

## CHAPTER 9

# FUNDAMENTALS OF THE DEFENSE

The immediate purpose of defensive operations is to defeat an enemy attack. Army forces conduct defensive operations as part of major operations and campaigns, in combination with offensive operations.

For a force-projection army, defensive operations by forces already in theater or early arriving forces at the tactical level support the campaign plan and maintain operational initiative for the joint or combined team. For example, if conditions do not support simultaneous operations to defeat an enemy rapidly, the mission of initial-entry forces might be to defend the forces, air bases, and seaports in the lodgment area to provide time for the JFC to build forces in the theater for future operations. In **such cases**, initial-entry forces would include sufficient combat power to deter attack or defend successfully while the buildup continues.

In other cases of offensive operations, commanders may require defensive operations by air assault, airborne, or amphibious forces. These forces would conduct an economy-of-force mission until a larger force could link up. Nonetheless, the preferred method is to conduct operations simultaneously throughout the depth and space of the AOR. This method can require defensive operations in some areas.

### THE PURPOSES OF THE DEFENSE

Military forces defend only until they gain sufficient strength to attack. Though the outcome of decisive combat derives from offensive operations, it is often necessary, even advisable, to defend. Commanders choose to defend when they need to buy time, to hold a piece of key terrain, to facilitate other operations, to preoccupy the enemy in one area so friendly forces can attack him in another, or to erode enemy resources at a rapid rate while reinforcing friendly operations.

They make this choice and create the conditions for a smooth transition from offense to defense or defense to offense, as the situation allows. Understanding the commander's intent is especially key in the defense,

since more precise synchronization is normally required, thus requiring close teamwork.

An effective defense consists of active and passive components combined to deprive the enemy of the initiative. It uses all arms and services in most effective combinations to fight the defense so that the enemy losses mount rapidly and the defender can quickly attack his vulnerabilities. As in the offense, passage of lines will be frequent, moving in all directions—rearward, forward, and laterally. Even in the defense, commanders seek greater freedom of maneuver while degrading or denying the enemy's.

The defender withstands and holds the enemy while continuously seeking every opportunity to assume the offensive at the appropriate time. With each engagement or battle, commanders seek conditions that favor future operations. They try to reduce options available to the enemy and increase their own, thereby seizing the initiative. They take risks to gain the initiative. There may be few opportunities in the early phases of an engagement or battle to assume the offensive. As the battle develops, such opportunities become more numerous. This is especially true during lulls in the

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battle when the defender should take steps to uncover enemy vulnerabilities and attack and destroy them if possible. Whatever the immediate purpose, the greater intent of the defense is to force the attack to culminate, to gain the initiative for friendly forces, and to create the opportunity to shift to the offensive.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Prepared positions, security, disruption, mass and concentration, and flexibility characterize defensive operations.

### PREPARATION

The defender arrives in the battle area before the attacker, making the most thorough preparations that time allows. In the early stages of battle, the defender capitalizes on the advantage of fighting from prepared positions of his selection. Defense always includes a point of main effort. Preparations involve positioning forces in depth, improving terrain to favor the defender, wargaming plans, organizing the force for movement and support, rehearsing, and taking measures to protect the force, such as mounting reconnaissance and surveillance operations forward of the defended area.

Mobilizing reserves and auxiliary forces, strengthening air and missile defenses or critical areas, conducting security operations to deny the enemy effective reconnaissance, and preparing deceptions to mislead the enemy are equally important tasks. During the course of the battle, the defender looks for opportunities to wrest the initiative from the attacker. He prepares for this by designating counterattack forces and rehearsing counterattack plans for the eventual transition to the offense. Cunning and guile are part of defensive preparations in order to keep the enemy off balance and make him begin early to doubt his ability to continue the attack.

### SECURITY

Defending forces provide security. Since a force defends to conserve combat power for use elsewhere, or at a later time, commanders must provide protection of their force. They do this principally through deception and physical means in the defended area. Defending units want to deceive the enemy as to their strengths and weaknesses. Normally a security area is designated with a covering force. The purpose of these

measures at all tactical echelons is to coordinate and synchronize the defense, to provide early warning, and to begin disrupting the integrity of the enemy attack early and continuously.

### DISRUPTION

The defender disrupts the attacker's tempo and synchronization by countering his initiative and preventing him from massing overwhelming combat power. Defending commanders also use disruption to attack the enemy's will to continue. They do this by defeating or misleading enemy reconnaissance forces, separating the enemy's forces, isolating his units, and breaking up his formations so that they cannot fight as part of an integrated whole. The defender interrupts the attacker's file support, logistics support, and C<sup>2</sup>. He deceives the enemy as to his true dispositions and intentions, unravels the coordination of the enemy's supporting arms, and breaks the tempo of the offensive operations. The attacker is never allowed to get set. He is hit with spoiling attacks before he can focus his combat power and is counterattacked before he can consolidate any gains.

### MASS AND CONCENTRATION

The defender seeks to mass the effects of overwhelming combat power where he chooses and shifts that mass repeatedly in accordance with his point of main effort. To obtain an advantage at decisive points, the defender economizes and takes risks in some areas; retains and, when necessary, reconstitutes a reserve; and maneuvers to gain local superiority at the point of decision. The defender may have to surrender some ground to gain the time necessary to concentrate his forces.

The defender normally masses effects and concentrates forces repeatedly during battle. He does so swiftly, since periods that allow them to develop superior combat power will be brief. Commanders accept risks in some areas to concentrate forces for decisive action elsewhere. Obstacles, security forces, and fires can assist in reducing these risks. Since concentration of the force increases the threat of large losses from weapons of mass destruction, commanders use deception and concealment to hide this vulnerability from the enemy. They also protect their forces with strong air and missile defenses to decrease the threat from weapons of mass destruction.

### **FLEXIBILITY**

Defensive operations epitomize flexible planning and agile execution. In exercising the initiative, the attacker initially decides where and when combat will take place. The defender who is agile enough to counter or evade the attacker's blow can then strike back effectively. Tactical flexibility stems from detailed planning, particularly in IPB. It is also needed for organizing in depth and retaining reserves. The plan enables commanders to shift their point of main effort quickly without losing synchronization. Commanders add flexibility to their basic plans by designating supplementary positions throughout the battlefield, designing counterattack plans, and preparing to assume the offensive.

Once the defender controls the attacker's thrust, he can operate against the enemy's exposed flanks and rear. The defender, under the cover of his own fires, can then maneuver over previously reconnoitered terrain against extended elements of the attacking force. The defender's fires cover all approaches and accommodate changes in priority and in sequencing targets and effects. Reserve commanders prepare for movement. They formulate counterattack plans that address their on-order and be-prepared missions and likely contingencies.

### **DEFENSIVE PATTERNS**

The two primary forms of defensive operations are mobile and area defense. These apply to both the tactical and operational levels of war. Mobile defenses orient on the destruction of the attacking force by permitting the enemy to advance into a position that exposes him to counterattack by a mobile reserve. Area defenses orient on retention of terrain by absorbing the enemy in an interlocking series of positions and destroying him largely by fires.

Although these descriptions convey the general pattern of each type of defense, both forms of defense employ static and dynamic elements. In mobile defenses, static defensive positions help control the depth and breadth of enemy penetration and ensure retention of ground from which to launch counterattacks. In area defenses, commanders closely integrate patrols, intelligence units, and reserve forces to cover the gaps among defensive positions, reinforcing those positions as necessary and counterattacking defensive positions as directed.

Defending commanders combine both patterns, using static elements to delay, canalize, and ultimately halt the attacker and dynamic elements (spoiling attacks and counterattacks) to strike and destroy enemy forces. The balance among these elements depends on the enemy, mission, force composition, mobility, relative combat power, and the nature of the battlefield.

### **MOBILE DEFENSE**

Mobile defense orients on the destruction of the enemy force by employing a combination of fire and maneuver, offense, defense, and delay to defeat his attack. The minimum force possible is committed to pure defense; maximum combat power is placed in a striking force that catches the enemy as it is attempting to overcome that part of the force dedicated to the defense. Commanders conducting a mobile defense take advantage of terrain in depth, obstacles, and mines, while employing firepower and maneuver to wrest the initiative from the attacker. A mobile defense requires a mobility greater than that of the attacker. The defenders cause the natural aggressiveness of the attacker to focus on the wrong objective, setting him up for attack from an unexpected direction and driving that attack home with overwhelming force and violence.

Defenders place minimum forces forward, forming powerful forces with which to strike the enemy at his most vulnerable time and place. Defenders track the enemy throughout his attack. They identify critical enemy nodes, such as C<sup>2</sup>, radars, logistics trains, and indirect fire support elements. They blind or deceive enemy critical reconnaissance elements; they allow less critical reconnaissance elements to draw attention to the friendly forces' secondary efforts. At the decisive moment, defenders strike simultaneously throughout the depth of the attacker's forces. They jam or destroy the enemy's C<sup>2</sup> systems, attack ammunition carriers and POL tankers by fires, and emplace minefield aerially or by field artillery behind and in front of the attacking enemy. They strike the enemy by air and ground attacks, assaulting him from an open flank and defeating him in detail.

Terrain is traded for maximum effect to divert the attention of the enemy from the defender's main force, overextend the attacker's resources, exposing his flanks, and leading him into a posture and terrain that diminishes his ability to defend against the counterattack of the larger, mobile reserve. The mobile defense sets up large-scale counterattacks that offer the defender the opportunity to gain and retain the

initiative, going over to the offense and moving into exploitation and pursuit. See Figure 9-1.

**AREA DEFENSE**

Commanders conduct an area defense to deny the enemy access to designated terrain or facilities for a specified time. In a theater campaign, selective use of an area defense can be part of a theater's mobile defense. Those elements designated to conduct area defense must understand their role in the larger campaign

plan. In an area defense, the bulk of defending forces deploy to retain ground, using a combination of defensive positions and small, mobile reserves. Commanders organize the defense around a static framework provided by defensive positions, seeking to destroy enemy forces with interlocking fins. Commanders also employ local counterattacks against enemy units penetrating between defensive positions. A security area or covering force is also part of an area defense.

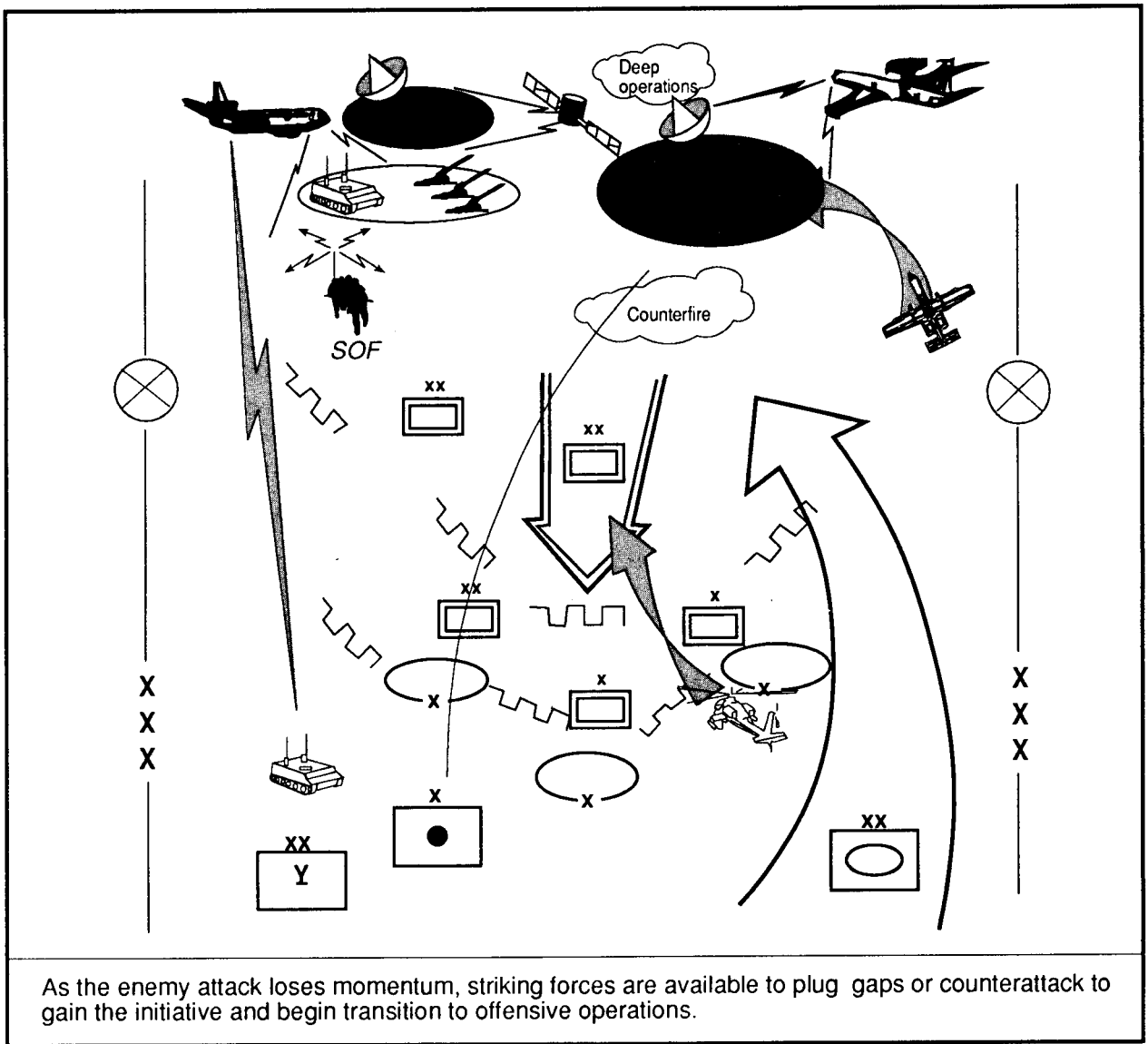


Figure 9-1. Mobile defense.

At times, commanders may be required to deny or hold key terrain, if the friendly situation gives the defender no other option or friendly forces are fighting outnumbered. In such situations, the key to success is making wise use of all resources in the time available to prepare positions and to ensure troops are fit and ready. This is a continuing process that ends only when the defender is ordered to give up the terrain. The factors of METT-T drive the tasks to be done and their priority, making maximum use of obstacle and barrier plans. Engagement areas and control and distribution of fires are keys to a successful area defense.

To make maximum use of the depths of their AO, commanders weigh all the factors of METT-T and use the defense pattern that offers the best advantage. A position defense in depth provides positions throughout the battlefield that provide mutual support and force the attacker to expose his force in the attack of one position after another. While such a forward defense may be necessary, it is more difficult to execute than an in-depth defense. Mobile defenses require considerable depth, but area defenses vary in depth according to the situation.

Commanders position their forces in platoon, company, or battalion battle positions on suitable terrain, with a specific orientation and direction or sector of fire. On occasion, commanders may also direct the construction of a strongpoint in order to deny key terrain to the enemy and force his movement in a different direction. The construction of a strongpoint requires considerable time and combat engineer support. In some cases, because of terrain restrictions, requirements to hold specific terrain, or when enemy forces are weak and disorganized, area defenses without much depth may be necessary, requiring the main effort to be well forward. See Figure 9-2.

### OPERATIONS IN DEPTH

A concise and comprehensive in-depth concept of operations is the basis for a successful defense. Simultaneous application of combat power—throughout the depth of the battle area—that defeats the enemy rapidly with minimum friendly casualties is preferable to the attrition nature of sequential operations. Quick, violent, and simultaneous action throughout the depth of the defender's battle space can hurt, confuse, and even paralyze an enemy just as he is most exposed and

vulnerable. Such actions weaken the enemy's will and do not allow his early successes to build confidence. Operations in depth prevent the enemy from gaining momentum in the attack. Sudden strikes by both fire and maneuver from a variety of directions-synchronized with other disruptive effects on the enemy such as jamming, smoke, and deception-can stall and overwhelm an attack even before it has begun. Commanders synchronize three complementary elements to defensive actions when executing their defensive plan: deep, close, and rear operations.

Although deep, close, and rear operations may not be contiguous to one another, commanders do not allow enemy forces freedom of movement within the gaps formed by extended, noncontiguous battles. They dominate their battle space throughout the depth of operations, designating responsibilities for unoccupied ground and providing the combat power as needed to attack the enemy wherever he ventures. Security of the force is a continuous concern of the command, and commanders must clearly designate this responsibility.

Regardless of the proximity or separation of various elements, commanders see their defense as a continuous whole. They fight deep, close, and rear operations as one battle, synchronizing simultaneous operations to a single purpose—the defeat of the enemy's attack and early transition to the offense.

### DEEP OPERATIONS

Commanders design deep operations to achieve depth and simultaneity in the defense and to secure advantages for future operations. Deep operations disrupt the enemy's movement in depth, destroy high-payoff targets vital to the attacker, and interrupt or deny vital enemy operating systems such as command, logistics, or air defense at critical times. As deep operations succeed, they upset the attacker's tempo and synchronization of effects as the defender selectively suppresses or neutralizes some of the enemy's operating systems to exploit the exposed vulnerability. Individual targets in depth are only useful as they relate to the destruction of a critical enemy operating system such as air defense or CSS. As the defender denies freedom of maneuver to the attacker with deep operations, he also seeks to set the terms for the friendly force transition to offense.

Deep operations provide protection for the force as they disrupt, delay, or destroy the enemy's ability to bring combat power to bear on friendly close combat

forces. As with deep operations in the offense, activities in depth, such as counterfire, focus on effects to protect the close combat operations directly. To synchronize the activities that encompass both deep and close objectives, commanders integrate and prioritize reconnaissance, intelligence, and target acquisition efforts to focus fires and maneuver at the right place and time on the battlefield.

**CLOSE OPERATIONS**

Close operations are the activities of the main and supporting efforts in the defensive area to slow, canalize, and defeat the enemy's major units. The defending commander may do this in several ways. Often, he fights a series of engagements to halt or defeat enemy forces. This requires him to designate a main effort, synchronize effects to support it, then shift it to concentrate forces and mass effects against another threat. This may be done repeatedly. Maneuver units defend, delay, attack, and screen as part of the defensive battle.

Security operations warn of the enemy's approach and attempt to harass and to slow him. A covering force meets the enemy's leading forces, strips away enemy reconnaissance and security elements, reports the attacker's strength and locations, and gives the commander time and space in which to react to the enemy.

Reserves conduct operations throughout the defense and may require continual regeneration. They give commanders the means to seize the initiative and to preserve their flexibility; they seek to strike a decisive blow against the attacker but prepare to conduct other missions as well. They provide a hedge against uncertainty. Reserves operate best when employed to reinforce and expedite victory rather than prevent defeat.

**REAR OPERATIONS**

Rear operations protect the force and sustain combat operations. Successful rear operations allow commanders freedom of action by preventing disruption of

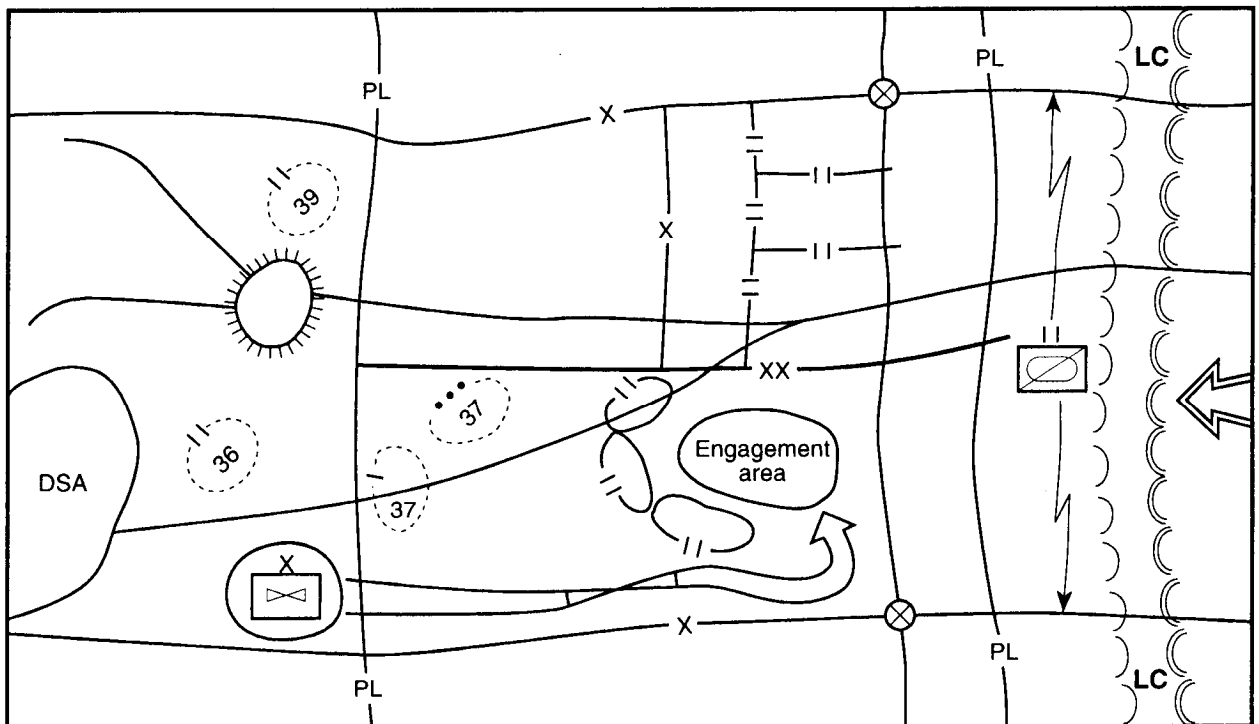


Figure 9-2. Area Defense

C<sup>2</sup>, fire support, logistical support, and movement of reserves. Destroying or neutralizing enemy deep battle forces achieves this goal.

Enemy forces may threaten the rear during establishment of the initial lodgment and throughout operations in theater. In the first case, close and rear operations overlap due to the necessity to protect the buildup of combat power. In the second case, deep, close, and rear operations may not be contiguous. When this situation occurs, rear operations must retain the initiative and deny freedom of action to the enemy,

even if combat forces are not available. A combination of passive and active defensive measures can best accomplish this. Commanders assess threat capabilities, decide where risk will be accepted, and then assign the units necessary to protect and sustain the force. Unity of command facilitates this process.

Regardless of the proximity or separation of elements, defense of the rear is integrated with the deep and close fight. Simultaneous operations defeat the attacking enemy throughout the battlefield and allow an early transition to the offense.