. Often, only aircraft are available to initially oppose an enemy penetration until ground forces can redeploy to engage it. Close air support (CAS) can be instrumental in disrupting an enemy advance. It can operate with Army helicopters and artillery assets to form a joint air attack team (JAAT). The commander also incorporates artillery fires with electronic warfare and joint systems to suppress enemy air defenses while CAS hits a target. Air interdiction can delay, destroy, or neutralize enemy follow-on forces, thereby providing the commander with additional time to prepare his defensive positions.

8-58. Once the fight moves into the MBA, fire support assets continue to target enemy combat units to force them to deploy. At the same time, fire support assets inflict casualties, disrupt the cohesion of the enemy's attack and impede his ability to mass combat power. Fire support assets continue to attack enemy follow-on forces before they can be committed to the MBA. This further isolates the attacking enemy force. They attack C2 facilities and logistics sites in depth to contribute to isolating the attacking enemy. The commander takes advantage of the range and flexibility of his fire support weapons to mass fires at critical points, such as obstacles and EAs, to slow and canalize the enemy to provide better targets for direct fire systems. Fire support systems cover barriers, gaps, and open areas within the MBA. Tasks assigned to these fire support systems include closing obstacle gaps or reseeding previously breached obstacles in accordance with the rules of engagement. Other tasks include—

- Massing fires to suppress enemy direct and indirect fire systems to facilitate defensive maneuver, especially the counterattack and disengagement.
- Neutralizing or isolating enemy forces that have penetrated the defensive area and impeding the movement of enemy reserves.

- Attacking enemy artillery and forward air defense elements.
- Using jamming to degrade or destroy the enemy's ability to transmit data and information.
- Reallocating fire support assets, after identifying the enemy's main effort, to reinforce fires in the most vulnerable areas.
- Separating attacking enemy combat vehicles from light infantry, disrupting the enemy's combined arms team.

8-59. In response to shallow enemy penetrations, artillery commanders normally reposition their systems laterally, away from that point. This allows artillery systems to provide fire support throughout the area of penetration.

## AIR DEFENSE

8-60. Freedom of movement is essential to successful defensive operations. In a hostile air environment, the defending force must establish air defense in depth around critical points, areas, units, and activities. The dedicated air defense artillery resources probably cannot provide adequate cover completely throughout the AO against all possible threats; therefore, the commander must establish priorities for coverage and assume risk.

### Active Air Defense

8-61. Normally, the commander's priorities for air defense protection in the defense begin with his C2 facilities. Because they are generally fixed or semi-fixed sites with high-electronic signatures, they are susceptible to attack by enemy aircraft. Air defense coordinators examine air avenues of approach toward C2 facilities and position guns and missiles to prevent enemy aircraft from reaching their targets.

8-62. Logistics support areas, main supply routes (MSRs), and other logistics sites are also relatively fixed and easily identified from the air. Passive air defense measures help prevent detection. However, once the enemy detects them, he will attempt to attack them. Therefore, route and point security missions require air defense units to locate along the MSR and in positions to protect fixed locations. The commander allocates his air defense assets to protect these locations in accordance with the factors of METT-TC.

8-63. The air defense responsibility may be most critical in forward areas since the commander will task air defense artillery (ADA) units along the FEBA to engage enemy aircraft providing CAS or attempting low-level penetration of friendly air defenses en route to a target in the friendly rear area. Air defense assets protecting combat forces in forward battle positions and strong points are more exposed to destruction by enemy direct and indirect systems than air defense systems located elsewhere on the battlefield. The commander must take steps to ensure their survivability, such as placing man-portable air defense missile gunners inside combat vehicles when not actively engaging enemy aircraft.

8-64. The reserve or striking force is initially a stationary hidden force. However, it is easy to observe from the air as it moves on its commitment by the commander. It is especially vulnerable once discovered. Therefore, the

commander positions air defense assets to protect the reserve or striking force, whether it is stationary or moving.

8-65. Air defense systems that protect the reserve and the striking force must be as mobile and protected as the forces they are protecting. The less mobile equipment is usually kept in more static roles. The commander continually coordinates his air defense activities with his air and artillery operations to avoid fratricide. Air defense units and support assets move in support of the defensive effort. If the enemy can disrupt this support from the air, it will affect the defense. Correct assessment of enemy air corridors and tactics is essential to guarantee protection and management of these resources.

8-66. The destruction of key bridges or the closing of choke points interrupts the defender's freedom of movement. The force must protect these positions to sustain the defense and allow the conduct of counterattacks. The commander locates air defense assets to protect these vital locations.

**Passive Air Defense**

8-67. The commander also uses passive air defense measures to protect his force. *Passive air defense measures* are all measures other than active defense taken to minimize the effects of the hostile air action (FM 3-01.8). Passive defense measures are of two types: attack avoidance and damage-limiting measures. Both include the use of cover, concealment and camouflage, and deception.

8-68. **Attack Avoidance.** Attack avoidance means taking steps to avoid being seen by the enemy. If the force cannot be seen, the probability of it being hit diminishes to near zero. The commander uses the same techniques, procedures, and materials for concealment from aerial observation as for concealment from ground observation. He employs three principles to enhance concealment—

- **Siting.** Siting means selecting the most advantageous position in which to hide a man, an object, or an activity. This is often the shadows provided by woodlines, wadies, and buildings.
- **Discipline.** Success in any concealment effort hinges on strict concealment discipline by units and individual soldiers. The unit should avoid activities that change the appearance of an area or reveal the presence of military equipment. Laxness and carelessness will undoubtedly reveal a position. Tracks, spoil, and debris are the most common signs of military activity, which indicate concealed objects. Ensure that new tracks follow existing paths, roads, fences, or natural lines in the terrain pattern. Do not end exposed routes at a position, but extend them to another logical termination. If practical, the unit should brush out, camouflage, or cover its tracks. It should cover or place spoil and debris to blend with the surroundings. The unit adds artificial camouflage when the terrain and natural vegetation are such that natural concealment is not possible.
- **Construction.** Adding natural materials to blend with the surrounding terrain augments this type of concealment.

8-69. There are three fundamental methods of concealing installations and activities—hiding, blending, and disguising.

- **Hiding.** Hiding is the complete concealment of an object by some form of physical screen. For example, sod placed over mines in a minefield hides the mines; the overhead canopy of trees hides the objects beneath from aerial observation; a net hides objects beneath it; a defilade position hides objects from ground observation. In some cases, the screen may be invisible. In other instances, the screen may be visible, but it hides the activity behind it.
- **Blending.** Blending is arranging or applying camouflage materials on, over, and around the object so that it appears to be part of the background. Examples include applying face paint to the exposed areas of skin, and adding burlap, paint, and live vegetation to helmets and clothing to closely resemble or blend into the background. Units can apply the same technique for equipment or structures.
- **Disguising.** Clever disguises can often mislead the enemy about the friendly force's identity, strength, and intention, and may draw his fire from real assets. Therefore, the simulation of objects, pieces of equipment, or activities may have military significance. Inflatable tanks, tents, and buildings can look like the real thing to an aerial observer.

8-70. In addition to hiding equipment, units can avoid detection by using mud for glassy surfaces and unfilled sandbags over windshields. Camouflage is one of the basic weapons of war. Soldiers must understand the importance, the principles, and the techniques of camouflage. All personnel must ensure the effectiveness of all camouflage measures and maintain strict camouflage discipline.

8-71. **Damage-Limiting Measures.** The other type of passive air defense, damage limiting, is also used for survival. These measures attempt to limit damage if the enemy detects the position. If the enemy is to destroy any equipment, he is forced to do it one piece at a time. Enemy forces should never be able to put a unit out of action with just a single attack. The commander uses the same measures taken to limit damage from field artillery attack—dispersion, protective construction, and cover.

- **Dispersion.** Dispersed troops and vehicles force the attacker to concentrate on a single small target that he will likely miss. The wider the dispersion, the greater the potential for limiting damage.
- **Protective Construction.** Using cover, natural or manmade, acts to reduce damage and casualties. Folds in the earth, natural depressions, trees, buildings, and walls offer damage-limiting cover; individuals and units should seek them out and use them habitually. If deployment is in flat terrain lacking cover, digging in or sandbagging can offer some protection. The unit employs smoke if it is moving and cannot use natural cover or cannot build fortifications. Smoke makes target acquisition much more difficult for the attacker.
- **Cover.** Cover emphasizes the importance of passive defense against an air attack. The unit must do everything it can to avoid an attack in the first place, but if it is attacked, it uses cover and dispersion to limit the amount of damage.

### Air Defense Role in Reconnaissance and Surveillance

8-72. A commander can direct his air defense systems to deploy forward with scouts along potential air corridors based on the aerial IPB developed by his intelligence and air defense officers. This provides early warning of enemy air infiltration and allows timely engagement of enemy aerial platforms attempting to insert dismounted reconnaissance, infantry, and antiarmor teams. The air defense systems can report stationary locations of enemy aircraft to assist the supported unit in confirming templated LZs. This allows the unit to quickly react to potential ground threats by calling for indirect fires or employing a quick reaction force to defeat this threat. The commander assigns a clear mission to these systems to ensure that they do not compromise the supported unit's integrated ISR plan by prematurely engaging enemy aerial reconnaissance platforms. He establishes a well-defined trigger event to prevent this from happening. Additionally, he ensures the integration of ADA unique munitions into the supported unit's CSS plan based on the planned time that these assets will be forward.

## MOBILITY/COUNTERMOBILITY/SURVIVABILITY

8-73. An attacking enemy has the initiative in terms of where and when he will attack. A defending commander must take a wide range of actions to protect the mobility of his force while degrading the mobility of the enemy. He takes those steps simultaneously to protect his force from losses due to enemy actions.

### Mobility

8-74. During the defense, mobility tasks include maintaining routes, coordinating gaps in existing obstacles, and supporting counterattacks. Engineers also open helicopter LZs and tactical landing strips for fixed-wing aircraft. Maintaining and improving routes and creating bypass or alternate routes at critical points are major engineering tasks because movement routes are subjected to fires from enemy artillery and air support systems. These enemy fires may necessitate deploying engineer equipment, such as assault bridging and bulldozers, forward. The commander can also evacuate dislocated civilians or restrict their movements to routes not required by his forces to enhance his mobility. He can do this provided he coordinates the action with the host nation or the appropriate civil military operations agency and fulfills his responsibilities to displaced civilians under international law.

8-75. Priority of mobility support is first to routes used by counterattacking forces, then to routes used by main body forces displacing to subsequent positions. This mainly involves breaching obstacles and improving combat roads and trails to allow tactical support vehicles to accompany moving combat vehicles. Careful coordination ensures leaving required lanes or gaps in obstacles for repositioning main body units and committing the counterattack force during the defense. Chemical reconnaissance systems also contribute to the force's mobility in a contaminated environment.

### Countermobility

8-76. In the defense, the commander normally concentrates his engineer efforts on countering the enemy's mobility. A defending force typically requires

large quantities of Class IV and V material and specialized equipment to construct fighting and survivability positions and obstacles. With limited assets, the commander must establish priorities among countermobility, mobility, and survivability efforts. He ensures that his staff synchronizes these efforts with the echelon's logistic plans.

8-77. The commander may plan to canalize the enemy force into a salient. In this case, he takes advantage of the enemy force's forward orientation by fixing the enemy and then delivering a blow to the enemy's flank or rear. As the enemy's attacking force assumes a protective posture, the defending commander rapidly coordinates and concentrates all effects of his fires against unprepared and unsupported segments of the enemy force in rapid sequence. The unit may deliver these fires simultaneously or sequentially.

8-78. When planning obstacles, commanders and staffs must consider not only current operations but also future operations. The commander should design obstacles for current operations so they do not hinder future operations. Any commander authorized to employ obstacles can designate certain obstacles that are important to his ability to shape the battlefield as high-priority reserve obstacles. He assigns responsibility for preparation to a subordinate unit but retains authority for ordering their execution or final completion. An example of a reserve obstacle is a highway bridge over a major river. Such obstacles receive the highest priority in preparation and, if ordered, execution by the designated subordinate unit.

8-79. A commander integrates reinforcing obstacles with existing obstacles to improve the natural restrictive nature of the terrain to halt or slow enemy movement, canalize enemy movement into EAs, and protect friendly positions and maneuver. He may choose to employ scatterable mines in accordance with the rules of engagement. Direct and indirect fires must cover obstacles to be effective. This requires the ability to deliver effective fires well beyond the obstacle's location. When possible, units conceal obstacles from hostile observation. They coordinate obstacle plans with adjacent units and conform to the obstacle zone or belts of superior echelons.

8-80. Effective obstacles force the enemy to attempt to breach them if he wants to maintain his momentum and retain the initiative. While the defending force is aware that the enemy is going to breach an obstacle, the enemy tries to conceal exactly where and when he will try to breach. The defending force's plan addresses how to counter such a breach, to include reestablishing the obstacle by using scatterable mines and other techniques.

8-81. Given time and resources, the defending force generally constructs additional obstacle systems to its flanks and rear. These systems can provide additional protection from enemy attacks by forcing the enemy to spend time and resources to breach or bypass the obstacle. This, in turn, gives the defending force more time to engage enemy forces attempting to execute breach operations or bypass these obstacles.

8-82. The commander designates the unit responsible for establishing and securing each obstacle. He may retain execution authority for some obstacles or restrict the use of some types of obstacles to allow other battlefield activities to occur. He allows his subordinate commanders some flexibility in selecting the exact positioning of obstacles. However, all units must know which gaps—

through obstacles and crossing sites—to keep open for the unit's use, as well as the firing and self-destruct times of scatterable mines to prevent delays in movement. The commander must be specific and clear in his orders for firing demolitions, emplacing obstacles, and closing lanes. As each lane closes, the closing unit reports the lane's closure to the higher, subordinate, and adjacent headquarters to preclude displacing units from moving into areas with unmarked or abandoned obstacles.

8-83. Tactical and protective obstacles are constructed primarily at company level and below. Small unit commanders ensure that observation and fires cover all obstacles to hinder breaching. Deliberate protective obstacles are common around fixed sites. Protective obstacles are a key component of survivability operations. They are tied in with FPFs and provide the friendly force with close-in protection. Commanders at all echelons track defensive preparations, such as establishing Class IV and V supply points and start or completion times of obstacle belts and groups. The commander plans how he will restore obstacles the enemy has breached. He uses artillery, air, or ground systems to reseed minefields.

8-84. FM 3-34.1 provides additional information about obstacles and obstacle integration, such as planning factors relating to emplacing obstacles and obstacle function versus lethality. It also describes the methods and essential principles for planning protective obstacles.

**Survivability**

8-85. Since the attacking enemy force usually has the initiative in terms of where and when it will attack, a defending commander must take a wide range of actions to protect his force from losses due to enemy actions. These steps include ensuring all-around defense, NBC defense, and using smoke.

8-86. The survivability effort for the defense must enable units to concentrate firepower from fixed positions. To avoid detection and destruction by the enemy, units move frequently and establish survivability positions quickly. To provide flexibility, units may need primary, alternate, and supplementary positions. This is particularly true of units defending key or decisive terrain. Units enhance their survivability through concealment, deception, dispersion, and field fortifications.

8-87. Survivability tasks include using engineer equipment to assist in preparing and constructing trenches, command post shelters, and artillery firing, radar, and combat vehicle fighting positions. The commander provides guidance on the level of protection—such as hull defilade or overhead cover, system priorities, and early use of specialized engineer systems that can construct survivability positions. He should protect supply stocks against blast, shrapnel, incendiaries, and NBC contamination. Supplies loaded on tactical vehicles can be protected against almost anything but a direct hit by constructing berms large enough to accommodate the vehicles and deep enough to keep supplies below ground level. The force's engineer officer can advise CSS logistics operators about storage area site selection that reduces the requirements for engineer survivability support without reducing the degree of protection provided. FMs 3-34.1 and 3-34.112 provide additional information concerning the construction and maintenance of survivability positions.

8-88. The commander should avoid predictable defensive preparations because an enemy will tend to attack lightly defended areas. Major positions, facilities, and operational logistics sites may require special camouflage. Camouflage measures that provide this protection include constructing dummy positions and decoys. The commander carefully plans the use of such measures within the framework of real positions and ongoing and future operations. The echelon's OPSEC program and any deception efforts conducted in accordance with guidance from higher echelons should conceal from the enemy or mislead him about the location of the MBA and the disposition of friendly forces.

8-89. **Ensure All-Around Defense.** Units employ all-around security at all times although they deploy the bulk of their combat power against likely enemy avenues of approach. This is because the battlefield offers many opportunities for small enemy elements to move undetected.

8-90. **NBC Defense.** Because defending units are often in fixed positions, they increase their vulnerability to weapons of mass destruction. The commander specifies the degree of risk he is willing to accept and establishes priorities for his NBC defense units. He positions forces and installations to avoid congestion, but he must not disperse to the extent that he risks defeat in detail by an enemy employing conventional munitions.

8-91. The commander determines the mission oriented protective posture (MOPP) level assumed by his force if the MOPP level has not already been established by a higher headquarters. Environmental factors determine where he places his NBC detection devices. He ensures that his unit can conduct hasty and deliberate decontamination of its soldiers and equipment. He drills his unit on measures taken in response to the enemy's use of weapons of mass destruction.

8-92. The commander should employ NBC reconnaissance units along movement routes and at potential choke points. Proper use of these assets enables the commander to reduce casualties and complete his mission. (FMs 3-11 and 3-12 detail NBC defense operations.)

8-93. **Smoke and Obscuration.** The commander uses smoke to disrupt the enemy's assault or movement formations and deny his use of target acquisition optics, visual navigation aids, air avenues of approach, LZs, and drop zones (DZs). Smoke creates gaps in enemy formations, separating or isolating attacking units, and disrupting their planned movement. Bispectral obscuration can blind attackers who lack thermal viewers or other enhanced optical systems. It prevents overwatching enemy elements from observing and engaging the defender, whereas defending forces with advanced optical systems can acquire and engage the enemy within the smoke. The commander can use smoke to facilitate friendly target acquisition by highlighting enemy systems against a light background while degrading the enemy's optics. Smoke used to mask obstacles located in low-level flight corridors and on LZs and DZs can prevent an enemy from using them or greatly increase his risk.

8-94. The commander uses his smoke-generation capabilities to mark targets and screen and obscure friendly positions. Modern bispectral obscurants provide protection from thermal as well as visual viewing devices. This generated capability must be carefully sited with regard to enemy systems and

friendly capabilities. Improper use can create an advantage for the enemy. The effectiveness of smoke depends on weather conditions and the quantity of smoke employed. The commander coordinates the use of smoke generators, artillery/mortar smoke, and smoke pot employment. The capabilities of each of these smoke-producing systems are complementary and most effective when used together to achieve synergistic effects. Using smoke can also enhance the effects of deception operations and cover friendly movement to include a river crossing. (FM 3-11.50 provides details on planning, preparing, and executing smoke operations.)

## COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

8-95. The commander addresses several CSS considerations unique to the defense in his plan. Priorities for replenishment are normally ammunition and materials to construct obstacles and defensive positions. There is normally a reduced need for bulk fuel. There may be an increased demand for decontaminants and chemical protective equipment. The defense should consider stockpiling or caching ammunition and limited amounts of petroleum products in centrally located positions within the main battle area. The commander should plan to destroy those stocks if necessary as part of denial operations. The supply of obstacle materials in a defense can be a significant problem that requires detailed coordination and long lead times. The commander should not overlook the transportation and manpower required in obtaining, moving, and uncrating barrier material and associated obstacle creating munitions, such as demolition charges and mines.

8-96. The logistics officer (G4 or S4) and the commanders of the logistics units supporting the defending force must understand the commander's tactical intent. They can then establish service support priorities in accordance with the commander's intent and plan logistics operations to ensure the supportability of the operations. Logistics plans should address the provision of CSS during branches and sequels to the defense plan, such as a counterattack into the flank of an adjacent unit.

8-97. Combat units top off regularly with supplies in case an enemy breakthrough disrupts the replenishment flow. At the battalion and brigade level the commander ensures that his CSS operators deliver combat-configured loads to his combat units on a scheduled basis. Combat-configured loads are packages of potable and nonpotable water, NBC defense supplies, barrier materials, ammunition, POL, medical supplies, and repair parts tailored to a specific size unit. This eliminates the need to request supplies and reduces the chance that a lapse in communications will interrupt the supply flow and jeopardize the integrity of the defense. The supported combat unit is resupplied using this push system until it issues instructions to the contrary. The commander can use utility and cargo helicopters to deliver supplies directly from the rear area to the defending unit. Advances in information systems should allow these combat-configured push packages to be accurately tailored to the demands of the supported combat units.

8-98. As a technique, the defending force conducts resupply during periods of limited visibility if the commander does not expect the enemy to conduct a limited-visibility attack. This tends to reduce the chance for enemy interference with the resupply process but also tends to lengthen the amount of time

it takes to complete the process. Resupply should take place during daylight hours if the commander expects the enemy to conduct a limited visibility attack. The commander may be required to infiltrate resupply vehicles to reduce detection chances when the enemy possesses a significant air, satellite, or unmanned aerial vehicle capability. The commander may also use smoke to help conceal his logistics operations.

8-99. The CSS commander remains responsible for the defense of his unit. Concealment is an important factor in reducing the risk factors of these units. The commander must plan for the reconstitution of CSS capability lost to enemy activities.

8-100. Terrain management is a critical consideration in the rear area. The commander seeks to position each CSS unit where it can best fulfill its support tasks while using minimal resources to maintain security in conjunction with other units located in the rear area. In contiguous operations, the commander positions his CSS facilities farther to the rear in a defense than in the offense to avoid interfering with the movement of units between battle positions or the forward movement of counterattack forces. It also should be located far enough behind friendly lines that likely enemy advances will not compel the relocation of critical CSS at inopportune times. At the same time CSS must be close enough to provide responsive support. In noncontiguous operations, the commander positions his CSS facilities within the perimeters of his combat units to provide security and avoid interrupting support services. The commander distributes his similar functional CSS units throughout his defensive area in both environments. This distribution allows him to designate one support unit to pick up the workload of a displacing second support unit until that unit is operational.

8-101. The defending commander provides maintenance support as far forward as possible to reduce the need to evacuate equipment. The thrust of the maintenance effort is to fix as far forward as possible those systems that can be quickly returned to the unit in combat-ready condition. He must ensure that multifunctional forward logistics elements contain the maximum variety of DS personnel with appropriate equipment, such as repair sets, kits, and outfits to ensure rapid repair of weapon systems.

8-102. The commander must plan to augment his available ambulances if a mass-casualty situation develops. Units should always plan for mass casualties and have an evacuation plan, including air evacuation, that specifies the use of nonstandard air and ground platforms.

8-103. The conduct of troop movements and resupply convoys is critical to a successful defense. Staffs balance terrain management, movement planning, and traffic-circulation control priorities. They plan multiple routes throughout the AO and closely control their use. The commander may allocate mobility resources to maintain MSRs in a functional condition to support units and supplies moving forward and to evacuate personnel and equipment to the rear. Military police ease these movements, prevent congestion, and respond to maneuver plan changes. Civil affairs and host nation agencies are involved as necessary to minimize the impact of displaced civilians on unit and convoy movements. The commander coordinates air and ground movements supporting the commander's maneuver scheme with any other affected

services. Commanders also coordinate such movements with any affected organic and external Army aviation, fire support, air defense units, and ground maneuver units.

8-104. During the preparatory phase of the defense, logistics operators normally pre-position supply stocks, particularly ammunition and barrier materials, in the battle positions of defending forces. They also establish maintenance and medical collection points. Logistics operators must address these and other logistics preparations in the planning process to avoid compromising the operation. These logistics preparations can also be included in military deception plans.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

8-105. A defensive mission generally imposes few restrictions on the defending commander. It allows freedom of maneuver within assigned boundaries, but requires him to prevent enemy penetration of the rear boundary. Defending an AO is a typical mission for battalion and higher-echelon units. This mission allows the commander to distribute forces to suit the terrain and plan an engagement that integrates direct and indirect fires. The commander must ensure that subordinate unit defensive plans are compatible and that control measures, such as contact points and phase lines, are sufficient for flank coordination when assigning AOs. The defensive plan must address what happens when it succeeds and the opportunity exists to transition from defense to offense.

8-106. Defensive operations are often difficult to conduct because they may occur against an enemy who has the initiative and usually superior combat power. The commander must have a clear understanding of the battlefield situation to mass the effects of his forces to disengage committed forces. He takes advantage of war gaming that takes place in the military decision making process to derive his decision points. He bases these decision points on enemy and friendly actions, such as shifting fires, moving between battle positions, and rearming part or all of the defending force. He may require additional signal support to sustain communications across wide frontages characteristic of many defensive operations.

8-107. Because the enemy has the initiative, the commander may have to frequently shift his shaping operations to contain the enemy's attack until he can seize the initiative. This may require him to adjust subordinate unit AOs, repeatedly commit and reconstitute his reserve, and modify the original plan.

8-108. The defending commander may change his task organization to respond to the existing or projected situation, such as forming a detachment left in contact prior to conducting a withdraw. Whenever possible the commander ensures that changes in task organization take place between units that have previously trained or operated together to take advantage of established interpersonal relationships. The commanders of such recently reorganized units place special attention on ensuring that each element directs its efforts toward accomplishing the overall unit's mission, thus obtaining the maximum combat capability provided by combined arms. This requires them to ensure synchronizing objectives, control measures, movement routes, defensive positions, and specifically assigned tasks. It also requires using standing

operating procedures by each element of the task-organized unit. Failure to synchronize the effects of task-organized elements has often resulted in mission failure in training and actual operations.

8-109. To break through the MBA, the enemy often attacks along the boundaries of defending units when he can identify them. Therefore, it is extremely important for commanders at every echelon to ensure that the plan for their part of the defense is properly coordinated not only within their units but also with flanking and supporting units. This coordination is best done by personal visits to subordinate commanders on the ground. The staff should promptly pass on decisions reached during coordination to all concerned. The following planning aspects require attention in the coordination process:

- Understanding the superior commander's intent and concept of operations.
- Understanding the tactics to be applied by flanking and supporting units.
- Selecting boundary locations that do not increase the coordination problem.
- Planning for mutual support.
- Surveillance and target acquisition plans.
- Location and composition of security forces.
- Obstacles and demolition plans.
- Fire plans, to include employing AT systems, illumination, and smoke.
- Air defense coverage areas.
- Employing the reserve in conjunction with information operations and fire support systems, such as artillery and aviation.
- Boundaries and other control measures.
- Communications.

8-110. Because C2 facilities tend to be more stationary in the defense, the commander should place them in hardened areas or protective terrain and reduce their electronic signature. They must remain capable of rapidly relocating to respond to battlefield developments.

## COMMON DEFENSIVE SCENARIOS

8-111. Certain common defensive scenarios have their own unique planning considerations. The following section addresses these scenarios and the unique considerations associated with—

- Defense against airborne and air assault attacks.
- Defense of a linear obstacle.
- Perimeter defense.
- Reverse slope defense.

### DEFENSE AGAINST AIRBORNE AND AIR ASSAULT ATTACKS

8-112. Defeating an enemy airborne or air assault begins with a good IPB process to determine the enemy's capabilities to conduct vertical envelopment and identify enemy airfields, pickup zones, DZs, and LZs. Armed with an appreciation of the enemy's capability to conduct vertical envelopment, the

commander takes steps to counter the threat before they launch, during their movement to the DZ, or at the LZ. After prioritizing the risk of each potential DZ or LZ to his operation, the commander establishes systematic surveillance of these areas to alert him if the enemy attempts to insert his forces. Units also sight their weapons to cover the most probable DZs and LZs. The fire support plan includes these zones in its target list for conventional munitions and scatterable mines and reflects current rules of engagement and host nation restrictions. Units and engineers emplace obstacles in these locations and block avenues of approach from such areas to critical friendly installations and activities as part of their countermobility and rear area survivability efforts.

8-113. Once enemy forces succeed in landing, the key to a successful defense is speed in containing and counterattacking the inserted enemy force before it becomes organized and reinforced. Field artillery and attack helicopters must commit rapidly to take advantage of the concentration of targets in the insertion area. Affected base and base cluster defense forces and available response forces keep the enemy force under observation at all times, calling in and designating targets for available fire support systems. The commander rapidly musters and commits available heavy units and combat systems to take advantage of enemy light forces' vulnerabilities to attack by armored vehicles while they remain concentrated in the insertion area. If more enemy troops land and succeed in consolidating, local base and base cluster defense forces and the response force try to fix the enemy force in a chosen location to allow a tactical combat force (TCF) to counterattack. If the enemy force is too large for the TCF to reduce, the commander may need to commit his reserve.

## DEFENSE OF A LINEAR OBSTACLE

8-114. A commander may conduct either an area or mobile defense along or behind a linear obstacle. An area defense is normally preferred because it accepts less risk by not allowing the enemy to cross the obstacle. Linear obstacles such as mountain ranges or river lines generally favor a forward defense. The defending force seeks to defeat any enemy attempt to secure a bridgehead across the linear obstacle. Local defending units immediately and violently counterattack any enemy bridgeheads established to destroy enemy forces located within the bridgehead, while higher echelons attempt to isolate enemy bridgehead sites. If the enemy secures a bridgehead and strikes out rapidly, it could quickly penetrate the defending force. This requires the commander to conduct retrograde operations, either a delay or a withdrawal.

8-115. It is extremely difficult to deploy in strength along the entire length of a linear obstacle. The defending commander must conduct economy of force measures in some areas. Within an area defense, the commander's use of a defense in depth accepts the possibility that the enemy may force a crossing at a given point. The depth of the defense should prevent the enemy from rapidly exploiting its success. It also defuses the enemy's combat power by forcing him to contain bypassed friendly defensive positions in addition to continuing to attack positions in greater depth. Once the enemy force secures several bridgeheads, the defending force moves to contain them. The defending force commander may choose not to counterattack until he can mass overwhelming combat power. He will probably choose to eliminate the

bridgeheads sequentially in this case. However, he risks allowing the enemy to establish and fortify bridgehead crossing sites sufficiently to prevent the counterattack force from eliminating them.

8-116. The mobile defense gives the enemy an opportunity to cross the obstacle with a portion of his force. The commander conducting a mobile defense along a linear obstacle normally employs minimal forces along the obstacle as his fixing force. This generally allows the enemy to cross in at least one location. Once the enemy has partially crossed and the obstacle divides his forces, the commander conducts shaping operations to isolate the enemy bridgehead. Once the bridgehead is isolated, the defending commander launches a decisive attack by the striking force to destroy that isolated enemy bridgehead. He may also choose this technique when the enemy is likely to use weapons of mass destruction.

8-117. Alternatively, in a mobile defense the commander may take advantage of terrain or smoke to hide a striking force until the enemy's forward elements pass this force. Until committed, the striking force maintains a perimeter defense. This technique closely resembles the use of stay-behind forces. Similarly, the commander may order units inadvertently bypassed by the enemy not to break out immediately so that he may capitalize on their position to destroy the enemy.

## PERIMETER DEFENSE

8-118. The commander can employ the perimeter defense as an option when conducting an area or mobile defense. The commander uses it in many other circumstances, such as when his unit is bypassed by the enemy or in base and base cluster defense in the rear area.

8-119. A perimeter defense is oriented in all directions. Aggressive patrolling and security operations outside the perimeter are prerequisites for a successful perimeter defense. These activities can be undertaken by the unit within the perimeter or by another force, such as the territorial defense forces of a host nation. The unit can organize a perimeter defense to accomplish a specific mission, such as protecting a fire base, or providing immediate self-protection, such as during resupply operations when all-around security is required. The commander establishes a perimeter when the unit must hold critical terrain, such as a strong point, or when it must defend itself in areas where the defense is not tied in with adjacent units. This occurs when the unit is operating behind enemy lines or when it is securing an isolated objective, such as a bridge, mountain pass, or airfield. A unit may also form a perimeter when it has been bypassed and isolated by the enemy and it must defend in place, or it is located in the friendly rear area within the confines of a base or base cluster. (See Figure 8-10.) However, divisions and corps can also organize a perimeter defense when necessary.

8-120. A major characteristic of a perimeter defense is a secure inner area with most of the combat power located on the perimeter. Another characteristic is the ease of access for resupply operations. The commander coordinates direct and indirect fire plans to prevent accidentally engaging neighboring friendly units and noncombatants. Normally, the reserve centrally locates to react to a penetration of the perimeter at any point.

8-121. Perimeters vary in shape depending on the terrain and situation. If the commander determines the most probable direction of enemy attack, he may weight that part of the perimeter to cover that approach. The perimeter shape conforms to the terrain features that best use friendly observation and fields of fire. The commander can increase the effectiveness of the perimeter by tying it into a natural obstacle, such as a river, which allows him to concentrate his combat power in more threatened sectors.

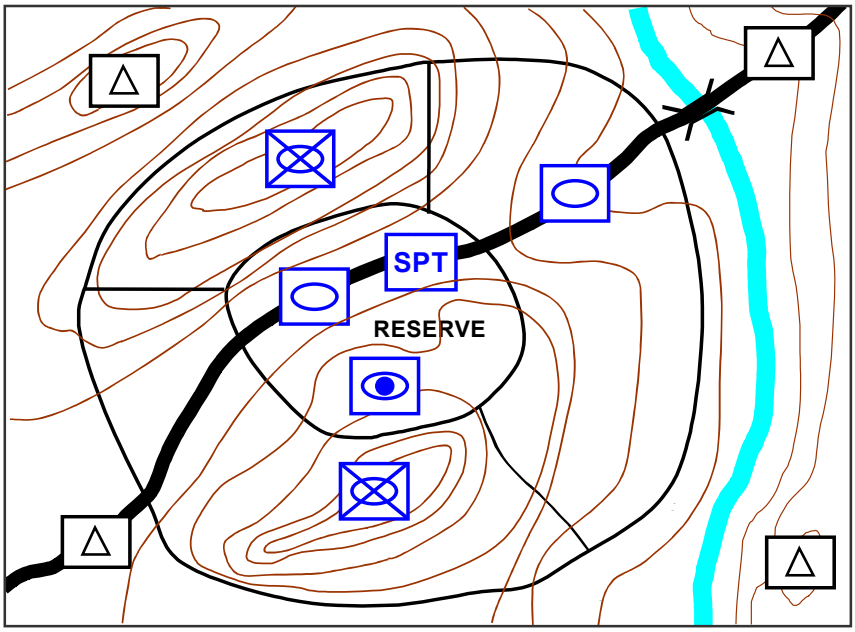


**Figure 8-10. Perimeter Defense**

## Organization of Forces

8-122. The commander may employ all of his forces forward along the perimeter or establish a defense in depth within the perimeter. The commander employs patrols, raids, ambushes, air attacks, and supporting fires to harass and destroy enemy forces before they make contact with the perimeter, thus providing defense in depth with both techniques.

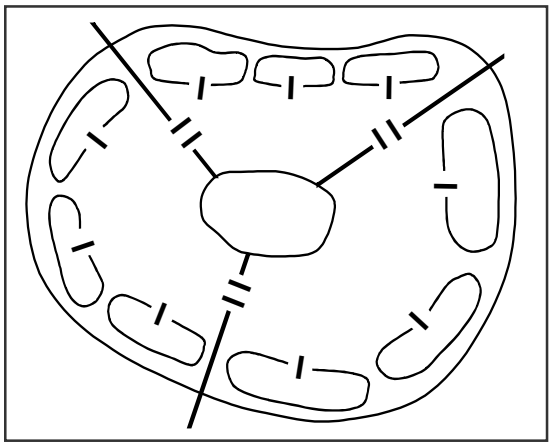

**Figure 8-11. All Company Teams on the Perimeter**

8-123. In the first technique, he places all of his subordinate units in positions along the perimeter. He divides the perimeter into subordinate unit AOs with boundaries and coordinating points. (See Figure 8-11.) This reduces the possibility of fratricide within the perimeter and maximizes combat power on the perimeter.

8-124. Constructing an outer and inner perimeter creates some depth in the defense in the second technique. Using a brigade assembly area as an example, the commander places two companies in each battalion task force along the outer perimeter and one company in reserve along the inner perimeter. (See Figure 8-12.) This configuration gives depth to the battalion task force's positions and facilitates control. It also gives one company from each battalion task force the mission to support frontline platoons. It enables the company commander to locate any indirect fire systems, such as mortars, near the reserve platoon, enhancing control and security. Alternatively, the commander could elect to assign two battalion task forces to the outer perimeter and a third battalion to an inner perimeter, retaining a larger, more cohesive central reserve. (See Figure 8-13.)

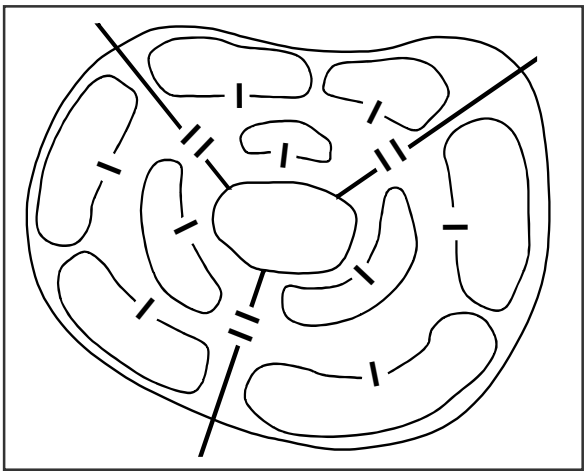

**Figure 8-12. Three Battalion TFs on Perimeter, Co/Teams Positioned in Depth**

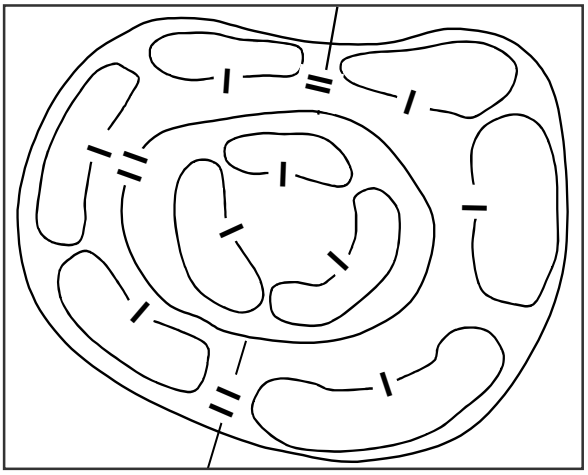

**Figure 8-13. Two Battalion TFs on the Perimeter, One in Reserve**

8-125. The commander positions his forces within the perimeter to decrease the possibility of an enemy simultaneously suppressing his inner and outer perimeter forces with the same fires regardless of the method used. Friendly forces within the perimeter must be capable of providing mutual support. The commander covers gaps on the outer perimeter between units in open terrain with fires. He should allow no gaps between defensive fighting positions when his unit is in restrictive terrain with restricted fields of fire and observation. This may mean that a unit defends along a narrower frontage than on more open terrain. The commander may also have to employ all of his subordinate units on the line formed by the perimeter. The commander ensures that outer perimeter positions have rearward protection from inner perimeter weapons once he establishes the inner perimeter.

8-126. The commander normally assigns combat vehicles supporting the defense firing positions on the perimeter to cover the most likely mounted avenues of approach. He should select and prepare alternate and supplemental firing positions and routes to and from them. If the perimeter has several

mounted avenues of approach leading to it, the commander may elect to hold his combat vehicles in hide positions until the enemy approaches. Units prepare routes, firing positions, and range cards in advance for all positions. Small-unit leaders must ensure that vehicles do not destroy communication wires when they displace from one position to another.

8-127. The need to hold or protect features—such as bridges, airfields, or LZs—from enemy observation and fires may restrict the positioning of units within a perimeter. These factors, as well as the inability to achieve depth, make a perimeter defense vulnerable to penetration by heavy enemy forces. The commander reduces these vulnerabilities by—

- Developing reconnaissance and surveillance plans that provide early warning.
- Positioning antiarmor weapon systems on armor-restrictive terrain to concentrate fires on armor approaches.
- Providing as much depth as the diameter of the perimeter to allow the proper placement of security elements and the reserve and the designation of secondary sectors of fire for antiarmor weapons.
- Constructing obstacles to fix or block enemy forces, so that friendly units can effectively engaged them.
- Using smoke and deception.

8-128. If isolation from other friendly units drives the commander to form a perimeter, such as during rear operations, CS and CSS elements from other units may seek the perimeter's protection. These elements are given defensive missions based on their capabilities. The commander coordinates and integrates any fire support provided from outside the perimeter into the overall defensive plan. This extra fire support conserves the ammunition of units within the perimeter.

8-129. The commander normally employs any reconnaissance assets, such as a scout platoon, outside the perimeter to provide early warning. He may augment security with squad-size or smaller observation posts that are provided and controlled by units on the perimeter. He positions these security elements to observe avenues of approach. Patrols cover areas that cannot be observed by stationary elements. Any security forces operating outside the perimeter must coordinate their passage of lines into and out of the perimeter with the appropriate perimeter units.

8-130. The reserve may be a designated unit or a provisional force organized from available personnel and equipment. The reserve forms a second line of defense behind the perimeter forces. Ideally, the reserve is mobile to react to enemy action along any part of the perimeter. The commander positions the reserve to block the most dangerous AA and assigns on-order positions on other critical avenues. The commander may task available combat vehicles initially occupying firing positions on the perimeter with the mission of reinforcing the reserve.

### Control Measures

8-131. The commander in a perimeter defense designates the trace of the perimeter, battle positions, coordinating points, and lateral and forward

boundaries. He can use EAs, target reference points, final protective fires, and principal direction of fire as fire control measures. The commander designates checkpoints, contact points, passage points, and passage routes for use by local reconnaissance, surveillance, and security elements operating outside the boundary of the perimeter. (See Figure 8-14.)

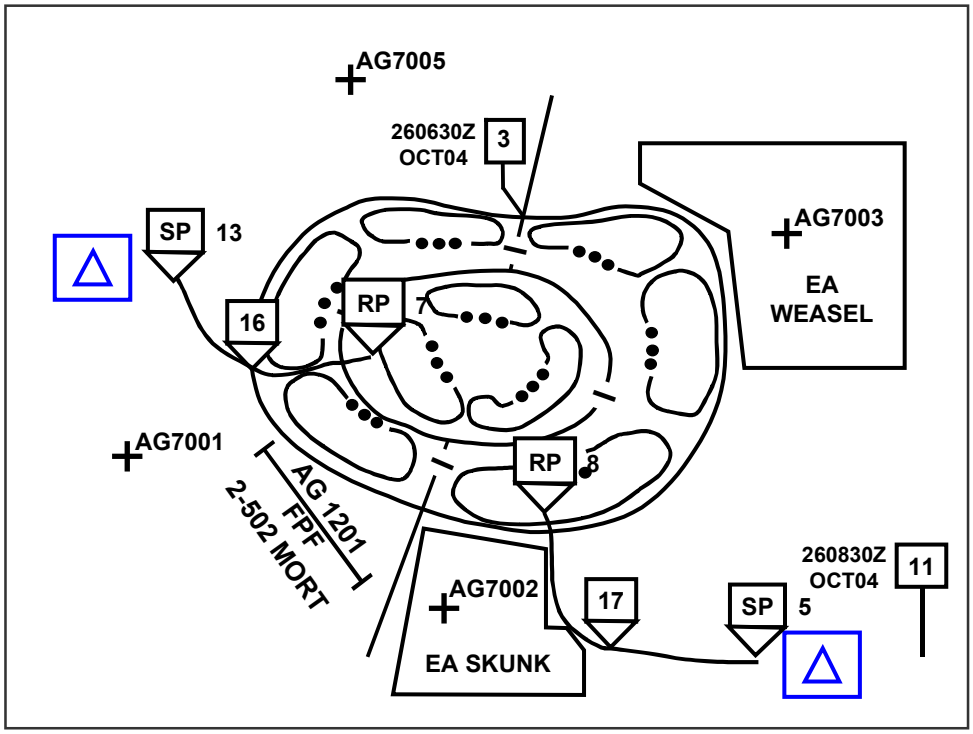


**Figure 8-14. Perimeter Defense Control Measures**

### Planning a Perimeter Defense

8-132. The defending commander positions his forces and plans fire and movement so he can respond to the widest possible range of enemy actions. He prepares plans, including counterattack plans. He rehearses, evaluates, and revises these plans as needed. The availability of LZs and DZs protected from enemy observation and fire is a major consideration when selecting and organizing the perimeter defense. The commander must emphasize supply economy and protect existing supply stocks since aerial resupply is vulnerable to weather and enemy fires. The commander considers the following fundamentals when planning a perimeter defense.

8-133. **Use of Terrain.** Proper evaluation and organization of the area are essential to maximize the effectiveness of a force conducting perimeter defense. Factors considered are—

- Natural defensive characteristics of the terrain.
- Using artificial obstacles to enhance the natural defensive characteristics of the terrain.
- Existing roads, railways, and waterways used for military LOCs and civilian commerce.

- Controlling land areas surrounding the perimeter to a range beyond that of enemy mortars and rockets and also controlling water approaches.

8-134. **Security.** Early warnings of pending enemy actions ensure the commander time to react to any threat. Combat outposts, patrols, sensors, target acquisition radars, and aerial surveillance provide early warning. Civilian informants and actions of indigenous personnel near the position are excellent indicators of pending enemy actions. Security measures vary with the enemy threat, forces available, and the other factors of METT-TC; however, all-round security is essential.

8-135. **Mutual Support.** The commander positions his defending forces to ensure mutual employment of defensive resources, such as crew-served weapons, observation, and maneuver elements. Mutual support between defensive elements requires careful planning, positioning, and coordination because of the circular aspects of the perimeter defense. He uses surveillance, obstacles, prearranged indirect fires, and the provision for maneuver elements to exploit or reinforce fires to control any gaps in the perimeter. Defensive plans provide for using all available support, including field artillery systems firing danger close, attack helicopters, and close air support.

8-136. **All-Around Defense.** In defensive planning, the commander has to be prepared to defend against enemy attack from any direction. His plans are sufficiently flexible, and he positions his reserve to permit reaction to any threat. The commander commits maneuver elements and available supporting weapons to detect, engage, and destroy the attacking enemy force. He assigns all personnel within the perimeter positions and sectors of fire.

8-137. **Defense in Depth.** Alternate and supplementary positions, combat outposts, and mutually supporting strong points forward of the perimeter extend the depth. The commander plans fires throughout the defensive area up to the maximum range of available weapons. He may place portable obstacles around critical locations within the perimeter during periods of reduced visibility to disrupt the enemy's plan based on visual reconnaissance and add depth to the defense.

8-138. **Responsiveness.** Attacks against a perimeter may range from long-range sniper, mortar, or artillery and rocket fire to attacks by demolition teams or major forces. The enemy has the advantage of deciding when, where, and with what force he will attack. The commander prepares plans, to include counterattack plans, and rehearses, assesses, and revises them as necessary. The defensive plan contains procedures for timely response by fire support teams and maneuver forces.

8-139. **Maximum Use of Offensive Action.** Since the objective of the perimeter defense is to maintain a secure position, the commander uses offensive actions to engage enemy forces outside the base. On initial occupation of the perimeter, friendly forces take offensive actions to destroy enemy forces in the immediate area. Once the perimeter area is clear, a relatively smaller force can defend the perimeter, thereby releasing other forces for their primary operations. The commander employs patrols, raids, ambushes, aerial attacks, and supporting fires to harass and destroy enemy forces to prevent their regaining the capability to threaten the perimeter. The commander

maintains constant communications with his subordinates within the perimeter and provides them the information necessary to maintain a common operational picture among all units located within the perimeter. He directs them to conduct appropriate actions to remove threats located within their AOs and sectors of fire.

### Executing a Perimeter Defense

8-140. Attacks against a perimeter may range from long-range sniper, mortar, or rocket fire; to attacks by suicide demolition squads; to attacks by major enemy ground and air forces. Mortars, artillery, tanks, and antiarmor missile systems from within the perimeter engage the enemy at long ranges. As the enemy comes within small arms range, other weapons on the perimeter engage him. If the assault continues, the force employs its available FPFs. If the enemy penetrates the perimeter, the reserve blocks the penetration or counterattacks to restore the perimeter. After committing the initial reserve, the commander must reconstitute another reserve to meet other threats. This force normally comes from an unengaged unit on another portion of the perimeter. If the commander uses an unengaged force to constitute a new reserve, he must retain sufficient forces to defend the vacated sector, unless he is forced to assume that degree of risk.

8-141. Combat service support elements may provide support from within the perimeter or from another location, depending on the mission and the status of the unit forming the defensive perimeter, type of transport available, weather, and terrain. Units in contested areas without secure ground LOC are often resupplied by air.

## REVERSE SLOPE DEFENSE

8-142. The commander organizes a reverse slope defense on the portion of a terrain feature or slope with a topographical crest that masks the main defensive positions from enemy observation and direct fire. All or part of the defending force may employ this technique. It is generally useful at lower tactical levels, such as battalion and below.

8-143. The commander bases a successful reverse slope defense on denying the topographical crest to the enemy. Although the defending unit may not occupy the crest in strength, controlling the crest by fire is essential for success. This defensive situation reduces the effects of massive indirect fire (mortar, artillery, and close-air support) and draws the battle into the small-arms range of infantry weapons. Using the reverse slope defense provides the defending force with an opportunity to gain surprise. Its goal is to make the enemy commit his forces against the forward slope of the defense, causing his forces to attack in an uncoordinated fashion across the exposed topographical crest. Firing from covered and concealed positions throughout the battle area, the defending force maintains a distinct advantage over the exposed enemy forces and canalizes them through unfamiliar terrain into kill zones. (Figure 8-15 shows the terminology associated with the reverse slope defense.)

8-144. The commander chooses to conduct a reverse slope defense when—

- The crest and forward slope are untenable because the enemy enjoys a quantative or qualitative advantage in firepower at that point.

- His weapons cannot depress enough to engage.
- The crest and forward slope offer little or no cover and concealment.
- The forward slope has been lost or has not been seized.
- Units on the flanks can adequately cover the forward slope.
- Variance in the force's tactical pattern is advisable to deceive or surprise the enemy.
- The commander is forced to assume a hasty defense while in contact with or in proximity to the enemy.

8-145. The reverse slope defense may deceive the enemy regarding the true location and organization of the main defensive positions. This defense protects the main defensive positions from preparation fires and causes the enemy to deploy into assault formations prematurely. The forward crest of the main defensive positions limits the enemy's observation. It reduces the effectiveness of enemy indirect fires and close air support and renders his direct fire weapons ineffective. The defending force may bring surprise fires to bear on the enemy as he crests the high ground. Units on the reverse slope have more freedom of movement until the crest is lost.

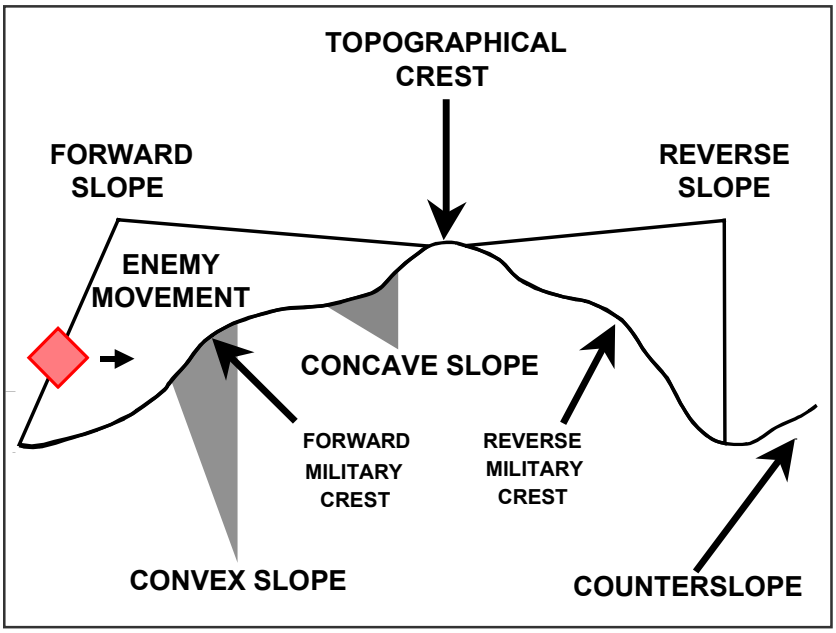


**Figure 8-15. A Hill in Cross-Section**

8-146. Using the reverse slope defense has several disadvantages:

- The effective range of direct fire weapons may be limited.
- Once security elements withdraw, the enemy can advance largely unimpeded until he has crested the high ground in front of the main defensive positions.
- The enemy has the advantage of attacking downhill.
- Maintaining observation of the enemy is difficult.
- In some cases the best locations for obstacles can only be covered from positions on the forward slope.

### Organization of Forces

8-147. The commander places his overwatching elements forward of the topographic crest and on the flanks of the position in a valley or depression. Another variation available to the commander is to organize a system of reverse slope defenses firing to the oblique defilade, each covering the other. A commander uses an oblique defilade to protect his defending systems from enemy frontal and flanking fires and from fires coming from above. For example, in Figure 8-16, the two units defending on the reverse slope cannot engage half of the hill to their direct front because of line of sight restrictions caused by small forests, but they can cover each other using oblique defilade.

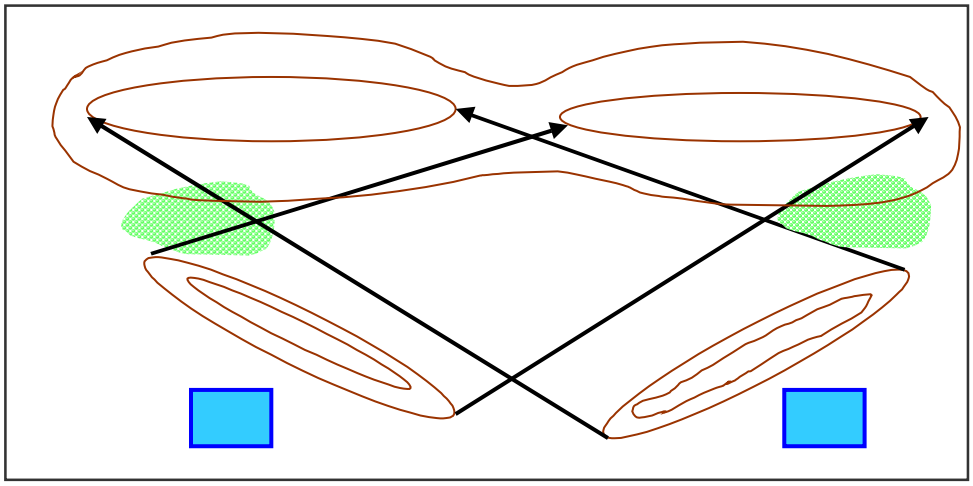

**Figure 8-16. Oblique Defilade**

8-148. The defending force positions its reconnaissance and security elements where it can observe the forward slope, the terrain forward of it, and other approaches to the defending position. Security elements destroy enemy reconnaissance assets, delay the enemy, disorganize his attack, and deceive him regarding the exact location of the main defense. The commander should position his reconnaissance and surveillance assets in observation posts (OPs) located near or forward of the topographical crest to provide long-range observation of both the enemy's flanks and front. Forces manning these OPs, which can be provided by the commander's reserve, may vary in size from a two-man buddy team to a rifle squad or a multiple combat vehicle section in each position. The commander should employ sufficient forces to provide observation and a security screen for the MBA on ground that should be retained. During darkness and periods of reduced visibility, he should strengthen these detachments in size and numbers to provide security against infiltration or surprise attack. Aggressive night combat patrols and ambushes are an essential part of the security process.

8-149. In order to achieve surprise and limit the enemy's ability to maneuver, the commander organizes the main defensive positions to mass the effects of his concentrated fires on the enemy as he crosses the topographical crest. In a reverse slope defense, the key position denies enemy penetration and supports forward elements by fire. The defending force maintains observation

and fires over the entire forward slope as long as possible to destroy enemy forces, thus preventing the enemy from massing for a final assault. From defensive positions on the reverse slope, the close-in battle builds in intensity. The defending force does not fire its direct fire weapons, which are located throughout the MBA (adjacent slope positions, counterslope positions, or reverse slope positions), until suitable targets appear. At the same time, the force shifts the effects of its indirect fires to those areas forward of the crest and forward military slope.

8-150. When possible other units on complementary terrain should support units in reverse slope positions. This is especially desirable when those supporting units can observe and place fires on the crest and forward slope. In a defense on a counterslope (reverse forward slope), fires must cover the area immediately in front of the reverse slope positions to the topographical crest. The commander organizes defensive positions to permit fires on enemy approaches around and over the crest and on the forward slopes of adjacent terrain features if applicable. The key factors that affect the organization of these areas are mutually supporting covered and concealed positions, numerous existing and reinforcing obstacles, the ability to bring devastating fires from all available weapons onto the crest, and a counterattack force. Depending on the terrain, the most desirable location for the reserve may be on the counterslope or the reverse military crest of the counterslope.

### Control Measures

8-151. Defensive control measures introduced in previous chapters apply equally to the reverse slope defense. The commander places his EAs and obstacles on the reverse slope. The topographical crest normally marks the far edge of the EA. He must dominate it by fires to prevent the enemy from successfully engaging the defending force.

### Executing a Reverse Slope Defense

8-152. When executing a reverse slope defense, the commander places special emphasis on—

- A fire support plan to prevent the enemy's occupation and use of the topographical crest.
- The proper organization of the forward slope to provide observation across the entire front and security to the main battle positions.
- A counterattack plan that specifies measures necessary to clear the creast or regain it from the enemy.
- Fire support to destroy, disrupt, and attrit enemy forces on the forward slope.

8-153. The commander normally places his final protective fires along the topographical crest and employs them as the enemy reaches the first row of defiladed obstacles. He uses his reserve to counterattack and expel the enemy from the topographical crest if massed indirect fires do not defeat the attack. As always, in a reverse slope defense, the commander can employ his designated reserve to conduct rear area security operations, prepare withdrawal routes, provide flank security, and conduct other actions with the understanding that this increases the time required to reassemble the reserve and prepare it to support the defense.

8-154. The reverse slope defense pursues offensive opportunities through surprise and deceptive actions. It is uniquely suited to infantry forces in mountainous terrain. When conducting a reverse slope defense, surprise results from defending in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared. Once this defense is employed successfully to halt an enemy attack, it may have limited further value because the effect of surprise will be difficult to attain. (For additional information on the use of a reverse slope defense, see FM 3-21.30 and other brigade- and lower-echelon field manuals.)

## TRANSITION

8-155. If a defense is successful, the commander anticipates and seeks the opportunity to transition to the offense. If the defense is unsuccessful, the commander needs to transition from a defensive posture into retrograde operations. Transition from one type of operation to another requires mental as well as physical agility on the part of the commanders, staffs, and units involved as well as accurate situational assessment capabilities.

8-156. Deliberate contingency planning for either event greatly assists the transition process and allows the commander to set the conditions necessary for a successful transition. Such planning addresses the need to control the tempo of operations, maintain contact with both enemy and friendly forces, and keep the enemy off balance. It establishes the procedures and priorities by which a unit reconstitutes itself for the next mission. In accordance with the factors of METT-TC, it establishes the required organization of forces and control measures necessary for success.

8-157. Such contingency planning decreases the time needed to adjust the tempo of combat operations when a unit transitions from defensive to offensive operations. It does this by allowing subordinate units to simultaneously plan and prepare for subsequent operations. Preparations typically include resupplying unit basic loads and repositioning or reallocating supporting systems. (Chapters 3-7 address the planning, preparation, and execution of all types of offensive operations.)

8-158. Contingency planning also reduces the amount of time and confusion inherent when a unit is unsuccessful in its defensive efforts and must transition to retrograde operations. It does this through designating units to conduct denial operations and early evacuation of casualties and inoperative equipment. The intent of retrograde operations is to preserve the force as a combat-capable formation until the commander can establish those conditions necessary for a successful defense. (Chapter 11 discusses retrograde operations.)

### TRANSITION TO THE OFFENSE

8-159. A defending commander transitioning to the offense anticipates when and where the enemy force will reach its culminating point or require an operational pause before it can continue. At those moments, the combat power ratios most favor the defending force. The enemy force will do everything it can to keep the friendly force from knowing when it is becoming overextended. Indicators that the enemy is approaching this point include—

- Enemy forces begin to transition to the defense—this defense may be by forces in or out of contact with friendly forces.
- Enemy forces suffer heavy losses.
- Enemy forces start to deploy before encountering friendly forces.
- Enemy forces are defeated in most engagements.
- Enemy forces are committed piecemeal in continued enemy attacks.
- Enemy reserve forces are identified among attacking forces.
- Examination of captured or killed enemy soldiers and captured or destroyed enemy equipment and supplies shows that the enemy force is unable to adequately sustain itself.
- A noticeable reduction in the tempo of enemy operations.
- Local counterattacks meet with unexpected success.

8-160. The commander must be careful that he is not the target of enemy information operations designed to tempt him to abandon the advantages of fighting from prepared defensive positions. He ensures that his force has the assets necessary to accomplish its assigned offensive mission.

8-161. In a mobile defense, transitioning to the offense generally follows the striking force's attack. In an area defense, the commander designates a portion of his force to conduct the attack, selecting units based on his concept for achieving his mission. However, he allocates available reserves to this effort.

8-162. As the commander transitions his force from the defense to the offense, he takes the following actions—

- Establishes an LD for his offensive operation. This may require him to conduct local, small-scale attacks to secure terrain necessary for the conduct of the offensive operation or destroy enemy forces that could threaten the larger offensive operation.
- Maintains contact with the enemy, using combinations of his available ISR assets to develop the information required to plan future operations and avoid being deceived by enemy information operations.
- Redeploys his combined arms team based on the probable future employment of each element of that team. For example, fire support assets would tend to move forward so that additional enemy forces and terrain would be encompassed within their range fans.
- Maintains or regains contact with adjacent units in a contiguous AO and ensures that his units remain capable of mutual support in a noncontiguous AO.
- Transitions the engineer effort by shifting the emphasis from countermobility and survivability to mobility.
- Provides his intent for transitioning from the defense to the offense to his commanders and soldiers.

8-163. The commander redeploys his air defense assets to provide coverage of combat forces and other assets necessary to conduct offensive operations. This may require him to change or modify his air defense priorities. For example, his top priority in the defense may have been his long-range sensors and weapons. This may shift to providing priority air defense coverage of his ground combat arms units and combat engineers.

8-164. 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 a capability to defend from a chosen location to an emphasis on ensuring the force's ability to advance and maneuver. For example, in the defense, the sustainment effort may have focused on the forward stockage of Class IV and V items and the rapid evacuation of combat-damaged systems. In the offense, the sustainment effort may need to focus on providing POL and forward repair of maintenance and combat losses. Transition is often a time in which deferred equipment maintenance can be performed. Additional assets may also be available on a temporary basis for casualty evacuation and medical treatment because of a reduction in the tempo of operations.

8-165. The commander should not wait too long to transition from the defense to the offense as the enemy force approaches its culminating point. Enemy forces will be dispersed, extended in depth, and weakened in condition. At that time, any enemy defensive preparations will be hasty and enemy forces will not be adequately disposed for defense. The commander wants the enemy in this posture when he transitions to the offense. He does not want to give the enemy force time to prepare for the defense. Additionally, the psychological shock on enemy soldiers will be greater if they suddenly find themselves desperately defending on new and often unfavorable terms while the commander's own soldiers will enjoy a psychological boost by going on the offense.

8-166. A commander can use two basic techniques when he transitions to the offense. The first, and generally preferred, technique is to attack using forces not previously committed to the defense. This is because defending MBA units may still be decisively engaged. These attacking forces may come from his reserve or consist of reinforcements. Since these forces have not recently been actively involved in combat, they are more likely to—

- Be at authorized strength levels.
- Enjoy a higher combat system operationally ready rate.
- Have leaders and soldiers who are more likely to be rested and thus capable of prolonged, continuous operations.
- Have a complete basic load of supplies.
- Have the time and energy to plan and prepare for offensive action.
- Be able to maneuver out of physical contact with the enemy.

8-167. A drawback to the use of this technique is the requirement to conduct a forward passage of lines. Additionally, enemy ISR systems are likely to detect the arrival of significant reinforcements.

8-168. Another consideration of using units not in contact occurs when they are operating in noncontiguous AOs. The commander rapidly masses the effects of overwhelming combat power in his decisive operation. This might require him to adopt economy of force measures in some AOs while temporarily abandoning others in order to generate sufficient combat power. (See Chapters 3 and 5 for offensive planning, preparing, and executing considerations.)

8-169. The second technique is to conduct offensive actions using the currently defending forces. This technique generally has the advantage of being more rapidly executed and thus more likely to catch the enemy by surprise.

Speed of execution in this technique results from not having to conduct an approach or tactical road march from reserve AAs or, in the case of reinforcements, move from other AOs and reception, staging, organization, and integration (RSO&I) locations. Speed also results from not having to conduct a forward passage of lines and perform liaison necessary to establish a common operational picture that includes knowledge of the enemy force's patterns of operation. The primary disadvantage of this technique is that the attacking force generally lacks stamina and must be quickly replaced if friendly offensive operations are not to culminate quickly.

8-170. If units in contact participate in the attack, the commander must retain sufficient forces in contact to fix the enemy. He concentrates the attack by reinforcing select subordinate units so they can execute the attack and, if necessary, maintain the existing defense. He can also adjust the defensive boundaries of subordinate units so entire units can withdraw and concentrate for the attack.

## TRANSITION TO THE RETROGRADE

8-171. A defending commander transitions from the defense to the retrograde for those reasons outlined in paragraph 11-1. A retrograde usually involves a combination of delay, withdrawal, and retirement operations. These operations may occur simultaneously or sequentially. As in other operations, the commander's concept of operations and intent drive planning for retrograde operations. Each form of retrograde operation has its unique planning considerations, but considerations common to all retrograde operations are risk, the need for synchronization, and rear operations. The planning, preparing, and executing considerations associated with retrograde operations are found in Chapter 11, but a number of key considerations receive special emphasis during the transition from the defense to the retrograde.

8-172. To accomplish the above purposes, the transition to retrograde operations must be accompanied by efforts designed to—

- Reduce the enemy's strength and combat power.
- Provide friendly reinforcements.
- Concentrate forces elsewhere for the attack.
- Prepare stronger defenses elsewhere within the AO.
- Lure or force part or all of the enemy force into areas where it can be counterattacked.

8-173. The complexity and fluidity of retrograde operations and the absolute need to synchronize the entire operation dictates the need for detailed, centralized planning and decentralized execution. Planning for retrograde operations begins with the preparation of plans for the follow-on mission and is driven by the commander's concept of operation and his intent.

8-174. The nature of retrograde operations involves an inherent risk of degrading the defending force's morale. Therefore, maintaining offensive spirit is essential among subordinate leaders and soldiers. Rearward movements may be seen as a defeat, or as an action that could result in isolation of the force. The commander must be well forward and visible. He must ensure that the leaders and soldiers understand the purpose and intent of the operation

and their role in accomplishing the mission. Thorough planning, effective control, and aggressive leadership will minimize risk during the retrograde or enhance the probability of success.

8-175. The commander's ISR requirements dramatically increase as his forces begin their movement to other locations and the combat capabilities of units in contact are subsequently reduced. It is imperative that an integrated ISR collection plan be in place to identify and locate enemy attempts to pursue, outflank, and isolate the defending force as it transitions to the retrograde.

8-176. As the commander transitions to the retrograde, he makes every effort to conserve his combat power. He considers the need to—

- Balance the risk of conserving combat power while remaining disposed to the intent of the defensive mission.
- Disengage and withdraw units with the least tactical mobility and non-essential elements prior to the retrograde of the main body.
- Use mobile forces to cover the retrograde of less mobile forces.
- Use the minimum essential combat power necessary to provide security for the retrograde of the main body.

## Chapter 9

# The Area Defense

*Regardless of the considerations which dictated the adoption of a defensive attitude, the tactics of defensive combat are essentially to develop the maximum firepower against an advancing enemy, to reduce our own losses by a better knowledge and utilization of the terrain, and thereby to stop the enemy's advance or throw him back by counterattack.*

FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations*, May 1941, Para 652

The *area defense* is a type of defensive operation that concentrates on denying enemy forces access to designated terrain for a specific time rather than destroying the enemy outright (FM 3-0). An area defense capitalizes on the strength inherent in closely integrated defensive organization on the ground. The commander may assign corps, divisions, and separate brigades the task of conducting an area defense as part of their mission. Subordinate echelons defend within their assigned areas of operations (AOs) as part of the larger-echelon's operation.

9-1. A commander should conduct an area defense when the following conditions occur:

- When directed to defend or retain specified terrain.
- When he cannot resource a striking force.
- The forces available have less mobility than the enemy.
- The terrain affords natural lines of resistance and limits the enemy to a few well-defined avenues of approach, thereby restricting the enemy's maneuver.
- There is enough time to organize the position.
- Terrain constraints and lack of friendly air superiority limit the striking force's options in a mobile defense to a few probable employment options.

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9-2. The commander conducting an area defense combines static and mobile actions to accomplish his assigned mission. Static actions usually consist of fires from prepared positions. Mobile actions include using the fires provided by units in prepared positions as a base for counterattacks and repositioning units between defensive positions. The commander can use his reserve and uncommitted forces to conduct counterattacks and spoiling attacks to desynchronize the enemy or prevent him from massing.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

9-3. The commander organizes his force to accomplish reconnaissance, security, main battle area (MBA), reserve, and sustaining operations. He has the option of defending forward or defending in depth. When the commander defends forward within an AO, he organizes his force so that he commits most of his combat power early in the defensive effort. To accomplish this he may deploy forces forward or plan counterattacks well forward in the MBA or even beyond of the MBA. If the commander has the option of conducting a defense in depth, he uses his security forces and forward MBA element to identify, define, and control the depth of the enemy's main effort while holding off secondary thrusts. This allows him to conserve his combat power, strengthen his reserve, and better resource the counterattack.

### INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE OPERATIONS

9-4. The commander directs his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to determine the locations, strengths, and probable intentions of the attacking enemy force before and throughout the defensive operation. The commander places a high priority on early identification of the enemy's main effort. He may need to complement surveillance with combat actions that test enemy intentions. Fighting for information can have two benefits—it can force the enemy to reveal his intentions and disrupt his preparations.

9-5. In the defense, ISR operations overlap the unit's planning and preparing phases. Leaders performing reconnaissance tasks must understand that they often deploy before the commander fully develops his plan and they must be responsive to changes in orientation and mission. The commander ensures that his staff fully plans, prepares, and executes reconnaissance missions.

### SECURITY OPERATIONS

9-6. The commander balances the need to create a strong security force to shape the battle with the resulting diversion of combat power from his main body's decisive operation. The commander usually allocates security forces to provide early warning and protect those forces, systems, and locations necessary to conduct his decisive operation from unexpected enemy contact. On a battlefield where forces are contiguous with one another, the location of security forces is usually in front of the main defensive positions. On a noncontiguous battlefield they are located on avenues of approach between the protected force and known or suspected enemy locations.

9-7. Battalion and brigade security forces normally conduct screen or guard missions. At division level and above, the commander may use a covering

force. A division commander may elect to have his security force conduct a guard mission if a corps covering force exists. Because an area security mission usually ties in closely with flank units, flank security forces are needed if there are gaps on the unit's flanks, which occurs during noncontiguous operations, or if gaps develop during the operation. A flank screen or guard is critical if an enemy avenue of approach into the defended area from the flanks could be uncovered during the defense. A commander does not normally assign a force the mission of conducting rear guard or rear cover during contiguous operations since it is unlikely that his force's rear area will become uncovered during the defense. He resources rear area security forces, to include a tactical combat force (TCF) or accepts the risk to his sustainment effort of not performing this function.

## MAIN BATTLE AREA OPERATIONS

9-8. The commander builds his decisive operation around identified decisive points, such as key terrain or high-payoff targets. The commander's decisive operation in an area defense focuses on retaining terrain by using fires from mutually supporting, prepared positions supplemented by one or more counterattacks and the repositioning of forces from one location to another. The commander's decisive operation normally involves close combat since an area defense emphasizes terrain retention.

9-9. The commander normally positions his main body—the bulk of his combat power—within the MBA where he wants to conduct his decisive operation. The commander organizes his main body to halt, defeat, and ultimately destroy attacking enemy forces. The majority of the main body deploys into prepared defensive positions within the MBA. However, mobile elements of the force are ready to deploy where and when needed.

## RESERVE OPERATIONS

9-10. The commander's defensive plan should be able to succeed without using his reserve. However, the most likely mission of the reserve is to conduct a counterattack in accordance with previously prepared plans. A lower-echelon commander uses his reserve primarily to conduct local counterattacks to restore his defense's integrity or to exploit an opportunity. A senior commander uses his reserve to seize the initiative from the enemy when the opportunity presents itself. For example, a corps commander may target the effects of his reserve against enemy fire support and follow-on forces to achieve that effect.

9-11. The reserve is not a committed force. The commander can assign it a wide variety of tasks on its commitment, and it must be prepared to perform other missions. In certain situations, it may become necessary to commit the reserve to restore the integrity of the defense by blocking an enemy penetration or reinforcing fires into an engagement area (EA). These secondary tasks include—

- Reinforcing the defense of committed forces.
- Blocking or containing enemy forces that penetrate friendly defensive positions.
- Relieving depleted units and providing for continuous operations.

- Reacting to threats directed against the friendly force's sustainment effort. This includes acting as the echelon TCF when a separate TCF cannot be resourced.
- Extending the flanks of a defending unit to prevent its envelopment.
- Covering a retrograde movement.

9-12. Defending commanders are usually hard-pressed to establish and resource reserve forces because they are normally facing an enemy with superior combat power. Nevertheless, commanders at each echelon down to the battalion task force retain reserves as a means of ensuring mission accomplishment and for exploiting opportunities through offensive action. (Company commanders may retain a reserve based on the factors of METT-TC.) Commanders do not hold artillery and other fire support systems in reserve. (Such systems committed to rear area security operations are not in reserve.) Each echelon's reserve must have the mobility and striking power required to quickly isolate and defeat breakthroughs and flanking attempts. It must be able to seize and exploit fleeting opportunities in a powerful manner to throw the enemy's overall offensive off balance. The commander must resource his reserve so it can repeatedly attack, regroup, move, and attack again.

9-13. The size of the reserve is relative to the commander's uncertainty about the enemy's capabilities and intentions. The more uncertainty that exists, the larger the reserve. The reverse is also true. If the commander knows the size, dispositions, capabilities, and intentions of the enemy, he requires only a comparatively small reserve.

9-14. In some situations, the commander may not be able to resource a separate reserve. Therefore, he may constitute all or a portion of his reserve from his security force after it conducts a rearward passage of lines through MBA units. If the security force is the reserve for an area defense, the commander must withdraw it so it has sufficient time to occupy its reserve position, perform the necessary degree of reconstitution, and prepare plans for its reserve role. However, this is not the preferred option. Before battle handover, the senior commander must state the acceptable risk to the security force or the disengagement criteria in quantifiable terms, such as friendly strength levels, time, or event. In this case, after completing the rearward passage, the security force moves to an assembly area to prepare for its subsequent operations. This area should be free from enemy interference and clear of MBA units, main supply routes (MSRs), and the movements of other portions of the reserve.

9-15. The operations of the reserve usually become the echelon's decisive operation once committed. However, the commander can commit his reserve in a shaping operation to allow his ongoing decisive operation to achieve success. It no longer constitutes the force reserve on its commitment in either case, so the commander should designate another uncommitted force as his reserve. If he does not have that flexibility, he must hold his reserve for commitment at the decisive moment and accept risk.

## CONTROL MEASURES

9-16. The commander organizes an area defense by designating his MBA and assigning AOs, battle positions (BPs), or both to subordinate units located within the MBA. He creates a security area in front of the MBA. When possible, the boundaries of the subordinate elements of the security force coincide with those of the major defending units in the MBA. The security area should be deep enough to make the enemy displace as much of his supporting forces as possible, such as cannon artillery, sensors, and air defense artillery gun systems, before carrying his attack into the MBA. The commander also designates his rear area. (See Chapter 12 for a discussion of security operations.)

9-17. Area defense maneuver graphic control measures also include EAs, the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA), battle handover line (BHL), strong points, target reference points (TRPs), named areas of interest (NAIs), targeted areas of interest (TAIs), decision points, and various other fire control and countermobility control measures. (Figure 9-1 depicts the most common control measures. Chapters 2 and 8, and Appendix B define these defensive control measures.)

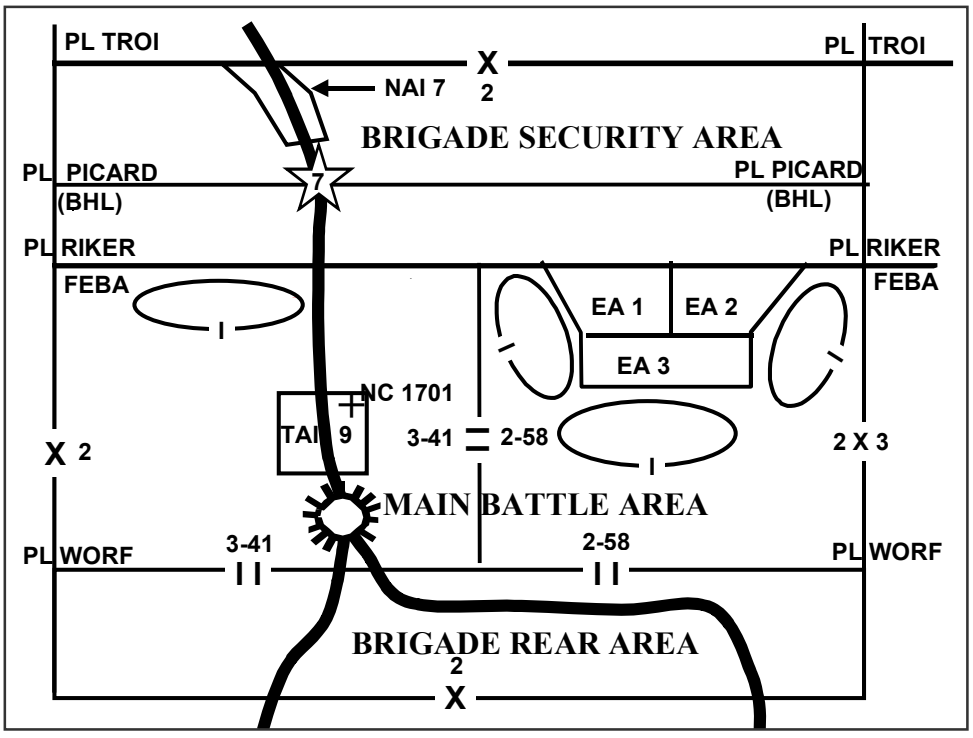


**Figure 9-1. Typical Control Measures for an Area Defense**

9-18. If the commander assigns a BP and an AO to a subordinate, the subordinate commander has specific guidance on the initial positioning of his forces. The commander ensures the synchronization of each of his subordinate units' defensive plans, and that his control measures, such as contact points and phase lines, are sufficient to ensure the continued control of his subordinates. He is responsible for fire and movement planning between the positions of his

subordinate units. If subordinate unit commanders prepare their defensive plans in isolation, one or more assailable flanks between subordinate units could easily develop. (The organization of forces, control measures, planning, preparation, and execution of a passage of lines—a tactical enabling operation—are the subject of Chapter 15.)

## PLANNING AN AREA DEFENSE

9-19. The key to a successful area defense is the integration and synchronization of all available assets. The commander achieves this when he can employ the effects of his combined arms team at the decisive time and place. (The general defensive planning considerations addressed in Chapter 8 apply to the area defense.) The commander assigns missions, allocates forces, and apportions combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) resources within the battlefield organization of decisive, shaping, and sustaining operations. He decides where to concentrate his effort and where to take risks. The commander can rapidly redirect attack aviation and artillery systems initially allocated to shaping operations to support decisive operations at the appropriate time. (See Figure 9-2 for a graphical depiction of the organization of forces for an area defense in a contiguous AO. See Figure 9-3 for a graphical depiction of the organization of forces for an area defense in a noncontiguous AO.)

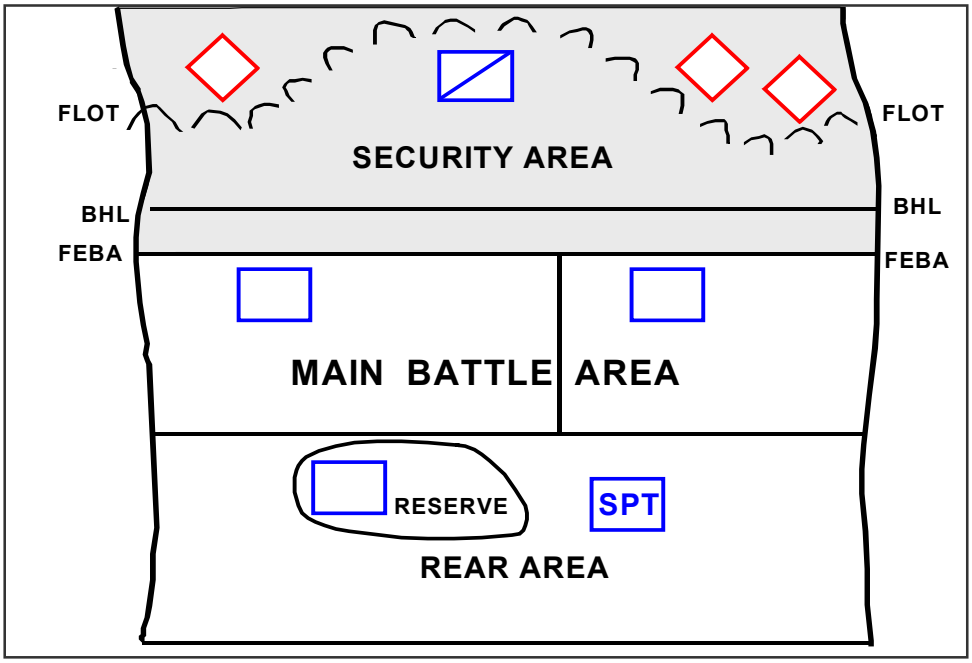


**Figure 9-2. Organization of Forces for an Area Defense—Contiguous Area of Operations**

9-20. The commander describes his concept of operation in sufficient detail so that his staff and subordinate commanders understand precisely how he intends to fight the battle. He ensures the coordination of maneuver and supporting actions among his subordinates. (FM 5-0 discusses the military decision making process and troop leading procedures.)

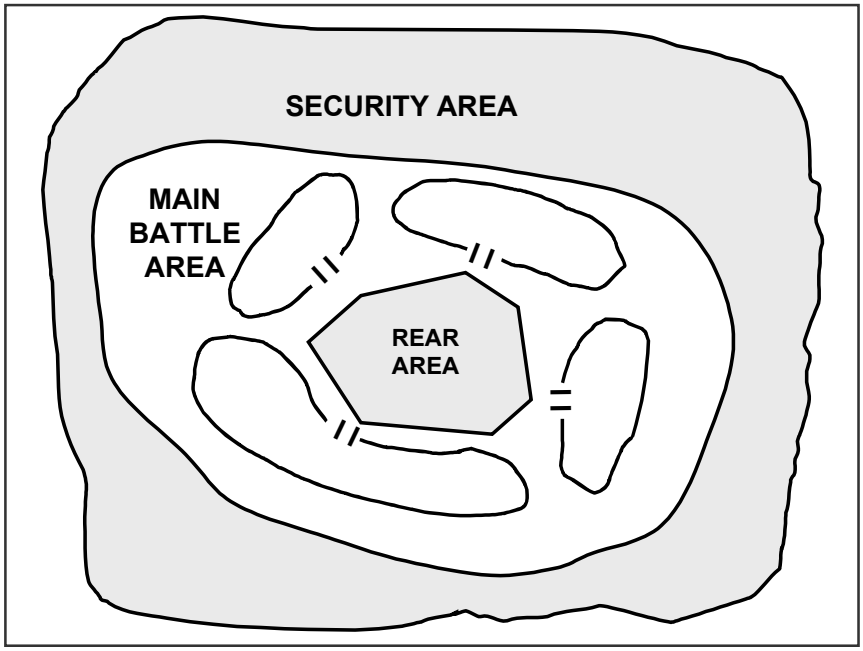


**Figure 9-3. Organization of Forces for an Area Defense—Noncontiguous Area of Operations**

9-21. The commander's keys to a successful area defense are—

- Capability to concentrate effects.
- Depth of the defensive area.
- Security.
- Ability to take full advantage of the terrain, such as intervisibility lines.
- Flexibility of defensive operations.
- Timely resumption of offensive actions.

The crux of the commander's defensive challenge is to gain time to ensure a synchronized, effective defense. The commander organizes his defensive effort based on an analysis of the factors of METT-TC and the higher commander's concept. He decides where to concentrate his efforts and how to economize his forces. He forces the enemy forces to enter his EAs. To succeed in its area defense mission, the unit must also counteract the enemy's initiative. The commander should take advantage of available offensive opportunities that do not risk the integrity of his defense, such as a spoiling attack or counterattack.

9-22. In planning an area defense, the commander may choose between two forms of defensive maneuver. He can organize either a defense in depth or a forward defense. A higher commander may dictate the form of maneuver or impose restrictions that eliminate a subordinate commander's form of maneuver. These restrictions can include time, security concerns, and directed retention of specific terrain. These two deployment choices are not totally exclusionary. Part of a commander's forces can conduct a forward defense while the other part conducts a defense in depth.

9-23. In determining the form of maneuver, the commander decides where the defensible terrain is located within his assigned AO based on its terrain characteristics and his estimate of the enemy's chosen course of action (COA). Those terrain characteristics include terrain relief patterns, avenues of approach into and within the AO, the location of any key or decisive terrain, existing obstacles and choke points, to include rivers and fording sites. The other factors of METT-TC also influence the commander's decision.

## POSITION SELECTION

9-24. Attempting to defend everything defends nothing. Therefore, the commander carefully designs his defense plan to ensure his defending force can halt the enemy attack and develop an opportunity to seize the initiative and undertake offensive operations. The cohesion of the defending force has a significant impact on the overall effectiveness of the defense. The commander must be prepared to adjust the defensive dispositions to meet changes in the enemy's dispositions to maintain that cohesion if the defense is to remain viable.

9-25. The area defense concept requires that defensive positions accomplish their mission independently or in combination by defeating the enemy by fire, absorbing the strength of the attack within the position, or destroying the enemy with a local counterattack. The commander combines the advantages of fighting from prepared positions, obstacles, planned fires, and local counterattacks to isolate and overwhelm selected enemy formations. He must be prepared to rapidly shift the nature and location of his main effort throughout his AO. The commander may have to reposition defending units within their defensive positions or reposition between terrain features as he masses overwhelming effects against the attacking enemy. The defensive plan should designate axes of advance and routes for the commitment or movement of reserves, or the forward or rearward passage of one unit through another. It should identify air axes for aerial maneuver by attack helicopters, air assault units, or fixed-wing aircraft. This capability to reposition is dependent on the defending force having superior tactical mobility. Without tactical mobility, defending forces stay in their prepared positions and accept the possibility of becoming decisively engaged.

9-26. The commander assigning the defensive mission defines the area to defend. A commander defending on a broad front is forced to accept gaps and conduct noncontiguous operations. His forward line of own troops (FLOT) will be discontinuous. Defending shallow areas of operations reduces flexibility and requires the commander to fight well forward. Narrow frontages and deep areas of operations increase the elasticity of an area defense by increasing the commander's maneuver options.

9-27. The ideal area defense is where effective mutual support exists throughout the width and depth of the defender's tactical positions. The commander organizes and occupies these positions based on their natural defensive strength; their retention ensures the integrity of his defense whether he employs a defense in an AO, defends by BP, or employs a combination of both. He maintains tactical integrity within each defensive area. A unit conducting an area defense normally addresses the security requirements of each flank

by assigning responsibility to a subordinate element or organizing a security force to specifically execute that mission.

### Defense in Depth

9-28. A defense in depth is normally the commander's preferred option. Forces defending in depth absorb the momentum of the enemy's attack by forcing him to attack repeatedly through mutually supporting positions in depth. Depth gives the commander's fire support assets time to generate devastating effects and affords him multiple opportunities to concentrate the effects of overwhelming combat power against the attacking enemy. This also provides more reaction time for the defending force to counter the attack. The commander gathers more information about the attacking enemy's intentions before the enemy commits to a COA. This reduces the risk of the enemy force quickly penetrating the main line of defense.

9-29. The commander also employs a defense in depth when the enemy has the capability to employ large quantities of precision-guided munitions or weapons of mass destruction. Defense in depth results in friendly units and facilities being dispersed throughout the defensive AO. The commander takes area damage-control measures to reduce the effects of weapons of mass destruction on the friendly force and denies the enemy lucrative targets. The degree of dispersal adopted by defending forces is both a function of the enemy's capabilities and the friendly forces' capability to rapidly concentrate overwhelming combat power at decisive points.

9-30. The commander positions his units in successive layers of battle positions along likely enemy avenues of approach when he conducts a defense in depth. (See Figure 9-4, page 9-10.) The commander usually decides to conduct a defense in depth when—

- The mission is not restrictive and allows the commander to fight throughout the depth of the battlefield.
- The terrain does not favor a defense well forward, and there is better defensible terrain deeper within the AO.
- The AO is deep compared to its width, and there is significant depth available.
- The cover and concealment on or near the FEBA is limited.
- The enemy has several times the combat power of the defender.

9-31. Divisions and corps employing a defense in depth can conduct an area defense on a wider frontage than they can if they adopt a forward defense because a forward defense has no time or space to reposition forces. A defense in depth allows the commander to use his security and forward MBA forces to identify the enemy's decisive operation and control the depth of the enemy's penetration into the MBA. By their defensive actions, they provide the commander with time to react to enemy actions and allow him to take offensive steps that eliminate enemy options, such as conducting a counterattack into the flank of an enemy force.

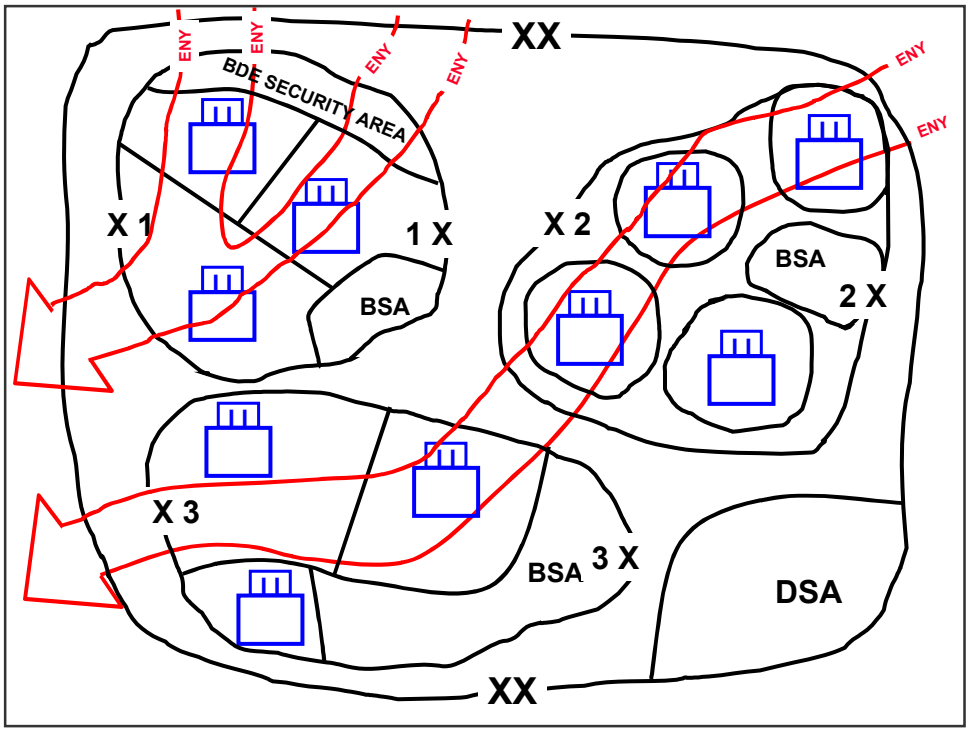


**Figure 9-4. Division Conducting a Defense in Depth with Subordinate Brigades Deployed in Noncontiguous Areas of Operations with Enemy Avenues of Approach Depicted**

### Forward Defense

9-32. The commander conducts his decisive operation from forward defensive positions near the FEBA in a forward defense. (See Figure 9-5.) He concentrates a significant portion of his available combat power into EAs along the FEBA. His intent is to prevent significant enemy penetration into the defensive area. The commander conducting a forward defense fights to retain these positions along the FEBA and violently counterattacks any enemy penetration. However, if the enemy penetrates the main defensive positions, the defender's lack of depth may allow the enemy to rapidly exploit success.

9-33. In general, the commander uses a forward defense when a higher commander directs him to retain forward terrain for political, military, economic, and other reasons. Alternatively, a commander may choose to conduct a forward defense when the terrain in that part of his AO—including natural obstacles—favors the defending force because—

- The best defensive positions are located along the FEBA.
- Strong natural obstacles are located near the FEBA.
- Natural EAs occur near the FEBA.
- Cover and concealment in the rear portion of the AO are limited.

## POSITIONING THE RESERVE

9-34. Whatever the commander's choice—forward or in depth—once the enemy commits his forces, the defending commander has the ability to seize the initiative by counterattacking over familiar ground to destroy a halted,

disorganized enemy while protected by overwatching fires from friendly positions. Whenever possible, the commander should direct these counterattacks against the enemy's rear or flanks. The commander's reserve is a key component of the counterattack.

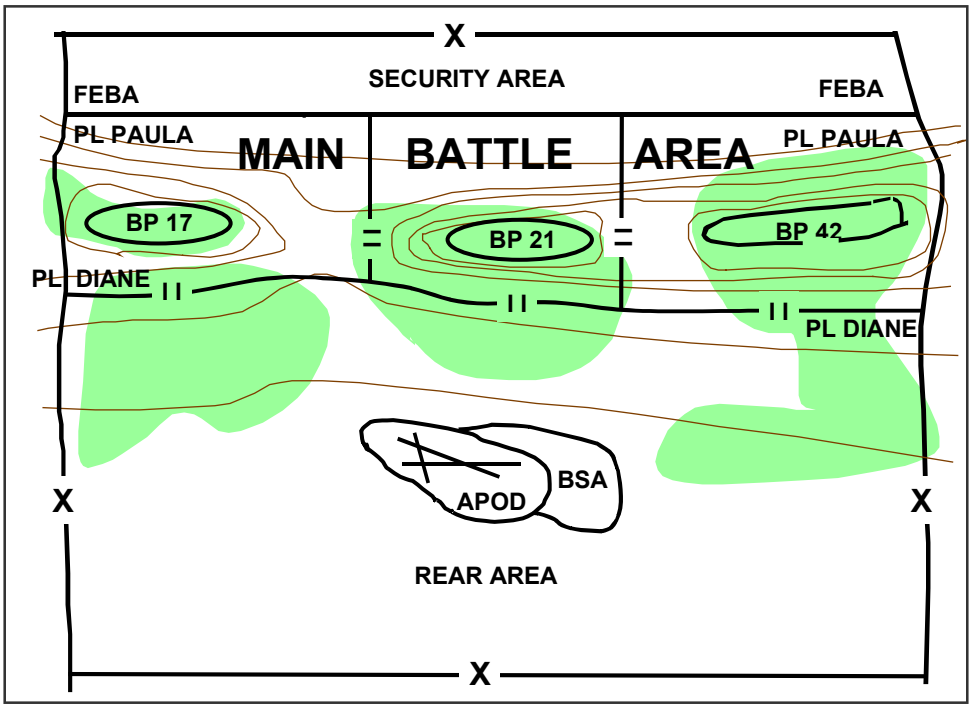


**Figure 9-5. Brigade Conducting a Forward Defense in a Contiguous Area of Operations**

9-35. When deciding where to place his reserve, the commander decides whether to orient his reserve on its most likely mission or its most important mission. He expends significant effort during the planning process to ensure he can effectively use his reserve when needed. He may locate his reserve within the AO where it can employ the road network to rapidly displace throughout the AO in response to a number of opportunities or contingencies. The commander must consider terrain, MSRs of forward units, enemy avenues of approach, and probable enemy penetrations when determining the exact location for his reserve. He may choose to initially position his reserve in a forward location to deceive the enemy and obscure subordinate unit boundaries, especially those of dissimilar units such as armor and light infantry.

9-36. In restrictive terrain that lacks routes for movement, the commander can task organize his reserve into small elements and position them where they can react quickly to local combat developments. This dispersion improves force protection but reduces the ability of the reserve to mass fires. Covered lateral and forward high-speed deployment routes should be available. The reserve must have movement priority along those routes. He must ensure the maintenance of communication between these dispersed elements. This may require establishing retransmission nodes for combat net radios. In open terrain, the commander maintains a centrally located reserve

positioned somewhat farther from the FLOT. He considers the enemy's potential to employ weapons of mass destruction and conduct air interdiction when deciding where to position his reserve.

9-37. Whenever possible, the commander positions his reserve beyond the enemy's direct fire range. This is easier to achieve at higher echelons than at lower echelons. The reserve takes defensive measures to prevent being acquired and attacked by enemy indirect fire systems. These include camouflage, local security, and control of electronic emissions.

9-38. The commander also plans how to reconstitute his reserve once he commits his original reserve. Forces most easily designated are subordinate unit reserves. If his higher headquarters has not committed its reserve, he has more flexibility and can take greater risk in employing his reserve.

## SPOILING ATTACKS AND COUNTERATTACKS

9-39. A spoiling attack preempts or seriously impairs the enemy's ability to launch an attack, while a counterattack prevents the enemy from exploiting his successes. The forces conducting either form of attack must be large and strong enough to develop the situation, protect themselves, and force the enemy to react, placing his plan at risk.

9-40. The commander considers the enemy situation and estimates the time and distance factors of any follow-on enemy forces in planning either a spoiling attack or a counterattack by his reserve and other forces. Then he determines which of his units will attack, where they will be after the attack, and what interdiction is necessary to isolate the targeted enemy element. (See Figure 9-6.) His counterattacking forces plan to avoid enemy strength when possible. The most effective attacks seize strong positions that permit the counterattacking force to deliver fire on an exposed enemy unit's flanks and rear. If it is tasked to stay and defend against enemy follow-on forces, the counterattacking force must establish a viable defensive position before any following enemy units can make contact.

9-41. Counterattack plans include assumptions regarding the size and shape of the anticipated penetration or enemy formation; the strength and composition of the enemy force; and the status of the reserve and forces in the MBA. Other factors that affect the counterattack include the capability to contain the enemy, shaping operations to support the attack, and the strength and responsiveness of the reserve at the time of the counterattack.

9-42. The commander's staff prepares counterattack plans and then allocates subordinate headquarters sufficient time to make their plans. The control measures for a counterattack are the same ones discussed in Chapter 5 for the attack. If possible, the commander distributes his counterattack plans along with the basic defense plan. Reserve unit commanders conduct detailed counterattack planning that includes conducting reconnaissance, selecting multiple routes, determining time and space factors, rehearsing, coordinating with appropriate elements of the forward defending force, and fire planning. The commander adjusts his counterattack plans as necessary based on the lessons learned during rehearsals.

9-43. Enemy movement into an NAI helps the commander determine the enemy's scheme of maneuver and possible objectives. He uses decision points and NAIs throughout his AO to trigger his counterattack. The commander identifies TAIs for attack to support his operations.

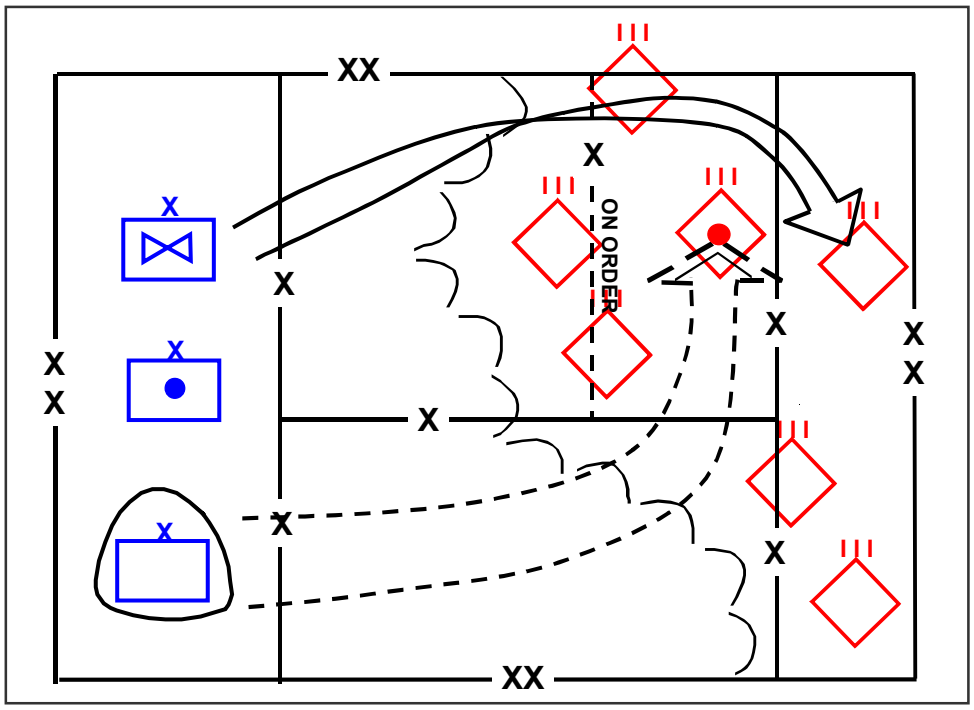


**Figure 9-6. Division Counterattack**

## PREPARING AN AREA DEFENSE

9-44. Preparations focus on planning those additional ISR operations required to answer the commander's critical information requirements, refining the plan, increasing coordination and synchronization, and conducting shaping actions within the force's capability and operations security guidelines. If the commander decides that he must conduct a deliberate defense but knows that the enemy will attack before he is prepared, he may have to commit substantial forces to security operations or conduct a spoiling attack. This buys time and space to prepare for a deliberate defense.

9-45. A unit normally transitions to the defense after it completes the deployment process of force projection, completes offensive operations, or is in an assembly area. The commander issues a warning order stating the mission and identifying any special considerations. His staff conducts detailed planning while the rest of the unit completes its current mission. The staff coordinates for the pre-positioning of ammunition and barrier material in a secure area near the unit's defensive positions before starting the operation.

9-46. Before occupying any position, leaders at all echelons conduct some type of reconnaissance. This reconnaissance effort is as detailed as the factors of METT-TC permit. It may consist of a simple map reconnaissance or a more detailed leaders' reconnaissance and initial layout of the new position.

9-47. The defending unit occupies its defensive positions as soon as practical after receiving the mission. It conducts reconnaissance of the defensive area and establishes a forward security area before occupying the positions The unit may pre-position supplies such as ammunition and barrier materiel once it establishes security. The unit can accomplish many defensive tasks simultaneously; the factors of METT-TC are the deciding consideration in establishing priorities of work. Those priorities may be—

- Establishing local security and deploying a security force.
- Identifying EAs where the commander wants to engage and destroy the enemy.
- Planning fire control measures, such as TRPs, trigger lines, and final protective fires to support the EAs.
- Positioning key weapon systems to engage into the EAs and TRPs and develop range cards and sector sketches.
- Positioning observers who can see both targets and trigger lines.
- Siting obstacle groups to support weapon systems.
- Designating and clearing fields of fire.
- Preparing primary fighting positions based on the anticipated fighting conditions, such as the time of day and weather conditions.
- Emplacing obstacles and surveying indirect fire targets to support these obstacles.
- Providing concealment and camouflage for fighting and survivability positions as they are constructed.
- Positioning any available critical friendly zones over friendly positions by establishing sensor coverage and quickfire links between the sensor and shooter.
- Installing night and limited-visibility aids, such as thermal hot spots and chemical lights on TRPs during daylight.
- Updating range cards and sector sketches as required.
- Preparing alternate fighting positions.
- Designating and preparing supplementary positions.
- Designating hide positions and rehearsing movements to and from fighting positions. (Units may place their combat and tactical vehicles in hide positions at any time while preparing the defensive position.)
- Positioning the reserve.
- Establishing contact points with any adjacent units so that the defensive efforts of both units can be tied together.
- Emplacing wire for communications.
- Improving mobility on counterattack routes.
- Prestocking ammunition in revetments or bunkers where it can survive the enemy's preparatory fires.
- Rehearsing movements under daylight and limited-visibility conditions.
- Continuing to improve the defense.

9-48. Survivability positions enhance the strength of a defensive position by providing soldiers and weapon systems with some degree of cover from enemy

fires. Units initiate construction of survivability positions in accordance with their priority of work and continue to build and improve them until the last possible moment. The overhead cover provided varies with the location of the sheltered troops and enemy capabilities. As time and resources allow, the defending unit improves communication routes throughout its defensive positions to ease movement of supplies and forces, particularly the reserve. It quickly establishes wire communications among its various subordinate elements to reduce its electromagnetic signature.

9-49. The defending unit rehearses how to move from its hide positions to its primary positions and how it will occupy alternate and supplementary positions to continue to engage the enemy if he progresses into the unit's defensive positions. These rehearsals establish the time necessary to conduct these movements under different environmental conditions. It modifies existing plans based on the results of rehearsals and changes in the factors of METT-TC. The commander takes steps to ensure that the routes taken during these rehearsals do not show obvious signs of heavy use. These steps can include the conduct of only dismounted rehearsals, only moving one vehicle per platoon, and taking steps to eliminate signs of movement such as sweeping snow back over the tracks made during the rehearsal.

9-50. The commander ensures close coordination among his subordinates. During the preparation phase, he can take his subordinate commanders to a vantage point in the MBA to rehearse the battle and plan coordination among their units if such a site is available. This helps the commander in transmitting his intent and in establishing common control measures for subordinate units.

9-51. The location, composition, and movement of the reserve are essential elements of friendly information. Enemy reconnaissance efforts focus on finding the reserve and reporting when and where it is committed. Avoiding detection by the enemy is vital to the success of the reserve.

9-52. The CSS rehearsal should be integrated into the maneuver rehearsal to verify that routes for support do not cross or conflict with routes used by reserve forces or other maneuver elements. The commander should balance the use of ammunition caches against the defending unit's ability to guard them. The commander should also ensure that alternate MSRs are adequate to accommodate contingency plans and that changing MSRs can be accomplished effectively.

9-53. The commander ensures that his combat multipliers are completely integrated with his intended maneuver. This includes the use of camouflage, deception, and smoke to confuse enemy reconnaissance assets. Having key representatives from each of these multipliers simultaneously rehearse the plan with his subordinate maneuver unit is an effective technique for ensuring integration. After issuing the order and receiving briefbacks from his subordinate commanders and other leaders, the commander verifies that they have a common understanding of the plan and can execute it with minimal guidance.

## EXECUTING AN AREA DEFENSE

9-54. A defending unit within the MBA uses a variety of tactics, techniques, and procedures to accomplish the mission. At one end of the defensive continuum is a totally static defense oriented on terrain retention. This defense depends on the use of firepower from fixed positions to deny the enemy terrain. At the other end is a dynamic defense focused on the enemy. That defense depends on maneuver to disrupt and destroy the enemy force.

9-55. A commander combines the static element to control, stop, or canalize the attacking enemy and the dynamic element to strike and defeat him. A successful area defense uses forces in relatively fixed positions to create the opportunity for the reserve to strike at the enemy from an unanticipated direction and strength. (See Figure 9-7.) The defending force repeatedly lures the enemy into EAs where it kills selected portions of the enemy force.

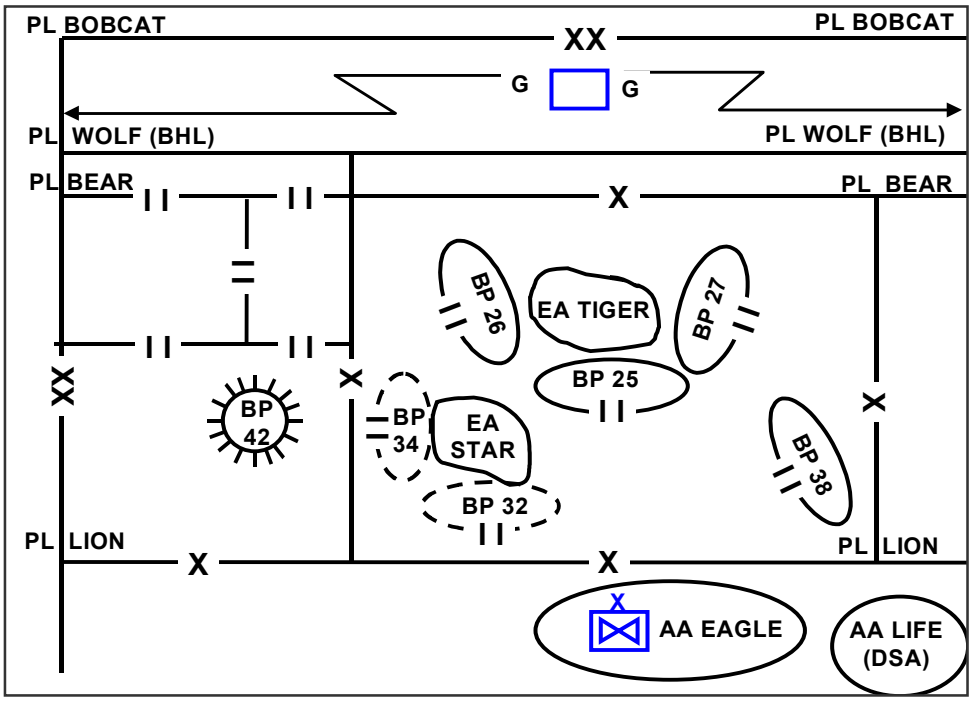


**Figure 9-7. Area Defense Using Static and Dynamic Elements**

9-56. In an area defense, defending forces fight mainly from prepared, protected positions to concentrate combat power effects against attempted enemy breakthroughs and flanking movements. The commander uses mobile forces to cover gaps between defensive positions, reinforce those positions as necessary, and counterattack to seal penetrations or block enemy attempts at flanking movements.

9-57. Conducting shaping operations in an area defense is similar to shaping operations in the offense. The factors of METT-TC determine how closely the commander synchronizes his shaping operations with his decisive operations. The commander conducts shaping operations designed to regain the initiative by limiting the attacker's options and disrupting the enemy's plan. He

conducts shaping operations to prevent enemy forces from massing and creates windows of opportunity for decisive offensive operations, allowing his force to defeat them in detail. The commander also employs shaping operations to disrupt enemy operations by attacking command posts at critical stages in the battle or by striking and eliminating key elements, such as river crossing equipment and supplies in a region that contains numerous unfordable rivers. Reconnaissance and security operations are normally components of the echelon's shaping operations.

9-58. This manual divides execution into five steps:

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

This does not imply that these steps occur sequentially; they may occur simultaneously.

## GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

9-59. Gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy in the face of his determined efforts to destroy friendly ISR assets is vital to the success of defensive operations. As the enemy's attack begins, the defending unit's first concerns are to identify committed enemy units' positions and capabilities, determine the enemy's intent and direction of attack, and gain time to react. Initially, the commander accomplishes these goals in the security area. The sources of this type of intelligence include reconnaissance and security forces, intelligence units, special operations forces, and aviation elements. The commander ensures the distribution of a common operational picture throughout the force during the battle as a basis for subordinate commanders' actions. (See FM 6-0.) The commander uses the information available to him, in conjunction with his military judgment, to determine the point at which the enemy is committed to a COA.

9-60. The security force seeks to strip enemy reconnaissance forces and hide the defending force's dispositions, capabilities, and intent at the same time as friendly ISR assets help to determine the enemy's chosen COA. Ideally, the fight in the security area should force the enemy to conduct a movement to contact against a prepared defense.

9-61. A single force in the security area can perform both reconnaissance and security functions. The security force uses every opportunity for limited offensive action to delay and harass the enemy and to gain information. As the security element displaces, the commander makes preparations to pass it through or around the MBA force as quickly as possible by using multiple passage points, gaps, or lanes along the FEBA. This usually occurs in one location at a time until the security force has completely withdrawn. However, the security force may pass in sequence based on enemy pressure. Transfer of responsibility occurs forward of the FEBA at the BHL. (See Figure 9-8, page 9-18.) Taking advantage of previous liaison and plans, the security force makes any required last-minute coordination with MBA forces at contact points to ensure its rapid passage through the MBA force.

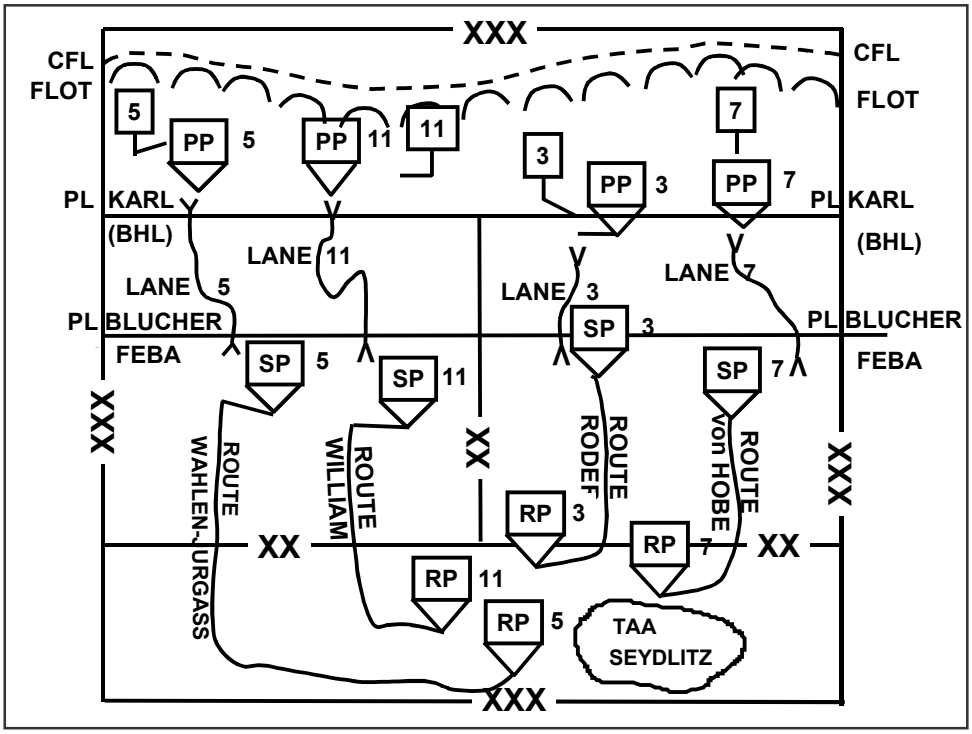


**Figure 9-8. Battle Handover Line**

9-62. The entire security force should not withdraw automatically as soon as the first enemy units reach the FEBA. The commander can leave in place security elements located in areas where the enemy has not advanced. The security force adjusts to the enemy's advance and continues to conduct security operations as far forward as possible. It continues to resist the enemy's shaping operations, such as the enemy's reconnaissance effort, thereby upsetting his coordination and allowing the MBA commander to fight one engagement or battle at a time. Doing this increases the chances for success even if the enemy attack penetrates into the MBA in some areas. In some cases, the security force can attack the enemy force from its rear, engage high-payoff targets, or drive between echelons to isolate leading enemy units.

9-63. As the enemy force approaches the MBA, the commander may order reconnaissance and surveillance assets within his security force to displace to one or both sides of the enemy penetration and continue to maintain surveillance. By observing and providing access to enemy flanks, reconnaissance and surveillance elements can facilitate the conduct of friendly counterattacks. However, to prevent the encirclement of these assets, the commander may plan to monitor those areas where the enemy has not advanced into the MBA solely by technical means.

9-64. Battle handover between the security force and MBA forces requires close coordination and occurs as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimize their vulnerability to enemy fire. The security force commander must retain freedom to maneuver until he initiates the passage of lines. The commander's fire support assets help cover the withdrawal of security forces.

Combat support and CSS elements of the security force should move to the rear as early as possible to avoid hampering the movement of combat forces. Normally, battalion-size units of the security force hand off the battle to the brigades through which they pass. (See Chapter 16 for a discussion of rearward passage of lines.)

9-65. The commander must consider the security force's next mission prior to battle handover between the security force and the MBA force. Factors that may affect his decision are the status of the security force, its subsequent mission preparation requirements, and the size and nature of the reserve required by the situation. He may decide to employ it immediately as his reserve, which would release his initial reserve for other tasks. Alternately, the commander may decide to use the security force to conduct additional security operations on the flanks of MBA forces as the battle progresses. However, it may be some time before the security force is ready for commitment. Therefore, the commander is more likely to wait until the security force has been reconstituted and the initial reserve committed before designating the former security force as his reserve.

9-66. The commander should base the location of his security force's assembly area on its follow-on mission. The commander wants those assembly areas located to rapidly support ongoing operations yet keep withdrawn security units from interfering with ongoing decisive and shaping operations. After passage, the security force normally moves to these locations to prepare for subsequent operations. At a minimum he must rearm and refuel the security force. Additional CSS concerns include casualty evacuation, maintenance requirements, and resupply of the other classes of supply.

## DISRUPT THE ENEMY

9-67. The commander executes his shaping operations to disrupt the enemy regardless of his location within the AO. After making contact with the enemy, the commander seeks to disrupt his plan, his ability to control his forces, and his combined arms team. Ideally, the results of the commander's shaping operations should force a disorganized enemy, whose ability to synchronize its elements has been degraded, to conduct a movement to contact against prepared defenses. Once the process of disrupting the enemy begins, it continues throughout a defensive operation.

9-68. The commander initiates his shaping operations simultaneously with the preparation of his MBA positions. These shaping operations typically focus on high-payoff targets, command and control nodes, engineer, fire support, and air defense assets for destruction or disruption. They can also force the enemy to use avenues of approach covered by friendly EAs. These shaping operations destroy the enemy's cohesion and disrupt the tempo of his approach to the MBA. This, in turn, disrupts the timely introduction of enemy follow-on forces into the engagement. For example, offensive information operations directed against the enemy's C2 nodes and air defense assets increase the enemy's vulnerability to other shaping operations while simultaneously slowing the enemy's reaction to these shaping operations. (FM 3-13 discusses offensive information operations.) Follow-on engagements focus on degrading the enemy's fire support and engineer assets, thereby disrupting the movement of his approaching units.

9-69. Other targets for shaping operations include enemy reconnaissance and intelligence assets. Destroying these assets allows the commander to repeatedly force enemy units to deploy into combat formations on ground of his choosing, thus contributing to the disruption and desynchronization of the enemy's plan. The timing of these shaping operations is important. The enemy cannot be allowed to recover from their effects prior to the decisive operation. The commander may also execute offensive operations to further disrupt the enemy, such as spoiling attacks, raids, ambushes, feints, or demonstrations.

**FIX THE ENEMY**

9-70. The commander does everything in his power to limit the options available to the enemy when conducting an area defense. In addition to disrupting the enemy, the commander conducts shaping operations to constrain the enemy into a specific COA, control his movements, or fix him in a given location. These actions limit the enemy's options. While executing these operations, the commander continues to find, and delay or attrit enemy follow-on and reserve forces to keep them from entering the MBA.

9-71. The commander has several options to help him fix an attacking force. The commander can design his shaping operations—such as securing the flanks and point of a penetration—to fix the enemy and allow friendly forces to execute decisive maneuver elsewhere. Previously discussed in Chapter 8, combat outposts and strong points can also deny enemy movement to or through a given location. A properly executed military deception operation can constrain the enemy to a given COA.

9-72. The commander uses obstacles covered by fire to fix, turn, block, or disrupt to limit the options available to the enemy. Properly executed obstacles are a result of the synthesis of top-down and bottom-up obstacle planning and emplacement. Blocking forces can also affect enemy movement. A blocking force may achieve its mission from a variety of positions depending on the factors of METT-TC.

**MANEUVER**

9-73. In an area defense, the decisive operation occurs in the MBA. This is where the effects of shaping operations, coupled with sustaining operations, combine with the decisive operations of the MBA force to defeat the enemy. The commander's goal is to prevent the enemy's further advance through a combination of fires from prepared positions, obstacles, and mobile reserves.

9-74. Generating massed effects is especially critical to the commander conducting the defense of a large area against an enemy with a significant advantage in combat power. The attacker has the ability to select the point and time of the attack. Therefore, the attacking enemy can mass his forces at a specific point, thus dramatically influencing the ratio of forces at the point of attack. An enemy three-to-one advantage in overall combat power can easily turn into a local six-to-one or higher ratio. The defending commander must quickly determine the intent of the enemy commander and the effects of terrain. This allows his units and their weapon systems to use agility and

flexibility to generate the effects of combat power against the enemy at those points and restore a more favorable force ratio.

9-75. Forces in the MBA assume responsibility for the battle at the BHL. As the security force approaches the FEBA, it may be necessary to increase the intensity of fire support from the MBA to allow the security force to break contact. Both direct and indirect fire assets from MBA forces provide support to cover the withdrawal of the security force and to close passage lanes through obstacle complexes. The commander may also employ smoke to assist the security force break contact with the enemy. The security force's withdrawal through the forward positions of the MBA must be carefully planned and coordinated. The commander must guard gaps in obstacles left for the withdrawal of the security force and arrange for closing them after the passage of the security force.

9-76. After the enemy reaches the MBA, he tries to find weak points and attempts to force a passage, possibly by a series of probing attacks. As the attack develops, defending units engage the enemy's lead forces. The enemy advance may slow because of canalization and the increased density of forces resulting from limited maneuver space, presenting good targets for defensive fire and air support. The maximum effects of simultaneous and sequential fires are brought to bear at this stage of the battle.

9-77. The commander's subordinate elements maneuver using massed direct and indirect fire and movement to gain positional advantage over the assaulting enemy force. The commander also directs the engineer obstacle and sustainment effort by his assignment of priorities. The commander must reposition his forces to meet the enemy where he is rather than where the commander would like him to be. The commander directs operations and supports his subordinate elements by providing the necessary CS and CSS. He controls the commitment of the reserve and, at division echelon and above, engages enemy follow-on forces. If enemy follow-on forces can be delayed, the enemy's attack may be defeated in detail, one echelon at a time. If the defending unit can force the enemy to commit follow-on forces sooner than planned, it can disrupt the enemy's timetable, which can lead to the creation of exploitable gaps between the committed and subsequent echelons.

9-78. Gaps between defensive positions may be necessary, but they are not left where the commander expects the enemy's probable main effort. They are kept under surveillance, covered by fire or, where possible, blocked by barriers or repositioned friendly forces. The commander clearly defines the responsibility for dealing with each enemy penetration. He leverages the use of choke points and obstacles to prevent enemy penetration. If the enemy succeeds in penetrating the MBA, the commander blocks the penetration immediately and destroys this enemy force as soon as possible; hence, the need for a mobile reserve. He may extend his actions within the depth of his AO to counter enemy penetrations that cannot be stopped farther forward.

9-79. The commander never allows the attacking enemy to consolidate unless it fits his scheme of maneuver. He conducts a local counterattack with all available local resources to prevent the enemy from consolidating his gains. The lowest possible echelon conducts this local counterattack; however, the commander must be aware of the problem of piecemeal commitment. A unit

does not abandon a position unless it fits within the higher commander's intent or he grants permission to do so. If the defending force is unable to repulse the enemy, it tries to contain the enemy penetration until it can attack in concert with major counterattacking forces. The commander coordinates his counterattacks with the efforts of his fire support system.

9-80. Although the commander plans for the counterattack in his defensive planning, he is aware that his plan may not correspond exactly with the existing situation when he launches the counterattack. As the situation develops, the commander reassesses his plan based on his revised situational understanding that results from an updated common operational picture as new intelligence and combat information becomes available to answer the following basic questions:

- Is a counterattack feasible, or should the commander use the reserve to contain enemy successes?
- When and where should the defending forces counterattack?
- In the case of enemy penetrations, what should the defending forces counterattack and what should they block or contain?
- Is there enough time to complete the counterattack before the arrival of enemy follow-on forces?
- Can he conduct a counterattack using his fire support systems?

9-81. When counterattacking, the commander employs all available resources necessary to ensure success. The reserve usually becomes the echelon's decisive operation on its commitment, so he avoids its premature or piecemeal commitment. One of the commander's most critical decisions is committing the reserve. He may reinforce his reserve force before committing it to give it greater capability to counter enemy action. The commander does not counterattack as an automatic reaction to an enemy penetration, nor does he commit the reserve solely because the enemy has reached a certain phase line or other location. Fire support assets and local counterattacks by forces already defending could destroy, disrupt, or attrit enemy penetrations, thus relieving the commander of the need to commit his reserve. When possible, the commander launches the counterattack when the enemy presents his flank or rear, overextends himself, or his momentum dissipates. Once the commander identifies the flanks of the enemy's main effort, he can target counterattacks to isolate and destroy enemy forces within the MBA.

9-82. Sometimes the commander may determine that he cannot afford to use his reserve to counterattack. Therefore, he must use his resources to block, contain, or delay the enemy to gain time to employ higher-echelon reserves. In these cases, the commander and his staff must plan how to integrate reinforcing companies and battalions into the defensive scheme, adjust boundaries, and place BPs. He plans the routes these units will use, and what adjustments will be necessary in existing C2 arrangements. He can speed the process of positioning and moving reinforcements or the reserve by designating routes and providing traffic-control personnel and guides at contact points to lead and brief them on the situation. Scouts, military police, and divisional cavalry units can provide traffic control.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

9-83. The purpose of defensive operations is to retain terrain and create conditions for a counteroffensive that regains the initiative. The area defense does this by causing the enemy to sustain unacceptable losses short of his decisive objectives. A successful area defense allows the commander transition to an attack. An area defense could also result in a stalemate with both forces left in contact with each other. Finally, it could result in the defender being overcome by the enemy attack and needing to transition to a retrograde operation. Any decision to withdraw must take into account the current situation in adjacent defensive areas. Only the commander who ordered the defense can designate a new FEBA or authorize a retrograde operation.

9-84. During this follow-through period, time is critical. Unless the commander has a large, uncommitted reserve prepared to quickly exploit or reverse the situation, he must reset his defense as well as maintain contact with the enemy. Time is also critical to the enemy, because he will use it to reorganize, establish a security area, and fortify his positions.

9-85. There is a difference between local counterattacks designed to restore the defense and a decisive operation designed to wrest the initiative from the enemy and then defeat him. To conduct a decisive counterattack, the defending force must bring the enemy attack to or past its culminating point before it results in an unacceptable level of degradation to the defending force. To do this, the defending force must disrupt the enemy's ability to mass, causing him to disperse his combat power into small groups or attrit his forces to gain a favorable combat power ratio. The defending force must continue to disrupt the enemy's ability to introduce follow-on forces and to destroy his sustainment system. In the defense, the commander must prepare to quickly take advantage of fleeting opportunities, seize the initiative, and assume the offense. Ideally, he already has a counterattack plan appropriate to the existing situation. He must rapidly reorganize and refit selected units, move them to attack positions, and attack. Alternatively, he must conduct an attack using those units already in contact with the enemy, which is normally the least favorable COA.

9-86. It is extremely difficult for the enemy to fight a defensive battle in response to a friendly counterattack after he reaches a culminating point for the following reasons:

- His defensive preparations are hasty.
- His forces are not adequately organized for defense.
- Reorganizing for a defense requires more time than the friendly commander should allow.
- The enemy force is dispersed, extended in depth, and weakened.
- Enemy attacks rarely culminate on ground ideally suited for defense.
- Physical fatigue.

9-87. The shift to defense requires enemy soldiers to make a psychological adjustment. Soldiers who have become accustomed to advancing, and thus winning, must now halt deep in the opposing force's territory and fight defensively, sometimes desperately, on new and often unfavorable terms. If the

enemy commander decides to conduct retrograde operations to more defensible ground, his soldiers find it even harder to adjust psychologically.

9-88. If the defensive battle leads to a stalemate with both forces left in contact with each other, the defending force must seek to retain the initiative and set the conditions for the next encounter. The commander must prepare the defending unit to move rapidly to a subsequent defensive position during a lull in the battle because it is risky to defend from the same position twice. The enemy will know the location of the defending force's position and subject them to his supporting fires unless the defending force moves. Nevertheless the defending unit should normally stay in place and continue to fight unless it can suppress the enemy's approaching forces or take other actions to distract the enemy. This is because of the risk to a unit when it moves out of its prepared positions while still under enemy pressure.

9-89. If the defending unit is unable to maintain the integrity of its defense, it must transition to a retrograde operation or risk destruction. The commander must analyze how to execute this transition and prepare contingency plans. If the situation requires a retrograde movement, the commander conducts the operation according to the retrograde fundamentals and principles addressed in Chapter 11. In the retrograde, if the defending force can trade space for time without sustaining unacceptable losses, the commander can usually reestablish the conditions required for a successful defense.

## Chapter 10

# The Mobile Defense

*A swift and vigorous transition to attack—the flashing sword of vengeance—is the most brilliant point of the defensive.*

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

The *mobile defense* is a type of defensive operation that concentrates on the destruction or defeat of the enemy through a decisive attack by a striking force (FM 3-0). It focuses on destroying the attacking force by permitting the enemy to advance into a position that exposes him to counterattack and envelopment. The commander holds the majority of his available combat power in a striking force for his decisive operation, a major counterattack. He commits the minimum possible combat power to his fixing force that conducts shaping operations to control the depth and breadth of the enemy's advance. The fixing force also retains the terrain required to conduct the striking force's decisive counterattack. The area defense, on the other hand, focuses on retaining terrain by absorbing the enemy into an interlocked series of positions, where he can be destroyed largely by fires.

10-1. The factors of METT-TC may dictate that a unit conducts a mobile defense when defending against an enemy force with greater combat power but less mobility. A commander may also employ a mobile defense when defending a large area of operations (AO) without well-defined avenues of approach, such as flat, open terrain. The mobile defense is preferred in an environment where the enemy may employ weapons of mass destruction because this type of defense reduces the vulnerability of the force to attack and preserves its freedom of action. Future technology associated with command and control (C2) should improve the ability of the friendly force to gain and maintain a common operational picture, which reduces the risk associated with this type of defense. Among these risks are—

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- The fixing force may be isolated and defeated in detail because of the need to resource the striking force to the detriment of the fixing force.
- Operations in noncontiguous AOs associated with conducting a mobile defense can lead to defeat in detail.
- Enemy operations may impair the ability of the striking force to react at critical points.
- The enemy may not move into the area intended by the defending commander.
- The attacking enemy retains at least some momentum as he approaches the desired engagement areas (EAs).
- The defending force may not gain an accurate picture of the enemy's locations and dispositions required by the striking force to launch decisive operations in time to react.
- The decentralized operations required by the mobile defense increase the potential for fratricide.

## HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

10-2. The concept of a mobile defense did not enter into Army doctrine until it had the chance to review German lessons learned as a result of its World War II experiences in Russia. The following historical example illustrates how conducting a mobile defense can result in recapturing the initiative and accomplishing the mission.

### Manstein's Donbas Operation, February 1943

In January 1943, the Soviets launched a number of successful offensives following their Stalingrad counteroffensive. By the end of the month, this culminated in plans to drive German forces back to the Dniepr River. The Soviet high command (STAVKA) approved plans to liberate simultaneously the Donets Basin industrial area, Kharkov, and Kursk, and drive the Germans as far west as possible. The plan required that operations be continued without an operational pause, using forces weakened by previous operations, tenuously sustained by overextended supply lines with virtually no operational reserve.

German Field Marshal Manstein's mission was to preserve the German southern wing in the Donets area. His defensive concept consisted of allowing Soviet forces to advance in some areas, holding tightly to a few critical positions, and deliberately reducing his own forces in other areas to create a striking force capable of mounting a coordinated counterattack. See Figure 10-1. Reinforcements began arriving for his *Army Group Don*. He deployed his *1st Panzer Armee* to defend Voroshilovgrad as a fixing force, *4th Panzer Armee* and *Army Detachment Hollidt* to defend the central and southern parts of Manstein's lines, and the 1st *SS Panzer Korps* to defend Kharkov. The *1st SS Panzer Korps,* consisting of the *1st (Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler), 2nd (Das Reich),* and *3rd (Totenkopf) SS Panzer Divisions) (PzDiv),* formed his striking force.

STAVKA continued to pursue its offensive plans. However, the farther west the Soviet forces moved, the more overextended their supply lines became. On 20 February, Manstein's plan went into action. The *2nd SS PzDiv* attacked from south of Krasnograd and struck the Russian 6th Army and linked up with the *15th*

*Infantry Division* at Novo Moskovsk, thereby severing communications between the Soviet 267th Rifle Division (RD) and the 106th Rifle Brigade and the rear. On 21 February, the German units consolidated their positions and prepared to advance on Pavlograd. Meanwhile, *XL Panzer Korps* attacked the Southwestern Front's mobile group, ultimately routing it. Units of the *3rd SS PzDiv* moved into the Krasnograd area to prepare for their advance on Pavlograd. Despite this new situation, the Soviet front did not deviate from its offensive plans.

On 22 February, the *2nd SS PzDiv* drove through to Pavlograd and cut off the 35th Guards RD's communications with its 6th Army headquarters. The *3rd SS PzDiv* advanced, widening the breach between the Soviet 6th Army's main forces and the 267th RD. On 23 February, the *6th* and *17th PzDivs*, previously the 4th *Panzer Armee* (fixing force) reserve, began their offensive, smashing the 6th Army and 1st Guards Army and cutting the supply lines of and virtually encircling the 25th Tank Corps, which had been ordered to continue its advance. The *2nd SS PzDiv* consolidated positions at Pavlograd. The *3rd SS PzDiv* advanced against the 16th Guards Tank Brigade and the 35th Guards RD. Its southern column reached positions just northeast of Pavlograd. The *6th* and *17th PzDivs* advanced northward from the southeast, both divisions ultimately linking up with the *1st SS Panzer Korps* to advance farther north on 24 February.

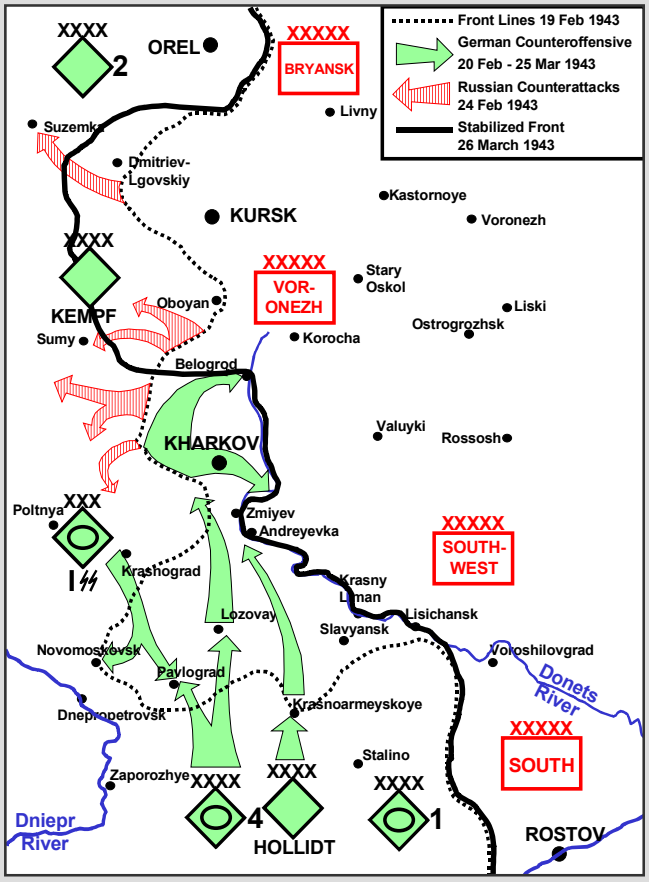


**Figure 10-1. Donbas Movements**

By the evening of 24 February, Vatutin, the Soviet Southwest Front commander, finally recognized the dangerous situation his forces were facing and ordered what remained of the front's right flank to go over to the defensive. The Germans continued their counteroffensive and ultimately recaptured Kharkov on 14 March.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

10-3. Units smaller than a corps do not normally conduct a mobile defense because of their inability to fight multiple engagements throughout the width, depth, and height of the AO, while simultaneously resourcing striking,

fixing, and reserve forces. Typically, the striking force in a mobile defense may consist of one-half to two-thirds of the defender's combat power. (See Figure 10-2.) Division and smaller units generally conduct an area defense or a delay as part of the fixing force as the commander shapes the enemy's penetration or they attack as part of the striking force. Alternatively, they can constitute a portion of the reserve.

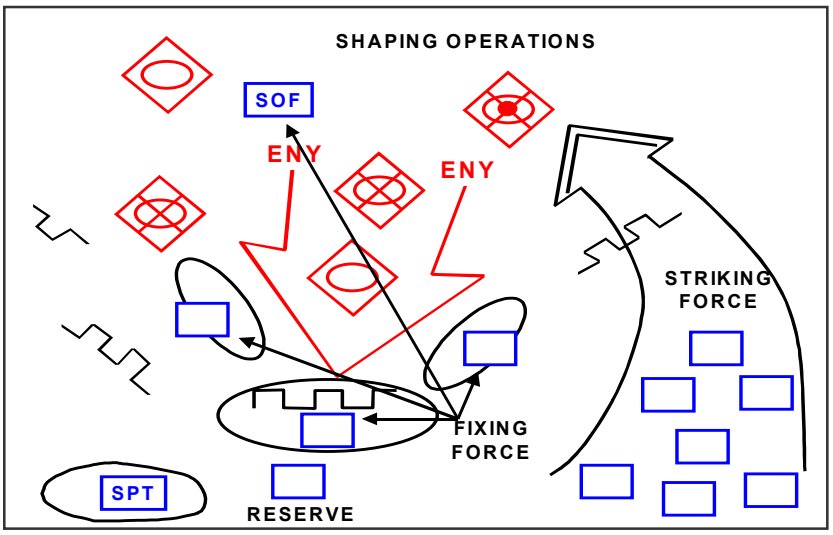


**Figure 10-2. Mobile Defense**

10-4. The commander organizes his main body into two principal groups—the fixing force and the striking force. In the mobile defense, reconnaissance and security, reserve, and sustaining forces accomplish the same tasks as in an area defense. (See Figure 10-3.) The commander completes any required adjustments in task organization before he commits his units to the fight.

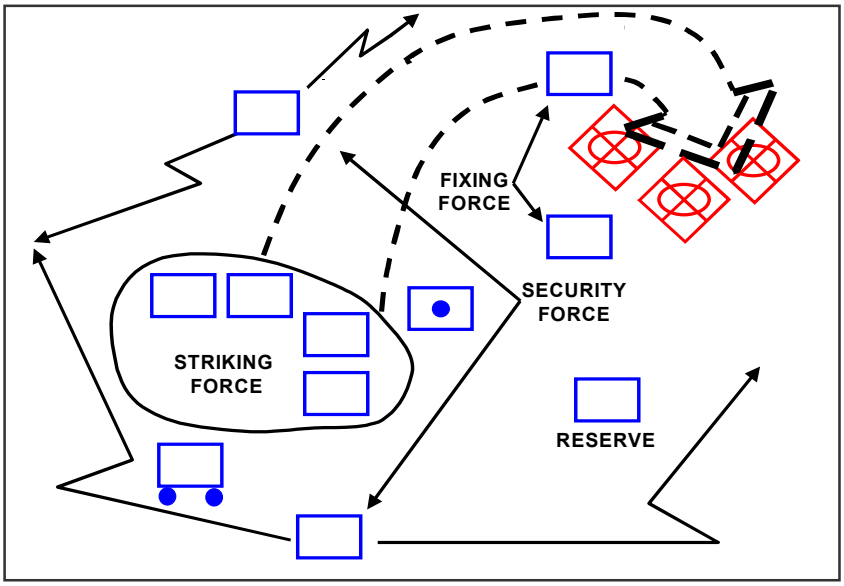


**Figure 10-3. Organization of Forces for a Mobile Defense**

10-5. Organized by the commander with the minimum combat power needed to accomplish its mission, the fixing force turns, blocks, and delays the attacking enemy force. It tries to shape the enemy penetration or contain his advance. Typically, it has most of the countermobility assets of the defending unit. The fixing force may conduct defensive actions over considerable depth within the main battle area (MBA). However, it must be prepared to stop and hold terrain on short notice to assist the striking force on its commitment. The operations of the fixing force establish the conditions for a decisive attack by the striking force at a favorable tactical location. The fixing force executes its portion of the battle essentially as a combination of an area defense and a delaying action. The actions of the fixing force are shaping operations.

10-6. The striking force decisively engages the enemy as he becomes exposed in his attempts to overcome the fixing force. The term "striking force" is used rather than reserve because the term "reserve" indicates an uncommitted force. The striking force is a committed force and has the resources to conduct a decisive counterattack as part of the mobile defense. It is the commander's decisive operation.

10-7. The striking force contains the maximum combat power available to the commander at the time of its counterattack. The striking force is a combined arms force that has greater combat power and mobility than the force it seeks to defeat or destroy. The commander considers the effects of surprise when determining the relative combat power of the striking force and its targeted enemy unit. The striking force is normally fully task organized with all combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) assets before its actual commitment. The commander positions engineer mobility-enhancing assets with the lead elements of the striking force.

10-8. The striking force is the key to a successful mobile defense. All of its contingencies relate to its attack. If the opportunity does not exist to decisively commit the striking force, the defender repositions his forces to establish the conditions for success. The striking force must have mobility equal to or greater than that of its targeted enemy unit. It can obtain this mobility through proper task organization, countermobility operations to slow and disrupt enemy movements, and mobility operations to facilitate the rapid shifting of friendly formations. The striking force requires access to multiple routes because an attacking enemy normally goes to great length to deny the defending force freedom of action.

10-9. The commander responsible for orchestrating the overall mobile defense should retain control of the striking force unless communication difficulties make this impossible. Normally this is the overall defending force commander. The commander's most critical decisions are when, where, and under what conditions he should commit his striking force. The commander normally accompanies the striking force.

10-10. Resourcing a reserve in a mobile defense is difficult and requires the commander to assume risk. He generally uses his reserve to support the fixing force. However, if the reserve is available to the striking force, it exploits the success of the striking force. If the reserve is composed largely of aviation forces and long-range fire support systems, it may have contingencies to support the fixing and striking forces.

## CONTROL MEASURES

10-11. A commander conducting a mobile defense uses control measures to synchronize conducting the operation. These control measures include designating the AOs of the fixing and striking forces with their associated boundaries, battle positions, and phase lines. He designates a line of departure or a line of contact as part of the graphic control measures for the striking force. He may designate an axis of advance for the striking force. He can designate attack-by-fire or support-by-fire positions. The commander uses EAs, target reference points, targeted areas of interest, and final protective fires as necessary. He designates named areas of interest to focus the efforts of his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets. This allows him to determine the enemy's course of action (COA). He designates checkpoints, contact points, passage points, passage routes, and passage lanes for use by reconnaissance and surveillance assets, security units, and the striking force. (See Figure 10-4.)

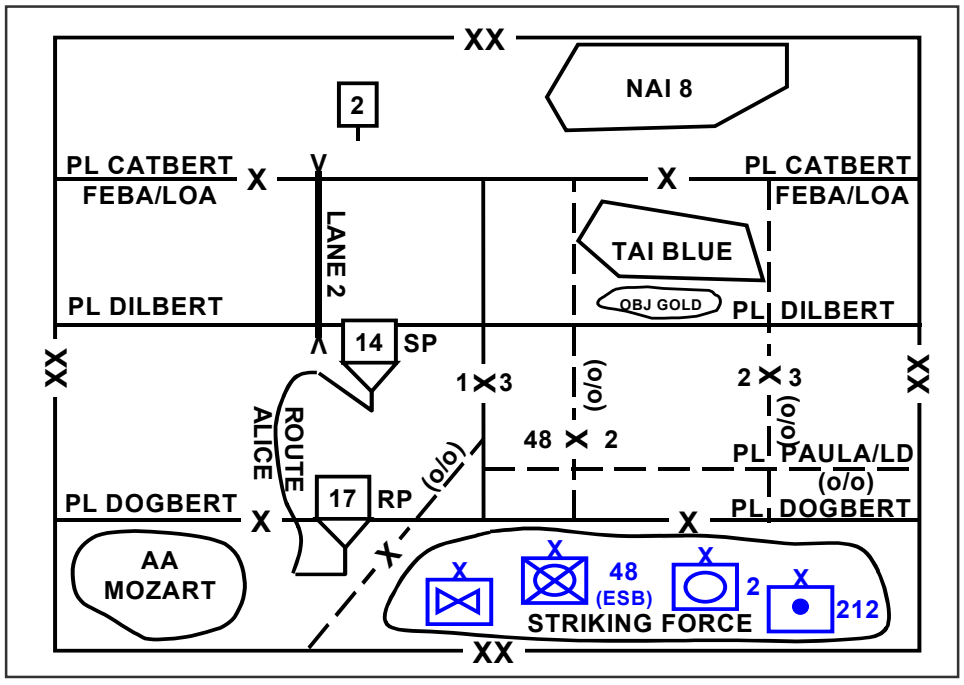


**Figure 10-4. Mobile Defense Control Measures**

10-12. The commander must provide the striking force commander with control measures to focus his force at the decisive time and place and to deconflict fires with the fixing force. As a minimum, the striking force commander needs to know the anticipated objective decision points that could lead to the commitment of his force, limit of advance, and boundaries of his AO. If the overall commander imposes either an axis of attack or a direction of attack as a control measure, he restricts the striking force commander's freedom of maneuver. However, such restrictions may be necessary to avoid contact with enemy forces that could distract the striking force from accomplishing its primary mission. These control measures may have to be drawn "on the fly" while the commander, his staff, and his subordinates move to take advantage

of an opportunity to commit the striking force in a decisive counterattack. They should also help the commander recover the integrity of his defense if the striking force is not successful in its attack. (Chapters 2, 5, and 8 explain these control measures.)

## PLANNING A MOBILE DEFENSE

10-13. The key to successful mobile defensive operations is the integration and synchronization of all available assets to maximize the combat power of the defending unit, particularly the striking force. The commander achieves integration and synchronization when he can employ their combined effects at decisive times and places. (The general defensive planning considerations addressed in Chapter 8 apply to the mobile defense.)

### MANEUVER

10-14. The commander's ability to maintain the mobility advantage of his forces is an important aspect of the mobile defense. This mobility advantage may result from or be enhanced by countermobility actions directed against the enemy force. In his mobile defense plan, the commander ensures that his forces—including reserves and the striking force—can move freely around the battlefield, while at the same time restricting the enemy's mobility, slowing his momentum, and guiding or forcing him into areas that favor the friendly defensive effort.

### FIRE SUPPORT

10-15. The effectiveness of a mobile defense is based on the carefully planned fires of all weapons. The striking force conducts the commander's decisive operation in a mobile defense. It requires continuous and concentrated fire support. The commander weights his decisive operation, in part, by allocating to it field artillery and other fire support weapon systems. He must rapidly shift indirect fire support from the fixing force to the striking force. These fire support systems do not have to move with the striking force if it remains within supporting range.

10-16. If the striking force's planned maneuver places it outside the supporting range of the defending commander's fire support systems, he must either plan the movement of fire support assets to locations where they can support the striking force or incorporate them into the striking force. Fire support assets can partially compensate for a lack of maneuver forces in the striking force. The commander takes precautions to prevent fratricide as the striking force approaches the fixing force's EAs, while supporting air and artillery assets try to interdict enemy movements.

### AIR DEFENSE

10-17. In the mobile defense, air defense is normally initially used to cover—

- Security forces and fixing force units in forward areas.
- C2 facilities.
- Critical assets, including fire support systems, reserves, and the striking force.
- Sustainment resources.

- Choke points along movement corridors planned for use by reserves or the striking force.

Once the commander commits the striking force, it receives priority of support as the decisive operation. If the striking force attacks to extended depths, the commander ensures that it and other critical assets remain within the coverage of available air defense systems. This may require him to reposition air defense radars and systems to maintain air defense coverage of the defending force.

### MOBILITY/COUNTERMOBILITY/SURVIVABILITY

10-18. The majority of the commander's countermobility and survivability assets support the operations of the fixing force. The majority of the commander's mobility assets support the operations of the striking force. Situational obstacles provide him a tremendous advantage in the mobile defense. These obstacles are a combat multiplier because they enable the commander to use economy of force measures. He uses situational obstacles to exploit enemy vulnerabilities, exploit success, separate enemy follow-on forces, and provide flank protection.

### COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

10-19. When planning for the mobile defense's sustaining operations, logistics operations planners must look beyond the fixing force's shaping operations to prepare to support the striking force's decisive counterattack. The greater the distance the striking force must cover when moving from its assembly area (AA) to its final objective, the greater the amount of supplies needed to support that move. Once committed, units in the striking force require priority of fuel, ammunition, and maintenance support over comparable units in the fixing force. Casualty evacuation will be a challenge because the fixing force will likely suffer a higher percentage of casualties but the lines of communications to the striking force must also support casualty treatment and evacuation. When the striking force must move a considerable distance from its sustaining base, the commander should consider establishing an intermediate support base (ISB). Before establishing an ISB, he must weigh the benefits of establishing the base against the cost in terms of combat power or effort diverted from the support mission to secure the ISB.

## PREPARING A MOBILE DEFENSE

10-20. Preparations for conducting a mobile defense include developing the fixing force's defensive positions and EAs as discussed in Chapter 8. The commander aggressively uses his reconnaissance assets to track enemy units as they approach. Engineers participate in conducting route and area reconnaissance to find and classify existing routes. They improve existing routes and open new routes for use during the battle.

10-21. The striking force assembles in one or more areas depending on the width of the AO, the terrain, enemy capabilities, and the planned manner of employment. Before the enemy attack begins, the striking force may deploy all or some of its elements forward in the MBA to—

- Deceive the enemy regarding the purpose of the force.

- Occupy dummy battle positions.
- Create a false impression of unit boundaries, which is important when operating with a mix of heavy and light forces or multinational forces.
- Conduct reconnaissance of routes between the striking force's AAs and potential EAs.

10-22. The enemy attempts to discover the strength, composition, and location of the units that constitute the fixing force and the striking force. The commander uses security forces and information operations to deny the enemy this information and degrade the collection capabilities of enemy ISR assets. The commander routinely repositions to mislead the enemy and to protect his force. In addition, his plans and preparations incorporate defensive information operations. The commander normally tries to portray an area defense while hiding the existence and location of the striking force.

## EXECUTING A MOBILE DEFENSE

10-23. This manual divides the execution of a mobile defense into five phases for discussion purposes. The length and nature of each phase, if it occurs at all, varies from situation to situation according to the factors of METT-TC. The phases of defensive operations are gain and maintain enemy contact, disrupt the enemy, fix the enemy, maneuver, and follow through.

10-24. The commander must have the flexibility to yield terrain and shape the enemy penetration. He may even entice the enemy by appearing to uncover an objective of strategic or operational value to the enemy. The striking force conducts the decisive operation—the attack—once the results of the actions of the fixing force meet the commander's intent.

### GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

10-25. The commander conducting a mobile defense focuses on discovering the exact location of the enemy and his strength to facilitate the effectiveness of the striking force. The security force (guard or cover) or the fixing force confirms the enemy's COA and main avenues of approach. The commander normally tasks other ISR assets to determine the location of enemy reserves and follow-on forces. Early detection of the enemy's decisive operation provides the commander with reaction time to adjust the fixing force's positions and shape the enemy penetration, which, in turn, provides the time necessary to commit the striking force. The striking force commander requires as close to real-time updates of the enemy situation as are possible to ensure that the striking force engages the enemy at the right location and time.

10-26. While conducting operations, the security force determines what routes the enemy is using, where the enemy is strong or weak, and where gaps in and between enemy formations exist. This information aids the commander in his attempt to seize the initiative. That information also increases the striking force's agility by identifying opportunities. Further, it helps pull the striking force along the path of least resistance as it maneuvers to employ its combat power at the critical time and place.

## DISRUPT THE ENEMY

10-27. In a mobile defense, the commander conducts shaping operations designed to shape the enemy's penetration into the MBA and disrupt the enemy's introduction of fresh forces into the fight. These shaping operations help establish the preconditions for committing the striking force by isolating the object of the striking force and destroying the enemy's key C2 nodes, logistics resupply units, and reserves. Whenever possible the commander sequences these shaping operations, to include offensive information operations, so that the impact of their effects coincides with the commitment of the striking force. To generate a tempo that temporarily paralyzes enemy C2, the intensity of these shaping operations may increase dramatically on the commitment of the striking force. The commander continues to conduct shaping operations once the striking force commits to prevent enemy forces from outside the objective area from interfering with executing the decisive counterattack.

## FIX THE ENEMY

10-28. Fixing the enemy is the second half of shaping operations and results in establishing the conditions necessary for decisive operations by the striking force. Typically, the commander of the defending force allows the enemy force to penetrate into the defensive AO before the striking force attacks. (See Figure 10-5.) The fixing force may employ a combination of area defense, delay, and strong point defensive techniques to shape the enemy penetration. The intent of the fixing force is not necessarily to defeat the enemy but to shape the penetration to facilitate a decisive counterattack by the striking force. The commander ensures that the missions and task organization of subordinate units within the fixing force are consistent with his concept for shaping the enemy penetration. Defensive positions within the fixing force may not be contiguous since the fixing force contains only the minimum-essential combat power to accomplish its mission.

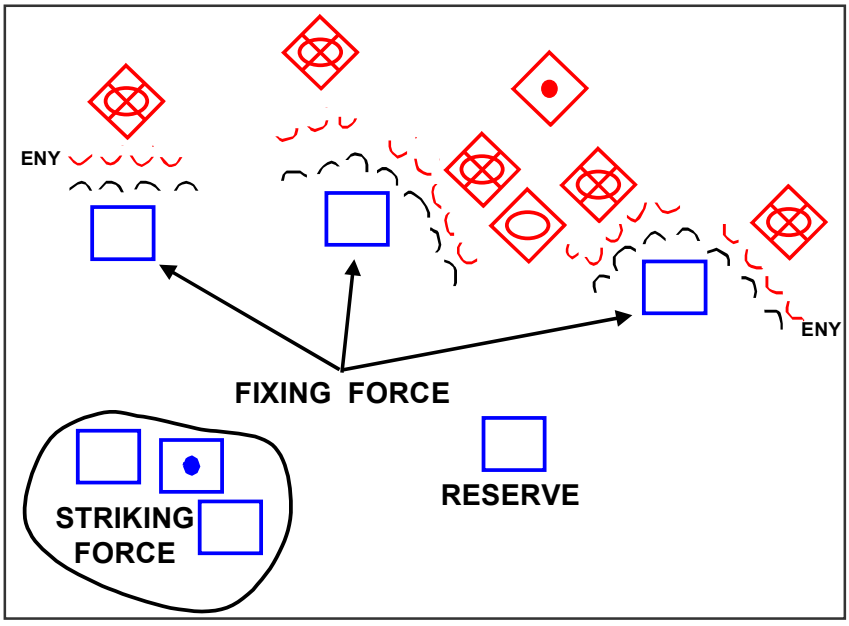


**Figure 10-5. Mobile Defense Before Commitment of Striking Force**

10-29. The fixing force's extensive use of obstacles supports this shaping effort and helps to gain an overall mobility advantage over the enemy. The commander may want to yield ground quickly to make the enemy think he has been successful or to entice him to a decisive point where the striking force can attack. Normally, in a mobile defense, the commander retains ground only to facilitate the commitment of his striking force.

10-30. When conducting a mobile defense, the commander may need to commit his reserve to reinforce the fixing force and help shape the battlefield. He positions his reserve so it effectively reacts to the most likely contingency and the enemy's most dangerous COA. Without a reserve, the commander assumes significant risk in attempting to shape the enemy penetration. Circumstances may also force the commander to employ elements of the striking force to assist the fixing force. If that occurs, the commander prefers to use his available long-range fire support assets and attack helicopters. They are the best choice because of their ability to rapidly disengage and shift their effects to support the efforts of the rest of the striking force on its commitment.

## MANEUVER

10-31. The commander's situational understanding is critical in establishing the conditions that initiate the striking force's movement and in determining the general area that serves as a focus for the counterattack. Situational understanding includes identifying those points in time and space where the counterattack proves decisive. A force-oriented objective or an EA usually indicates the decisive point. The staff synchronizes the unit's activities in time and space to sufficiently mass the effects of the striking force at the right time and place.

10-32. The actions of the striking force are the echelon's decisive operation on its commitment. The commander's ISR systems focus entirely on tracking the enemy's advance. The striking force commander continuously receives intelligence and combat information updates that allow him to adjust his counterattack as necessary to defeat the targeted enemy. Once the enemy starts his attack, any forward-deployed elements of the striking force withdraw to AAs or attack positions and prepare for their commitment in counterattack.

10-33. The defending commander launches his striking force in a counterattack when its offensive power, relative to that of the targeted attacking enemy element, is the greatest. (See Figure 10-6.) Piecemeal commitment of the striking force in support of local objectives jeopardizes the success of the overall operation. The striking force must execute the counterattack rapidly and violently, employing all combat power necessary to ensure success. The striking force may be committed at a time different than anticipated and in an entirely different area than previous contingency plans envisioned. Thus, it must be able to respond to unexpected developments rapidly and decisively.

10-34. Because the striking force normally attacks a moving enemy force, it generally assumes a combat formation with a covering force, an advance guard, a main body, and either a follow-and-support or a follow-and-assume force. The striking force attempts to take advantage of obstacles, such as rivers or obstacle zones that block the enemy's movement. The commander designates flank responsibilities and may even allocate a designated force

against a particularly vulnerable flank. However, the striking force moves quickly and takes risk on its flanks, using its speed of movement and superior situational understanding to provide security.

10-35. The striking force attacks in a formation that provides maximum combat power forward to devastate the targeted enemy force and achieve decisive results. The striking force takes advantage of its mobility and fire power to seize the initiative by overwhelming the enemy force with swift, violent blows that cripple the enemy's command and control system, disrupt his formations, and destroy his combat systems. The commander ensures that his fire support and fixing force capture the enemy's attention and posture the enemy for attack by the striking force. During the counterattack, he may have one element of the striking force occupy support-by-fire positions to suppress the enemy, while another striking force element prepares to assault the objective. Either heavy or light forces may make this assault. (Chapter 5 discusses the actual conduct of an assault on an objective.)

10-36. Engineers should be well forward to enhance the mobility of the striking force. These lead engineers search for existing obstacles and clear the route as much as possible within their capabilities. Follow-on engineers expand breaches, improve routes, and replace assault bridges with more permanent structures. Engineers with flank units focus on countermobility to protect the flanks.

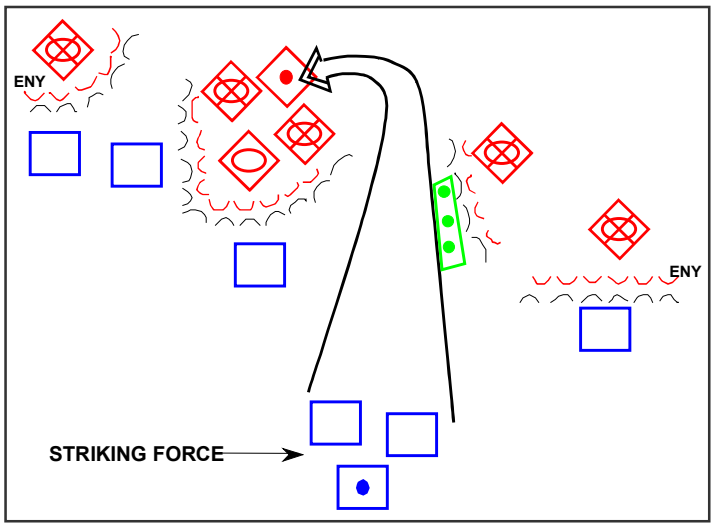


**Figure 10-6. Mobile Defense After Commitment of Striking Force**

## FOLLOW THROUGH

10-37. All defensive operations intend to create the opportunity to transition to the offense. In a mobile defense, that transitional opportunity generally results from the success of the striking force's attack. The commander exploits his success and attempts to establish conditions for a pursuit if his assessment of the striking force's attack is that there are opportunities for future offensive operations. (Chapters 6 and 7 discuss exploitation and pursuit.) If conducting the mobile defense is unsuccessful and the enemy retains the initiative, the commander must either reestablish a viable defense or conduct retrograde operations. (Retrograde operations are the topic of Chapter 11.)