

# Fighting the MEF



## MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP)

U.S. Marine Corps  
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MSTP Pamphlet 3-0.5

# Fighting the MEF

This pamphlet supports the academic curricula of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Staff Training Program (MSTP).

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May 2001

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3300 Russell Road  
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**FOREWORD**

1. **PURPOSE.** MSTP Pamphlet 3-0.5, *Fighting the MEF*, addresses how the Marine expeditionary force (MEF) conducts expeditionary maneuver warfare at the tactical level.

2. **SCOPE.** The pamphlet provides the fundamentals of MEF tactical operations and concisely addresses the types of operations Marines will conduct to accomplish these missions. While the pamphlet is primarily focused at the MEF level, this information is applicable to all subordinate commands.

3. **SUPERSESSION.** None.

4. **CHANGES.** Recommendations for improvements to this pamphlet are encouraged from commands as well as from individuals. The attached User Suggestion Form can be reproduced and forwarded to:

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5. **CERTIFICATION.** Reviewed and approved this date.

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Quantico, Virginia

Throughout this pamphlet, masculine nouns and pronouns are used for the sake of simplicity. Except where otherwise noted, these nouns and pronouns apply to either sex.

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## Part I

# The MEF in the Campaign

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Marine Corps expeditionary forces, comprised of a Marine Corps component command and one or more MEFs, are well suited to perform full spectrum operations as part of a joint or combined force at the operational level of war. Uniquely equipped and trained to perform a variety of tactical actions from the sea, in the air, and on land, Marine Corps expeditionary forces are often the first forces to arrive in a crisis area. They then begin a series of actions to create conditions that meet the nation's goals and strategic objectives. Marine commanders may have operational-level responsibilities that include taking on-the-spot decisions that will set the course of the nation's role in the crisis. They may also be responsible for providing the nucleus of a joint force headquarters. Regardless of the size of the forces involved or the scope of the military action, if Marine Corps expeditionary forces are operating to achieve a strategic objective, then they are being employed by the joint force commander at the operational level.

As stated in MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, the principal tool by which the joint force commander pursues the conditions that will achieve the strategic goal is the campaign. According to Joint Pub 1-02, a campaign is a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space. Normally, there is only one campaign underway within a combatant commanders theater of war or theater of operations. This campaign is almost always a joint campaign and is under the command of the combatant commander or the commander of a subordinate joint task force. The joint force commander's campaign is normally a series of related operations, some of which may be conducted by a single Service, such as the Navy escorting foreign flag tankers through the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Other campaigns may consist of large operations conducted by joint and combined forces such the Marianas campaign in the Central Pacific in 1944. During this campaign Marine, Navy, and Army forces conducted three major amphibious operations, seizing the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam from the Japanese, while the Navy turned away the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

The art of campaigning consists of deciding whom, when, and where to fight and for what purpose. As a campaign is a series of operations or battles whose outcomes lead to the accomplishment of the strategic goals, the commander must focus on the strategic goals to be achieved. Tactical and operational decisions must be made with these goals in mind. Ideally, operational commanders fight only when and where they want, maintaining the initiative and a high tempo of operations. They fight when they are stronger than the enemy and avoid battle when they are at a disadvantage. This allows them to shape the tactical actions to meet their strategic goals.

Campaigns are normally conducted by joint force commanders within a joint or combined operational framework. This framework provides for logical divisions of the battlespace to facilitate operations and clearly delineate Service responsibilities. Campaigning involves—

- Fighting a series of battles to accomplish the joint force commander's objectives.
- Defeating the enemy in depth by fighting the single battle.
- Synchronizing operations (not scripting activities but arranging activities in space and time.)
- Breaking the enemy apart over time. While destroying the enemy's will to resist in one attack is the ideal, the MEF may not have the ability to do this. A series of battles may be necessary.
- Knowing when and where to give battle and when to refuse battle.

## **1001. The Role of the Marine Corps Component and the MEF**

The Marine Corps component commander is responsible for the employment of his forces and to support other component commanders as directed by the joint force commander. The Marine Corps component commander sets conditions for the successful employment of the MEF by ensuring that appropriate missions, forces, resources, battlespace, and command relationships are assigned or made available to the MEF. While principally a force provider and sustainer, the Marine Corps component commander may be assigned some operational responsibilities. He focuses on the formulation and execution of the joint force commander's plans, policies, and requirements. He coordinates strategic and operational actions with other component commanders to achieve unity of effort for the joint

force. He accomplishes any assigned mission by executing Marine Corps component operations through the MEF and other assigned forces.

During employment, the command relationship between the Marine Corps component commander and the MEF commander can vary with each phase of an operation. The MEF commander may have command relationships with two types of components: functional and Service. When the MEF is placed under the operational or tactical control of a functional component commander, the functional component commander provides the tasks and purpose for the MEF, which in turn, drive the development of the MEF's course of action and subsequent planning efforts. If the joint force is organized on a Service component basis, the Marine Corps component commander provides the tasks and purpose for the MEF.

As the Service component commander, the Marine Corps component commander represents MEF interests at various joint force boards. He will participate on joint force boards along with any functional component commander the MEF may be supporting. Consequently, the MEF must keep the Marine Corps component commander informed of operational matters to ensure relevant and contextual representation at the various joint boards.

The orientation of the Marine Corps component commander is *normally* at the operational level of war while the MEF commander is *normally* at the tactical level. This difference in orientation is the result of the joint force commander's organization of forces and each subordinate commander's place in the operational chain of command and the assigned mission. This placement, in turn, determines the people and agencies with whom the Marine Corps component and MEF commanders must interact.

The Marine Corps component commander—who translates strategic objectives into operational objectives—must interact up the chain of command with the joint force commander, laterally with other component commanders, and down to his MEF commander. The MEF commander—who translates operational objectives into tactical actions—must interact up the chain of command with the Marine Corps component commander, laterally with adjacent tactical commanders, and down to his subordinate commanders. The Marine Corps component commander assigns the MEF commander missions that may accomplish objectives at both the operational and tactical levels of war when the joint force is organized on a Service component basis.

## 1002. Battlespace

Battlespace is the environment, factors, and conditions that must be understood to successfully apply combat power, protect the force, and accomplish the mission. This includes the air, land, sea, space, and enemy and friendly forces, infrastructure, weather, and terrain within the assigned area of operations (AO) and the commander's area of interest. Battlespace is conceptual—a higher commander does not assign it. Commanders determine their own battlespace based on their mission, the enemy, and their concept of operations and force protection. They use their experience and understanding of the situation and mission to visualize and adapt their battlespace as the situation or mission changes. The battlespace is not fixed in size or position. It varies over time, and is dependent upon the environment, the commander's mission, and friendly and enemy actions. Battlespace is normally comprised of an AO, area of influence, and area of interest.

Joint force commanders may define additional operational areas or joint areas to assist in the coordination and execution of joint operations. The size of these areas and the types of forces used depend on the scope, nature, and projected duration of the operation. Combatant commanders and other joint force commanders use the following organization of the battlespace at the operational level of war—

- Combatant commanders are assigned an *area of responsibility* in the Unified Command Plan. Areas of responsibility are also called *theaters* within which the combatant commanders have the authority to plan and conduct operations. Within the theater the combatant commanders may designate theaters of war, theaters of operation, combat zones, and a communication zone.
- A *theater of war* is the area of air, land, and sea that is, or may become, directly involved in the conduct of the war. It may be defined by either the National Command Authorities or the combatant commander and normally does not encompass the combatant commander's entire area of responsibility.
- A *theater of operations* is a sub-area within a theater of war defined by the combatant commander required to conduct or support specific operations. Different theaters of operations within the same theater of war will normally be geographically separate and focused on different enemy forces. Theaters of operations are usually of significant size, allowing for operations over extended periods of time.

- A *combat zone* is that area required by combat forces for the conduct of operations. The *communications zone* is the rear part of the theater of operations (behind but contiguous to the combat zone) which contains lines of communications, supply or evacuation sites, and other agencies required for the immediate support of the joint force. The Marine Corps component commander will normally focus his efforts to deploy, support, and sustain his forces, particularly the MEF, in the communications zone. He will normally locate his headquarters close to the joint force commander, who usually establishes his headquarters in the communications zone.

### **a. Area of Operations**

Joint Pub 1-02 defines an AO as an operational area assigned by the joint force commander for land and naval forces. AOs do not typically encompass the entire operational area of the joint force commander, but should be large enough for component commanders and their subordinate units to accomplish their missions and protect their forces. The AO is the tangible area of battlespace and is the only area of battlespace for which a commander is directly responsible. AOs should also be large enough to allow commanders to employ their organic, assigned and supporting systems to the limits of their capabilities. The commander must be able to command and control all the forces within his AO. He must be able to see the entire AO—this includes coverage of the AO with the full range of collection assets and sensors available to the MAGTF, to include reconnaissance, electronic warfare aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), remote sensors, and radars. He must be able to control the events and coordinate his subordinates' actions. Finally, the commander must be able to strike and maneuver throughout the AO.

Component commanders normally assign AOs to their subordinates. These commanders typically subdivide some or all of their assigned AO to their subordinates. The commander will use control measures to describe the AO, using the minimum necessary control measure to assign responsibility, promote unity of effort, and accomplish the unit's mission. Commanders should not assign areas of operations that are significantly greater than the unit's area of influence. A subordinate commander who is unable to directly influence his entire AO may have to request additional forces or assets that will allow him to extend his operational reach. Failing that he may have to—

- Request a change in mission or tasks.
- Request a reduction in the size of his AO.
- Revise his concept of operations by phasing operations in such a way that he only needs to directly influence portions of his AO.

Commanders can choose to organize his AO so that his subordinates have contiguous or noncontiguous AOs. A contiguous AO is one in which all subordinate commands AOs share one or more common boundaries while a noncontiguous AO is one in which one or more subordinate AOs do not share a common boundary. Commands with contiguous AOs are normally within supporting distance of one another. The commander establishes contiguous AOs when—

- The AO is of limited size to accommodate the force.
- Political boundaries or enemy dispositions require concentration of force.
- There is a risk of being defeated in detail by superior size enemy forces or the enemy situation is not clear.
- Key terrain is in close proximity to each other.
- Concentration of combat power along a single avenue of advance or movement corridor is required.

A noncontiguous AO is normally characterized by a 360 degree boundary. Because units with noncontiguous must provide all around security, they generally allow for less concentration of combat power along a single axis. There is additional risk associated with noncontiguous AOs in that units with noncontiguous AOs are normally out of supporting range of each other. The commander establishes noncontiguous AOs when—

- Limited friendly forces must occupy or control widely separated key terrain.
- Relative weakness of the enemy does not require that subordinate units remain within supporting range of each other.
- Dispersal of the enemy throughout the AO requires a corresponding dispersal of friendly units.

Operations against the enemy outside of noncontiguous subordinate commands' AOs are the responsibility of the command the common higher.

A *joint operations area* is determined and assigned by a combatant commander or a subordinate unified commander. According to Joint Pub 1-02, it is the area of land, sea, and airspace in which a joint force commander (normally the commander of a joint task force) conducts military operations to accomplish a specific mission. In amphibious operations, the joint force commander may designate an *amphibious objective area* or an AO that contains the amphibious task force objectives.

## **b. Area of Influence**

Joint Pub 1-02 states the *area of influence* is that geographical area wherein a commander is directly capable of influencing operations by maneuver or fire support systems normally under the commander's command or control. It is the battlespace that the commander can affect through the maneuver, fires, and other actions of his force. Its size is normally based on the limits of organic systems (fire support, aviation, mobility, and reconnaissance capabilities) and operational requirements identified within each of the warfighting functions. The area of influence normally reflects the extent of the force's operational reach. MEFs have significant areas of influence, employing Marine fixed wing aviation, to extend the operational reach of Marine forces.

The commander considers his mission, forces, inherent warfighting functions requirements, and the AO to determine his area of influence. The area of influence is useful to the commander as a tool in assigning subordinate areas of operations and in focusing intelligence collection and information operations to shape the battlespace to facilitate future operations. Today's area of influence may be tomorrow's AO.

## **c. Area of Interest**

The *area of interest* contains friendly and enemy forces, capabilities, infrastructure, and terrain that concern the commander. This area includes the area of influence and those areas that contain current or planned objectives or enemy forces that are capable of endangering mission accomplishment. The size of the area of interest normally exceeds the commander's operational reach.

While the area of interest includes the AO and area of influence, the area of interest may stretch far beyond the other parts of his battlespace. In analyzing the battlespace to determine his area of interest, the commander

may pose the questions, “Where is the enemy and where are his friends?” and then “Where am I, and where are my friends?” The answers to these questions help identify the size, location, and activities that constitute the commander’s area of interest. He may also consider critical information requirements such as critical terrain and infrastructure features and the ability of his intelligence and information assets to collect on these features when determining this area. The commander may request joint theater or national assets to help him understand the battlespace and collect intelligence throughout his area of interest.

Another key point to remember is that the area of interest may be non-contiguous. (See Figure 1-1.) For example, a forward deployed MEF may have an area of interest back in the continental United States while the time phased force and deployment list is being executed. It may also have areas of interest around airbases in other countries neighboring the MEF’s AO. Using non-contiguous areas of interest conserves time and scarce collection assets. Assets will be allocated and time will be invested to provide the information required. Identifying non-contiguous points vice large generic areas is a technique that can conserve these valuable resources.

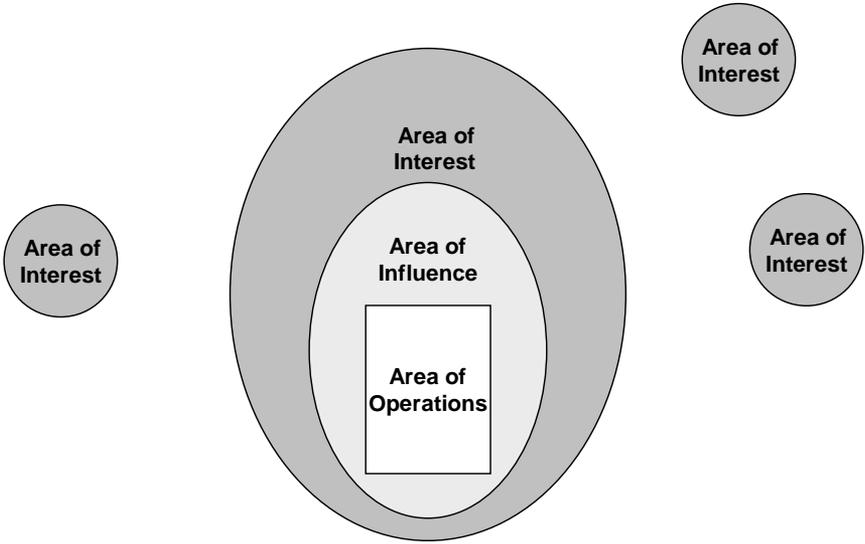


Figure 1-1. Non-contiguous areas of interest.

#### **d. Boundaries, Maneuver Control Measures, and Fire Support Coordinating Measures**

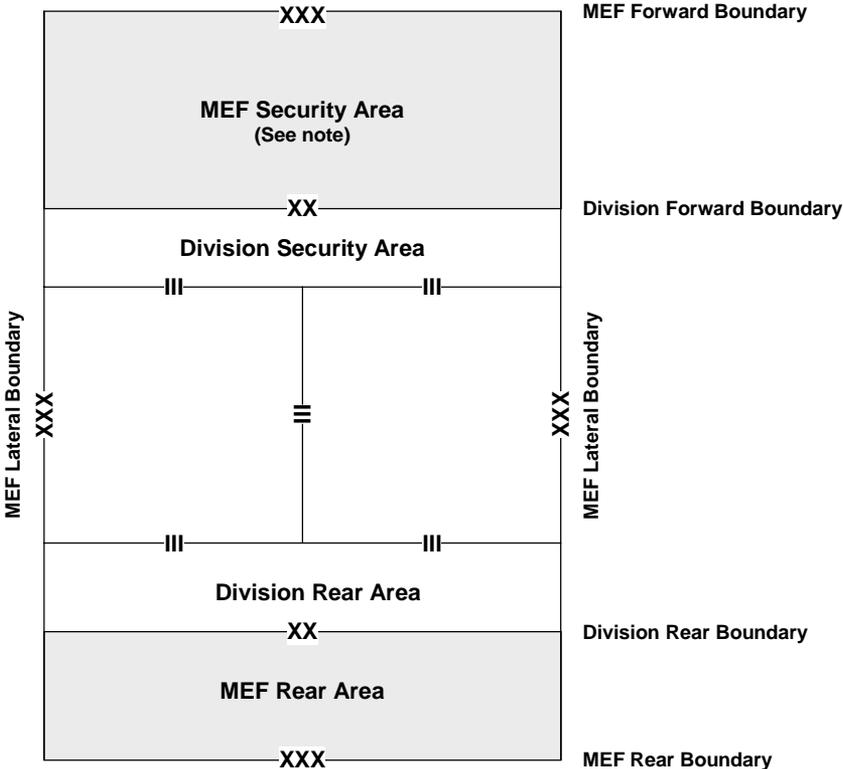
Joint force commanders and other commanders at the operational level of war often use boundaries, maneuver control measures, and fire support coordinating measures to control and coordinate the operations of their forces in the battlespace. These measures are usually employed to delineate areas of operation or other areas in which components or subordinate commands will conduct their operations or to coordinate maneuver or fires between adjacent units. Each of these measures has specific and discrete purposes. Their use normally results in the units affected by them having to do something or refrain from doing something. Therefore, it is critical that Marine commanders use these measures as they were designed and that any modifications to the doctrinally based measure be clearly articulated to all affected higher, adjacent, and subordinate units.

The most commonly used of these measures is the boundary. A boundary is a line that delineates surface areas for the purpose of facilitating coordination and deconfliction of operations between adjacent units, formations, or areas according to Joint Pub 1-02. They are used to define the forward, flank, and rear limits of an AO and when possible should be drawn along identifiable terrain to aid in recognition. (See Figure 1-2.)

An axis and limit of advance are used at the operational level of war. Per Joint Pub 1-02, an *axis of advance* is a line of advance assigned for the purpose of control; often a road, network of roads, mobility corridor, or a designated series of locations, extending in the direction of the enemy. It provides subordinate commanders with a graphic representation of the commander's intent for their scheme of maneuver. Subordinate commanders are guided by it but may deviate from it when the situation dictates. A *limit of advance* is an easily recognizable terrain figure beyond which attacking elements will not advance according to Marine Corps Reference Publication 5-12A, *Operational Terms and Graphics*. It is assigned by the commander to subordinate maneuver commanders to control their actions and form a limit of their advance.

One of the most important and frequently misused fire support coordinating measures at the operational level is the fire support coordination line (FSCL). A FSCL is a permissive fire support coordinating measure used to facilitate timely attack of the enemy by air and surface-based fires.

Supporting elements may engage targets beyond the FSCL without prior coordination with the establishing commander, provided the attack will not produce adverse effects on or to the rear of the FSCL or on forces operating beyond the FSCL. It is established and adjusted by the appropriate ground or amphibious force commander in consultation with superior, subordinate, supporting, and other affected commanders. The FSCL is not a boundary between aviation and ground forces and should not be used to delineate a de facto AO for aviation forces. It is located within the establishing commander's AO. Synchronization of operations on either side of the FSCL out to the forward boundary of the establishing unit is the responsibility of the establishing commander. When possible the FSCL should be drawn along readily identifiable terrain to aid in recognition.



Note: The MAGTF commander may assign the ACE an AO. Normally the ACE will not subdivide this AO.

Figure 1-2. Unit boundaries.

Understanding the joint battlespace at the operational level of war in which Marine Corps forces will operate is an important step in setting the conditions for their success. Marines must understand the relationship between the AO, area of interest, and area of influence. By analyzing his AO in terms of his area of influence and area of interest, a Marine commander determines whether his assigned AO is appropriate. This analysis may include the forces' capabilities to conduct actions across the warfighting functions.

### **1003. Employment**

The deployment of expeditionary forces to a foreign setting and their visible, credible presence offshore may be sufficient to accomplish national objectives or deter further crisis. However, in those situations when presence has not achieved friendly intentions, the actual *employment* of forces may be required to achieve military objectives and political goals. Employment is the use of Marine Corps forces to conduct operations to achieve the objectives of the joint force commander. Marine Corps forces are employed at the operational and tactical level. This employment is comprised of the operational use of Marine Corps forces by the Marine Corps component commander or functional component commander and the tactical use of the MEF within the AO to attain military objectives. Employment includes both combat operations as well as military operations other than war (MOOTW). Employment by the MEF also includes tactical operations like the offense, defense, and security operations.

During employment, it is not unusual for a MEF to conduct offensive and defensive operations simultaneously. Early in Operation DESERT STORM, I MEF aviation forces attacked Iraqi forces and installations in Kuwait while still maintaining a defensive combat air patrol over friendly forces in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, while I MEF ground units were attacking enemy critical vulnerabilities by use of artillery raids, adjacent light armored vehicle units were protecting friendly vulnerabilities by conducting counterreconnaissance missions.

Simultaneous combined arms operations, like those discussed above, and the need to operate across the entire spectrum of conflict require MEFs to operate in an environment of *mission depth*. Marines have recently experienced mission depth in Somalia and Haiti with Marines on one city

block providing humanitarian assistance, while on the next block dealing with civil disturbance, and on yet another block fully engaged in armed combat.

### **a. Employment Planning**

Planning for employment is based on the factors of mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available (METT-T) that provide a framework for assessing the elements of the battlespace (infrastructure, threat, friendly and noncombatants) to determine employment requirements. The mission establishes the context, relevancy, depth, and objectives of friendly operations. The enemy, or the threat (famine, political unrest, natural disaster), must be considered in the context of the environment and the elements that comprise it, such as the populace, governmental institutions, industry, and media. Terrain and weather determine the physical parameters of the battlespace—where the force interacts with the enemy. Troops and support available are the friendly resources and capabilities to be applied against the enemy or threat. Time helps determine the scope of the battlespace—its depth and the extent and duration of operations. METT-T is used by the commander to prepare his forces to accomplish the mission, defeat the enemy, and operate effectively in the surrounding environment.

This approach to employment planning promotes a unifying effort within the force. Just as the enemy cannot be viewed in isolation, each element of the MEF has its own unique characteristics, capabilities, and in some cases, AO. Yet the efforts of the elements, when focused toward a common purpose, synergistically create combat power far greater than that possible through their independent employment.

### **b. Arranging Operations**

The principal tool by which the operational level commander pursues the conditions that will achieve the strategic goal is the *campaign*. The MEF commander arranges his operations to support the joint force commander's campaign and fulfill the joint force commander's operational goals. The MEF commander's focus must be on achieving these operational goals. The MEF commander and his staff must understand the following key issues when arranging operations—

- The higher headquarters commander's intent and end state.

- The MEFs wider interaction with the joint force and Marine Corps component than that of its major subordinate commands.
- How the MEF gets to the AO.
- Theater logistics, specifically how to sustain the force over time and in depth.

Ideally, Marine commanders want to attack the enemy simultaneously across the width and breath of the battlespace to overwhelm the enemy's capabilities and reduce his options to counter. The simultaneous attacks throughout Panama by Army and Marine Corps forces during Operation JUST CAUSE (1989) is an example of the devastating effect on the enemy's ability to command and control his forces. The scope, complexity, and duration of military operations during the campaign may require Marine Corps forces to phase their operations. A phase represents a period during which a large portion of the forces are involved in similar or mutually supporting activities or there is a distinct type of operation. A transition from one phase to another may indicate a shift in emphasis, the main effort, or the objective. The point where one phase stops and another begins is often difficult to define in absolute terms. During planning, commanders establish conditions for transitioning from one phase to another. The commander bases these conditions on measurable effects on the enemy, friendly forces, and the battlespace resulting from his and the enemy's actions. He must determine these effects and his procedures for collecting information to make his assessment of the conditions early in the planning process. During execution, commanders adjust the phases to exploit opportunities presented by the enemy or to react to unforeseen situations.

Phasing assists commanders in thinking through the entire operation and defining requirements in terms of forces, resources, and time. A significant benefit of phasing is that it assists commanders in achieving major objectives by planning manageable subordinate operations to gain progressive advantages against the enemy. A significant disadvantage of phasing is the possible loss of tempo or momentum when transitioning between phases. This can create a period of vulnerability for the force. The enemy can take advantage of additional time and lack of pressure during any loss of tempo to consider his options and take more calculated actions to counter friendly operations. Another disadvantage of phasing is that it may create a discernable and predictable pattern that the enemy can use to disrupt or defeat friendly operations.

The commander must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of phasing. The commander can reduce the risks associated with transitioning between phases by overlapping phases and by anticipating potential problems.

*Branches* are options built into the basic plan. They may require shifting priorities, changing task organizations, and command relationships or change the very nature of the operation itself. Branches add flexibility to plans by anticipating situations that could alter the basic plan. The requirement for a branch plan may surface during the course of action war game step or as a result of the execution drills and rehearsals conducted during the transition of the plan. Such situations could arise from enemy action, availability of friendly capabilities or resources, or even a change in the weather or season within the operational area. *Sequels* are subsequent operations based on the possible outcomes of the current operation—victory, defeat, or stalemate. Well-developed sequels help maintain momentum and facilitate the exploitation of fleeting opportunities.

### **c. Warfighting Functions**

The warfighting functions encompass all military activities performed in the battlespace. These activities occur in the battlespace whether the commander and the staff choose to integrate them or not. Warfighting functions are a grouping of like activities into major functional areas to aid in planning and execution of operations. These functional areas include command and control, maneuver, fires, logistics, force protection, and intelligence. The key advantage of using warfighting functions is that they allow the commander and his planners to look at all aspects of the battlespace and not leave anything to chance, if it is within their capability to coordinate, control, influence, and synchronize them. By synchronizing the warfighting functions, the commander can increase the force's combat power, mass effects on the enemy, and aid in the assessment of the success of the operation. As stated in MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*, maximum impact is obtained when all warfighting functions are synchronized to accomplish the desired objective within the shortest time possible and with minimum casualties.

Planners consider and integrate the warfighting functions when analyzing how to accomplish the mission. According to MCWP 5-1, "Integrating the warfighting functions helps to achieve focus and unity of effort. They provide a method for planners to think in terms of how each function

supports the accomplishment of the mission. Critical to this approach to planning is the coordination of activities not only within each warfighting function but also among all the warfighting functions. By using warfighting functions as the integration elements, planners ensure all functions are focused toward a single purpose”. The warfighting functions apply equally to conventional operations and other types of operations such as MOOTW and information operations. See Appendix A, “Warfighting Functions,” for more information.

#### **d. Information Operations**

Information operations include all actions taken to affect enemy information and information systems while defending friendly information and information systems. Information operations consist of the following distinct elements that must be employed together in an integrated strategy to be successful—

- Operations security.
- Psychological operations.
- Military deception.
- Electronic warfare.
- Physical destruction.
- Computer network operations.

Information operations related activities include public affairs and civil affairs that help to shape civilian perceptions of MEF operations both at home and in the AO.

Information operations are conducted across the range of military operations and at every level of war. It is well suited to support expeditionary operations as information operations can project US influence and can be tailored to provide measured effects in a specific mission or situation. They are scalable, allowing the commander to increase or decrease the level of intensity to reflect a changing situation. Information operations must be closely coordinated with those of the joint force commander to ensure unity of effort and to avoid undermining the effects desired by higher headquarters.

The primary focus of MEF information operations is at the operational and tactical level of war. Offensive information operations are oriented against

command and control targets, disrupting or denying an enemy's use of information and information systems to achieve the commander's objectives. The MEF relies primarily on electronic warfare and physical destruction to attack command and control, intelligence, and other critical information-based targets the enemy needs to conduct operations. The MEF can also employ deception operations to deceive the enemy commander's intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination systems. MEF defensive information operations protect information and information systems the MEF commander requires to plan and execute operations.

The MEF will frequently rely on national and theater assets to augment MEF information operations. To be successful, the MEF's information operations plan must be nested with that of its higher headquarters and any adjacent commands, and must be synchronized with the MEF's concept of operations.

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## Part II

# Conducting MEF Operations

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This section provides the foundation for MEF tactical operations. It discusses the importance of single battle, decisive and shaping actions, centers of gravity (COGs) and critical vulnerabilities, main and supporting efforts, security, and the reserve. It also describes operational design and addresses the manner in which the MEF commander plans and conducts expeditionary operations. While these topics generally apply to all tactical operations, the planning and conduct of tactical operations will reflect the uniqueness of every situation based on the factors of METT-T.

## 2001. Maneuver Warfare

The Marine Corps practices maneuver warfare when conducting operations. According to MCDP 1, *Warfighting*—

*“Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy’s cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.”*

Maneuver warfare is based on the avoidance of the enemy’s strengths—surfaces—and the exploitation of the enemy’s weaknesses—gaps. Rather than attacking the enemy’s surfaces, Marines bypass the enemy’s defense and penetrate those defenses through gaps to destroy the enemy system from within. The goal of maneuver warfare is to render the enemy incapable of effective resistance by shattering his moral, mental, and physical cohesion.

Maneuver provides a means to gain an advantage over the enemy. Traditionally, maneuver has meant moving in a way that gains positional—or spatial—advantage. For example, a force may maneuver to envelop an exposed enemy flank or deny him terrain critical to his goals. The

commander may maneuver to threaten the enemy's lines of communications and force him to withdraw. He may maneuver to seize a position which brings effective fire to bear against the enemy but which protects his forces against enemy fires.

To maximize the usefulness of maneuver, the commander must maneuver his forces in other dimensions as well. The essence of maneuver is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing his objectives as effectively as possible. That advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial.

A force maneuvers in time by increasing relative speed and operating at a faster tempo than the enemy. Normally, forces maneuver both in time and space to gain advantage and, ultimately, victory at the least possible cost. Operation DESERT STORM (1991) is a classic example in which forces used both time and space to their advantage to outmaneuver the enemy. While the Marines and Arab coalition forces fixed the Iraqis in Kuwait, other coalition forces rapidly maneuvered through the Iraqi desert to out flank the enemy. The success of this maneuver led to the complete disruption of the Iraqi defense and their rapid capitulation. This operation illustrates the importance of synchronizing the maneuver of all the elements of the MEF to achieve a decision.

## **2002. Operational Design**

Commanders initiate the conduct of operations with a design that will guide their subordinate commanders and the staff in planning, execution, and assessment. This operational design is the commander's tool for translating the operational requirements of his superiors into the tactical guidance needed by his subordinate commanders and his staff. The commander uses his operational design to *visualize*, *describe*, and *direct* those actions necessary to achieve his desired end state and accomplish his assigned mission. It includes the purpose of the operation, what the commander wants to accomplish, and how he envisions achieving a decision. Visualization of the battlespace and the intended actions of both the enemy and the friendly force is a continuous process that requires the commander to understand the current situation, broadly define his desired future

situation, and determine the necessary actions to bring about the desired end state. The commander then articulates this visualization to his subordinate commanders and staff through his commander's battlespace area evaluation (CBAE) and guidance. By describing his visualization in this concise and compelling method, the commander focuses the planning and execution of his subordinate commanders and staffs. Finally, the commander directs the conduct of operations by issuing orders, assigning missions and priorities, making decisions, and adjusting his planned actions as necessary based on assessment.

Operational design differs at various levels of command, principally in the scope and scale of operations. Higher level commanders, such as the Marine Corps component and MEF commander, identify the time, space, resources available, and purpose of operations that support the joint force commander's campaign plan or component commander's operational design. At a lower level of command, the commander may be able to include in his operational design a detailed description of the battlespace, objectives, available forces and desired task organization, and guidance on the phasing of the operation.

Operational design helps the commander to visualize the operation and describe that vision to his subordinate commanders and the staff. (See Figure 2-1.) The elements of operational design include—

- Factors of METT-T.
- CBAE consisting of the commander's analysis of the battlespace, commander's intent, COG analysis, and commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs).
- Commander's guidance.
- Decisive actions.
- Shaping actions.
- Sustainment.
- Principles of war and tactical fundamentals.
- Battlefield framework.
- Operation plan or order.

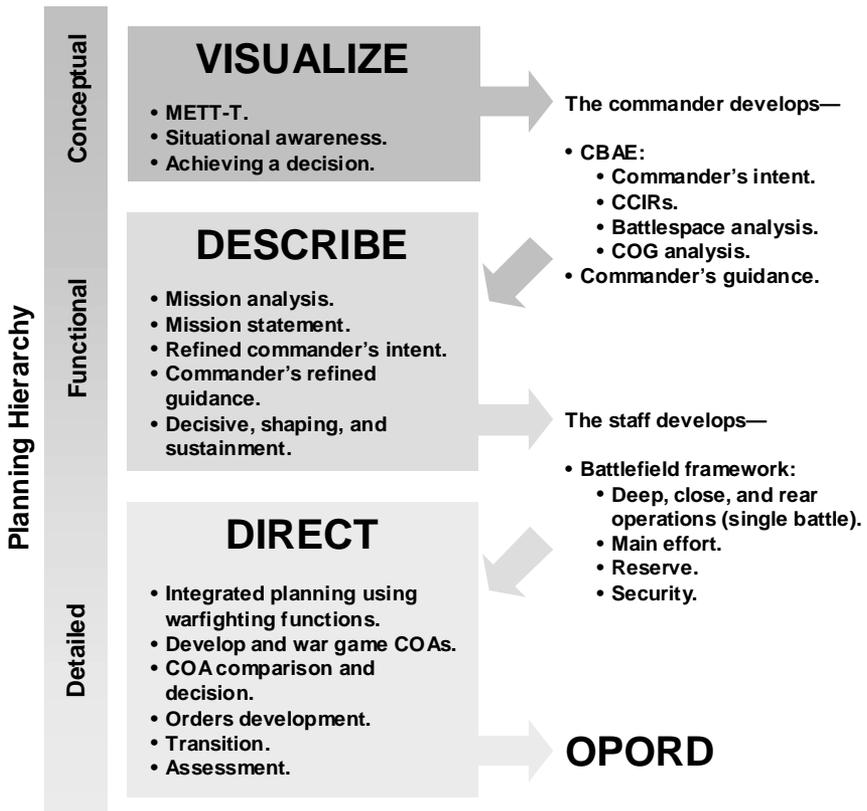


Figure 2-1. Operational design.

### a. Visualize

The *visualize* portion of operational design is what MCDP 5, *Planning*, refers to as conceptual planning, the highest level of planning. In conceptual planning, the commander determines the aims and objectives of the operation. During visualization, the first task for the commander is to understand the situation. He studies the situation to develop a clear picture of what is happening, how it got that way, and how it might further develop. The commander considers the information available on the factors of METT-T and any other information on the situation or potential taskings from higher headquarters. He develops an initial view of friendly actions, desired effects and their results, and determines the means to achieve those

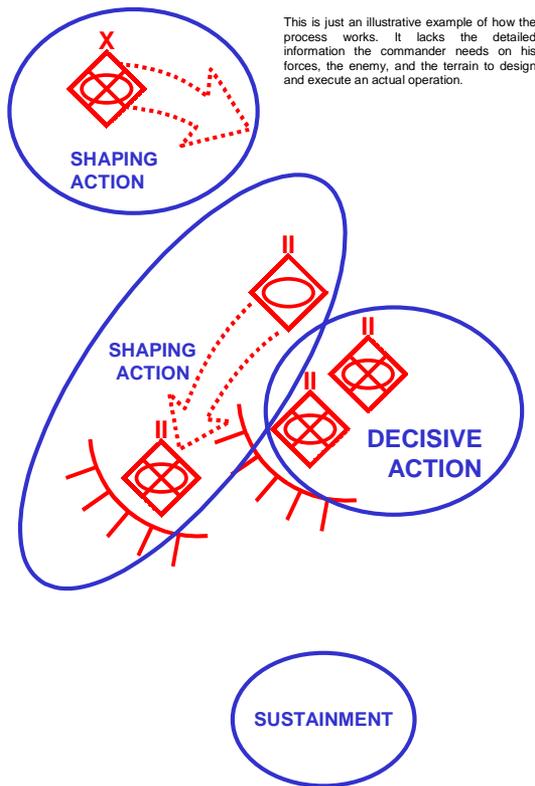
results. Part of the commander's thinking should also include assuming the role of the enemy, considering what the enemy's best course of action may be, and deciding how to defeat it. Thinking through these factors helps the commander develop increased situational awareness. The commander must also address possible outcomes and the new situations that will result from those possibilities. As the situation changes, so will the solution and the actions that derive from it. Combining this initial understanding of the situation within the battlespace with his experience and military judgment, he may begin his visualization by posing the following questions—

- Where am I? Where is the enemy?
- Where are my friends? Where are the enemy's friends?
- What are my strengths? What are the enemy's strengths?
- What must I protect? What are the enemy's weaknesses?
- What must I do and why? What will the enemy do and why?
- What is the enemy's most dangerous course of action?

As the commander considers these questions, he visualizes what he thinks he has to accomplish to achieve a decision and best support his higher commander's operation. This becomes the basis for his CBAE and guidance which he provides to his subordinate commanders and the planners in the describe portion of operational design.

## **b. Describe**

The *describe* portion of operational design is a combination of conceptual planning and what MCDP 5 refers to as functional planning, the middle level of planning in which the commander and the staff consider discrete functional activities that form the basis for all subsequent planning. It begins when the commander articulates his vision through his CBAE and initial guidance. The commander then uses this visualization to focus and guide the staff as they conduct mission analysis to determine the mission of the force. Mission analysis provides the commander and his staff with additional insight on the situation. Combined with any intelligence or operational updates, mission analysis may prompt the commander to refine his vision, confirming or modifying his commander's intent or other initial guidance on decisive and shaping actions and sustainment. (See Figure 2-2, page 22.)



“The purpose of this operation is to defeat the enemy’s first tactical echelon. I see the enemy’s tactical strength as his mobile reserves. I cannot let the enemy commit these reserves in a decisive manner. To support the higher commander’s plan, I will have to keep the reserve mechanized brigade from committing against our higher commander’s main effort or being used decisively against my forces. I want to shape the enemy by having him first commit his reserve armor battalion against my supporting effort. Simultaneously, by using lethal and non-lethal fires, I want to control the timeline for the commitment of the enemy’s reserve mechanized brigade and, once committed against my forces, I want to limit its capability. These shaping actions will allow me to fix the enemy reserves while I mass my combat power at the time and place of my choosing. I want to exploit my center of gravity—my superior tactical mobility—and combined arms. I want to avoid the enemy’s fixed defenses and focus my decisive action against the enemy’s flank to defeat the two isolated mechanized battalions. Once defeated, I want to rapidly focus on the defeat of his remaining mechanized and reserve units that were fixed by my supporting effort. I want a viable security force covering the flank of my main effort. My sustainment must be task organized and positioned forward to allow the force to maintain operational momentum.”

Figure 2-2. Commander’s vision of decisive and shaping actions and sustainment.

Once the mission statement has been produced, the commander and staff are ready to further develop the operational design by describing how the command will achieve a decision through decisive and shaping actions. They also describe how these actions will be sustained. Receiving necessary commander's planning guidance, the staff begins to develop the *battlefield framework*. (See Figure 2-3, page 24.)

This framework describes how the commander will organize his battlespace and his forces to achieve a decision. The battlefield framework consists of the battlespace organization of envisioned deep, close,, and rear tactical operations as well as the organization of the force into the main effort, reserve, and security. Supporting efforts are addressed in the context of deep, close, and rear operations as part of the single battle.

### **c. Direct**

The *direct* portion of operational design is a combination of functional planning and what MCDP 5 refers to as detailed planning, the lowest level of planning. During direction the commander and the staff determine the specifics of implementing the operational design through the operation plan or order. Armed with the description of how the commander intends to achieve a decision and obtain his desired end state, planners conduct integrated planning using the battlefield framework and the six warfighting functions to develop and war game courses of action that address the following considerations and issues—

- Type of operation.
- Forms of maneuver.
- Phasing/sequencing of the operation.
- Security operations.
- Sustaining the operation.
- Information operations.
- Targeting priorities.
- Intelligence collection priorities.



As this integrated planning continues, the commander chooses a course of action and, if time and situation allow, the staff conducts detailed planning to provide further direction to the force and prepare necessary operations plans and orders. Once the plan or order is completed, the direct portion of operational design concludes with the transition of the plan or order to the subordinate commander's and the staff that will execute it. The operational design, once developed into an operation plan or order, is the basis for execution and aids the commander and the staff as they execute operations.

The commander assesses the success of the operation by comparing the envisioned operational design—as expressed in the operation order—with what is actually occurring in the battlespace. If the assessment indicates the need to modify or adjust the operational design the commander will again visualize what must be done and then he and the staff will describe how it will be accomplished by modifying or adjusting the battlefield framework. Fragmentary orders, branch plans, or sequels to direct the operation will be prepared and issued, if necessary.

### **2003. Planning**

As described in MCDP 5, *Planning*, planning is the art and science of envisioning a desired future and laying out effective ways of bringing it about. It encompasses envisioning this desired end state and arranging a configuration of potential actions in time and space that will realize the end state. Planning is an essential element of command and control and the responsibility to plan is inherent in command. It is a truism that planning is half of command and control. As further stated in MCDP 5, the fundamental object of command and control is also the fundamental object of planning—to recognize what needs to be done in any situation and to ensure appropriate actions are taken. This requires commanders that can visualize what they want to happen and how they will employ their force to achieve their goals. They must be able to contemplate and evaluate potential decisions and courses of action in advance of taking action. The commander must be constantly aware of how much time a situation allows for planning and make the most of that available time. Whether planning is done deliberately or rapidly, the commander must display an acute awareness of the time available—all planning is time sensitive.

Planning can be viewed as hierarchical continuum with three levels of planning—conceptual, functional, and detailed. All three levels are used at various times in the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP), such as the use of conceptual planning during mission analysis, functional planning during course of action development, and detailed planning during orders development.

While the commander is primarily involved at the conceptual level, he is an important participant throughout the planning process and must supervise his subordinate commanders and the staff in their efforts at the functional and detailed levels of planning. The commander's conceptual planning provides the basis for all planning performed by the staff. He must organize and train his staff to gather, manage, and process information essential to the commander's decisionmaking process. The size and the capabilities of the staff are dependent on the level of command and the information and decisionmaking needs of the commander.

The MCP is the vehicle through which the Marine Corps component or MEF commander and their staffs provide input to the joint planning process. It interfaces with the joint planning system during the supporting plan development phase in deliberate planning and during the situation development phase during joint crisis action planning. The Army's planning process closely resembles the MCP, enabling close coordination in planning and execution among Marine Corps and Army forces assigned supporting missions or attached to the other Service.

The following paragraphs describe the various elements of operational design and their use in the planning and execution of MEF operations.

### **a. Commander's Battlespace Area Evaluation**

CBAE is the commander's personal vision based on his understanding of the mission, the battlespace, and the enemy. It is his visualization of what needs to be done and his first impressions of how he will go about doing it. He uses CBAE to articulate his initial view of the operational design. This visualization is used to transmit critical information to subordinate commanders and the staff and is the basis for the commander's planning and decisionmaking. It identifies the commander's battlespace, COG and critical vulnerabilities, the commander's intent, and his CCIRs. The staff normally assists the commander in the preparation of much of his CBAE, including battlespace appreciation,

COG analysis, and determining his CCIRs. The G/S-2 is particularly helpful to the commander in determining possible enemy COGs.

**(1) Analyze and Determine the Battlespace.** The commander's battlespace consists of his AO, area of influence, and area of interest. The commander analyzes his assigned AO, comparing the capabilities of his forces with the mission assigned to determine his area of influence. He then visualizes how he will use his forces within the battlespace to accomplish his mission. This visualization allows the commander to recognize critical information requirements that will determine the extent of his area of interest.

The commander compares his AO to his area of influence to determine whether the AO's size and location will allow him to accomplish his mission. If the AO is too small to allow the commander to use all the assets of the MEF effectively to accomplish the mission, then he should request a larger AO be assigned. If he determines that the AO assigned is too large for his force or that it not located to best accommodate the MEF, then he should request a new or modified AO, or additional forces, from his commander. Regardless of its size, the MEF commander must be able to command and control his forces throughout the assigned AO.

**(2) Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities.** The commander continues to visualize what he must do and how he thinks he will use his force to accomplish that mission. An important aspect of the commander's visualization includes his analysis of COGs and critical vulnerabilities.

According to MCDP 1, a *center of gravity* is an important source of strength. Both enemy and friendly forces have COGs. Employing friendly strengths or COGs to attack the enemy's strength should be avoided whenever possible. Rather, the commander seeks to employ his strength against threat weaknesses. To accomplish this task, the commander must identify the enemy's *critical* vulnerabilities; that is, a vulnerability which permits him to destroy some capability without which the enemy cannot function effectively. At the tactical level, the COG is normally an enemy unit.

Critical vulnerabilities provide an aiming point for the application of friendly strengths against threat weaknesses. The commander directs his force's strength at those capabilities that are critical to the enemy's ability

to function—to defend, attack, or sustain himself, or to command his forces. The commander focuses on those critical vulnerabilities that will bend the enemy to his will most quickly. Once identified, critical vulnerabilities assist the commander in choosing where, when, and what will constitute decisive action. By attacking critical vulnerabilities, the commander increases the potential that the attack may in fact be the decisive action. Friendly critical vulnerabilities must also be identified to protect the friendly COG from similar attack by the enemy.

The commander's analysis of COGs and critical vulnerabilities during CBAE may require refinement as more information about the enemy and the tactical situation become available. The commander will continue to refine his visualization of the battlespace and his mission, which may require him to modify or delete his current choice for COGs and critical vulnerabilities. COGs and critical vulnerability analysis is an ongoing process and the commanders thinking on these items during CBAE may be radically altered during the remainder of the planning process and once the plan is executed.

**(3) Commander's Intent.** The commander continues his CBAE by describing the interaction of the enemy, his own force and the battlespace over time and how he will achieve a decision that leads to a the desired end state. He communicates this vision to his subordinates through the most important element of CBAE—commander's intent.

As described in MCDP 1, commander's intent is the commander's personal expression of the purpose of the operation. It must be clear, concise, and easily understood. It may also include how the commander envisions achieving a decision as well as the end state or conditions that, when satisfied, accomplish the purpose.

Commander's intent helps subordinates understand the larger context of their actions and guides them in the absence of orders. It allows subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative—in a way that is consistent with the higher commander's aims—when the unforeseen occurs. This freedom of action, within the broad guidance of the commander's intent, creates tempo during planning and execution.

Higher and subordinate commander's intent must be aligned. Commander's intent must be promulgated and clearly understood two levels down so that

commander's intent and the resulting concepts of operation are "nested" to ensure unity of effort. Nested commander's intent ensure that while subordinates have the freedom to conduct their part of the operation as their situation dictates, the results of these disparate actions will contribute to achieving the higher commander's desired end state.

Commander's intent focuses on the enduring portion of any mission—the purpose of the operation—which continues to guide subordinates' actions, while the subordinates' tasks may change as the situation develops. As the commander proceeds through planning and his situational awareness grows, he may refine his intent. He may also include how he envisions achieving a decision—his method—as well as the end state that, when satisfied, accomplish the purpose of the operation.

The commander's intent provides the overall purpose for accomplishing the task assigned through mission tactics. Although the situation may change, subordinates who clearly understand the purpose and act to accomplish that purpose can adapt to changing circumstances on their own without risking diffusion of effort or loss of tempo. Subordinate commanders will be able to carry on this mission on their own initiative and through lateral coordination with other units.

**(4) Commander's Critical Information Requirements.** CCIRs identify information on friendly activities, enemy activities, and the environment that the commander deems critical to maintaining situational awareness, planning future activities, and assisting in timely and informed decisionmaking. Commanders use CCIRs to help them confirm their vision of the battlespace and how they will achieve a decision to accomplish their desired end state or to identify significant deviations from that vision.

Not all information requirements support the commander in decisionmaking. CCIRs must be linked to the critical decisions the commander anticipates making. They focus the commander's subordinate commanders and staff's planning and collection efforts. The number of CCIRs must be limited to only those that support the commander's critical decisions—too many CCIRs diffuse focus.

CCIRs help the commander tailor his command and control organization. They are central to effective information management, which directs the

processing, flow, and use of information throughout the force. While the staff can recommend CCIRs, only the commander can approve them. CCIRs are continually reviewed and updated or deleted as necessary to reflect the commander's concerns and the changing tactical situation.

CCIRs are normally divided into three subcategories: priority intelligence requirements, friendly force information requirements, and essential elements of friendly information. A priority intelligence requirements is an intelligence requirement associated with a decision that will critically affect the overall success of the command's mission. A friendly force information requirements is information the commander needs about friendly forces in order to develop plans and make effective decisions. Depending on the circumstances, information on unit location, composition, readiness, personnel status, and logistic status could become a friendly force information requirements. Essential elements of friendly information are those specific facts about friendly intentions, capabilities, and activities needed by adversaries to plan and execute effective operations against friendly forces.

## **b. Commander's Guidance**

Guidance and intent are distinctly different and cannot be used interchangeably. Commander's intent is the purpose of the operation and allows subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative when the unforeseen occurs. Commander's guidance provides preliminary decisions required to focus the planners on the commander's conceptual vision of the operation. The commander develops his *commander's initial guidance* using how he envisions planning and conducting the operation, his CBAE, his experience, and any information available from higher headquarters. This guidance provides his subordinate commanders and the staff with additional insight of what the force is to do and the resources that will be required to achieve the desired end state. It may be based on the warfighting functions or how the commander envisions the sequence of actions that will allow his force to achieve a decision. The commander may provide general guidance and specific points he wants the staff to consider, like a particular enemy capability, a certain task organization, or constraints or restraints from higher headquarters. This initial guidance is best transmitted to the subordinate commanders and the staff by the commander personally as it will set the direction for the initial planning and preparations and will contribute to the establishment of tempo in the operation.

### c. Mission

Commanders determine their missions through an analysis of the tasks assigned. This analysis will reveal the essential tasks, together with the purpose of the operation, that clearly indicate the actions required and the desired end state of the operation. The mission includes *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* the task is to be accomplished.

There are two parts to any mission: the *task* to be accomplished and the reason or intent behind it. The task describes the action to be taken while the intent describes the purpose of the action. The task denotes what is to be done, and sometimes when and where; the intent explains why. Tasks can be *either specified or implied*.

- **Specified Tasks.** Specified tasks are specifically assigned to a unit by its higher headquarters. They are derived primarily from the mission and execution paragraphs of the higher headquarters operation order but may be found elsewhere, such as in the coordinating instructions or annexes.
- **Implied Tasks.** Implied tasks are not explicitly stated in the higher headquarters order, but should be performed to accomplish specified tasks. Implied tasks emerge from analysis of the higher headquarters order, the threat, and the terrain. Routine or continuing tasks are not included in implied tasks.

*Essential tasks* are those specified or implied tasks that define mission success and apply to the force as a whole. If a task must be successfully completed for the commander to accomplish his purpose, it is an essential task. Once they have been identified as essential tasks, they form the basis of the mission statement.

Tasks normally include a desired end state, which helps the subordinate to more fully understand the purpose of the task and to allow him to make an informed deviation from the stated task if the situation warrants. A task may also have pre-determined conditions that when satisfied tells a subordinate when the desired end state has been reached. End state and conditions help the commander to measure the effectiveness of his subordinate's actions in achieving a decision and accomplishing the mission.

*Mission tactics* is the assignment of a mission to a subordinate without specifying how the mission must be accomplished. It is a key tenet of maneuver warfare. In mission tactics, the higher commander describes the mission and explains its purpose. The subordinate commander determines the tactics needed to accomplish the task based on the mission and the higher commander's intent. In this way, each leader can act quickly as the situation changes without passing information up the chain of command and waiting for orders to come back down.

At the conclusion of mission analysis the commander issues his *commander's planning guidance*. Planning guidance may be either broad or very detailed depending on the commander and the time and information available. Whatever the nature of this guidance, it must convey the essence of the commander's vision. This guidance should include the commander's vision of decisive and shaping actions, which will assist the staff in determining the battlefield framework consisting of the main and supporting efforts, use of the reserve and security forces, phases of the operations, location and timing of critical events and other aspects of the operations the commander considers important. The commander's planning guidance and the battlefield framework are then used to assist the staff in developing and wargaming courses of action and other planning activities. For more information on commander's planning guidance, see MCWP 5-1.

- **Decisive Action.** The purpose of all military operations is mission success. Decisive action achieves mission success with the least loss of time, equipment and, most importantly, lives. It causes a favorable change in the situation or causes the threat to change or cease planned and current activities. When a commander seeks battle, he seeks victory: accomplishment of the assigned mission that leads to further significant gains for the force as a whole. Tactical battles are planned for their overall operational and strategic effect. The consequences of a tactical engagement should lead to achieving operational and strategic goals. The goal is not just for the MEF commander to achieve a decision, but to ensure that decision has greater meaning by contributing to the success of his senior commander's operation or campaign. For an action to be truly decisive, it must lead to a result larger than the action itself, according to MCDP 1-3, *Tactics*. Decisive action creates an environment in which the enemy has either lost the physical capability or his will to resist. Forcing the enemy to reach a

culminating point could be a decisive action by a defending force. A culminating point is that point in time and space where an attacker's combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender and/or an attacker's momentum can no longer be sustained. A culminating point for a defender is that point in time in which a defender must withdraw to preserve his force.

Decisive action may occur anywhere and at any time in the single battle. Any of the MEF's three major subordinate commands can achieve a decision. The aviation combat element (ACE) and the ground combat element (GCE) normally achieve a decision through combat. The combat service support element (CSSE) may be called upon to achieve a decision in MOOTW, e.g., humanitarian assistance. The commander considers the following in planning decisive action—

- What are the enemy's intentions?
- What are the COGs and critical vulnerabilities?
- What is the battlespace and is it appropriate to the capabilities of the MEF?
- What are the effects necessary to achieve a decision?
- Are the command relationships appropriate to the mission and battlespace?
- Have proper missions been assigned to the main effort, supporting efforts, and the reserve?
- How to synchronize the actions of the major subordinate commands?
- Does the MEF have the resources to accomplish the mission within the battlespace assigned?
- Have the MEF's resources been allocated and apportioned properly?
- Can the MEF be sustained in its effort to achieve a decision?
- Can the MEF accomplish the mission without reaching a culminating point?
- How does the MEF commander recognize whether the MEF has been successful in executing the plan?
- How does the commander assess success and whether changes must be made?

Decisive action at the MEF level involves more than just fire and maneuver. The MEF commander arranges a series of battles or engagements to achieve a decision. The commander arranges the actions of the MEF in terms of time, space, and resources to generate combat power at the decisive time and place.

- **Shaping Actions.** The MEF commander sets the conditions for decisive action by conducting shaping actions to achieve desired effects. Shaping is all lethal and nonlethal activities conducted throughout the battlespace to influence a threat capability, force, or the enemy commander's decision. The commander shapes the battlespace principally by protecting friendly critical vulnerabilities and attacking enemy critical vulnerabilities. In many cases, the MEF has the capability to achieve much of its own shaping. The objective of shaping actions might include:
  - Limit enemy freedom of action.
  - Deny the enemy the capability to concentrate forces.
  - Deceive the enemy as to friendly intentions.
  - Destroy enemy capabilities.
  - Alter the tempo of operations.
  - Gain and maintain momentum.
  - Influence perceptions of the enemy, allies, and noncombatants.

Shaping can have a favorable impact on friendly forces. The sense of being on the offensive and taking the fight to the enemy helps to maintain morale and foster offensive spirit for later decisive actions. Shaping incorporates a wide array of functions and capabilities and is more than just fires and targeting. It may include, but is not limited to, direct attack, psychological operations, electronic warfare, deception, civil affairs, information management, public affairs, engineer operations, and preventive medical services. Logistics operations, such as the marshaling of critical ammunition, fuel, and supplies to facilitate future operations, shape both friendly and threat forces.

Shaping makes the enemy vulnerable to attack, impedes or diverts his attempts to maneuver, aids the MEF's maneuver, and otherwise dictates the time and place for decisive action. It forces the enemy to

abandon their course of action and adopt a course of action favorable to the MEF. Shaping actions must be relevant to the envisioned decisive action. The commander attempts to shape events in a way that allows him several options, so that by the time the moment for decisive action arrives, he is not restricted to only one course of action. The goal of shaping is to eliminate the enemy's capability to fight effectively before the MEF initiates decisive action. MCDP 5, *Planning*, states "Ideally, when the decisive moment arrives, the issue has been resolved. Our actions leading to this point have so shaped the conditions that the result is a matter of course."

#### **d. Battlefield Framework**

This framework describes how the commander will organize his battlespace and his forces to achieve a decision. The battlefield framework consists of the battlespace organization of envisioned deep, close, and rear tactical operations as well as the organization of the force into the main effort, reserve, and security. Supporting efforts are addressed in the context of deep, close, and rear operations as part of the single battle. The battlefield framework provides the commander and his staff with an organized way to ensure that they consider in planning and execution all essential elements of successful military operation.

#### **e. Integrated Planning**

Integrated planning is a disciplined approach to planning that is systematic, coordinated, and thorough. It uses the warfighting functions to integrate the planning and supervise execution. Planners use integrated planning to consider all relevant factors, reduce omissions, and share information across the warfighting functions.

Integrated planning is essential to eliminate "stove pipe" planning in which individual planners, staff sections, and functional areas plan in a vacuum, without coordination with others. This approach often results in disjointed plans and execution that is not synchronized. By conducting integrated planning, staffs will produce more useful operation plans and orders and commanders will realize more synchronized operations across the elements of the MEF with increased tempo.

The warfighting functions are used extensively in integrated planning. Commanders and staffs use warfighting functions as a planning framework. Their use ensures that the commander and his planners consider all critical functional areas when planning and making decisions. Warfighting functions are planning and execution tools used by planners and subject matter experts in each of the functional areas to produce comprehensive plans that are integrated with the other warfighting functions. This integration of the planning effort helps the commander to achieve unity of effort.

### f. Single Battle

Single battle allows the commander to effectively focus the efforts of all the elements of the force to accomplish his mission. Within the single battle, the commander conducts centralized planning while fostering decentralized execution allowing subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative and exploit opportunities. Centralized planning is essential for controlling and coordinating the efforts of all available forces. Decentralized execution is essential to generate the tempo of operations required and to cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat.

A commander must always view his AO as an indivisible entity—operations or events in one part of the AO may have profound and often unintended effects on other areas and events. While the AO may be conceptually divided to assist centralized planning and decentralized execution, the commander’s intent ensures unity of effort by fighting a single battle. The asymmetrical natures of the elements of the MAGTF make this particularly critical to the success of the MAGTFs operations. (See Figure 2-4.)

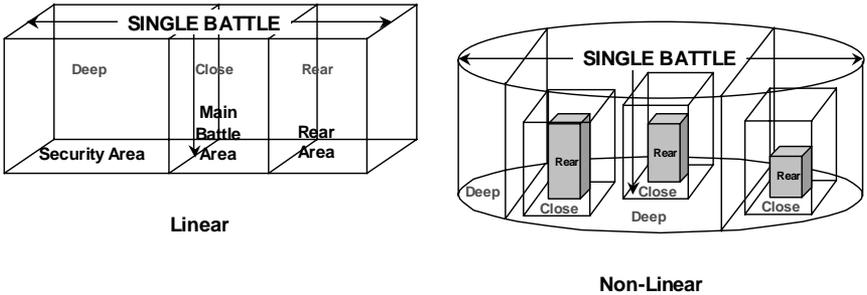


Figure 2-4. Single battle.

Under single battle, the AO consists of three major areas—deep, close, and rear—in which distinctly different operations are performed. These operations are not necessarily restricted to, or characterized by distance or location in the AO; rather, they are functional actions that must be accomplished for other functions to be effective. The MEF does not merely divide the battlespace up with the ACE taking the deep, the GCE taking the close, and the CCSE taking the rear area. The MEF commander is in charge and is responsible for the entire battle. To synchronize actions within the single battle, the commander must determine what, where, when, and how to apply the warfighting functions.

While the MEF commander desires to defeat the enemy in a single battle or engagement, it may be beyond the capabilities of the MEF to achieve this. Thus, MEF operations may need to be phased. All actions and phases must be connected and focused on achieving a decision. This arrangement of forces in time and space to generate sufficient combat power to achieve a decision is the result of detailed and integrated planning.

**(1) Deep Operations.** Deep operations shape the battlespace to influence future operations. They seek to create windows of opportunity for decisive action, restrict the enemy's freedom of action, and disrupt the cohesion and tempo of his operations. Deep operations help the commander seize the initiative and set the conditions for close operations. Because of its operational reach, deep operations are primarily conducted by the ACE, although the GCE and CSSE may play significant roles. MEF intelligence assets such as force reconnaissance and signals intelligence, and ACE and GCE surveillance and reconnaissance assets, like UAVs and ground surveillance radars, contribute to the conduct of deep operations.

The commander focuses on attacking enemy capabilities that most directly contribute to the accomplishment of his mission. Deep operations should exploit or create these critical enemy vulnerabilities. Deep operations normally focus on the enemy's follow-on and supporting forces, command and control nodes, and key lines of communications or facilities. Deep operations may require coordination and integration with national-level assets and joint forces. They may include—

- Interdiction through fires and maneuver.
- Surveillance, reconnaissance, and target acquisition.

- Information operations such as deception or psychological operations.
- Offensive anti-air warfare.

**(2) Close Operations.** Close operations project power against enemy forces in immediate contact and are often the decisive actions. These operations require speed and mobility to rapidly concentrate overwhelming combat power at the critical time and place, and exploit success. Close operations are dominated by fire and maneuver conducted by combined arms forces from the GCE and the ACE. Combined arms forces maneuver to enhance the effects of their fires and fire to enhance their ability to maneuver. As they maneuver to gain positions of advantage over the enemy, combined arms forces deliver fires to disrupt the enemy's ability to interfere with that maneuver. Commanders prioritize fires to weight the main effort and to focus combat power to achieve effects that lead to a decision. The effects of fires can be massed to strike the enemy at the decisive point and time, while reducing the risks to the force entailed in massing maneuver forces at a single point or in a single portion of the battlespace.

**(3) Rear Operations.** Rear operations support deep and close operations and facilitate future operations. Security is inherent in rear operations—sustainment must not be interrupted and assets must be protected. Rear operations ensure the freedom of action of the force and provide continuity of operations, logistics, and command and control. Rear area operations deny the use of the rear area to the enemy. To minimize the logistical footprint, rear operations may require the maximum use of sea-basing, push logistics, host nation support, and existing infrastructure. Rear operations are conducted by all elements of the MEF.

Rear area operations are evolutionary in nature. As the operation progresses, the geographic location, command and control structure, and the organization of the rear area can be expected to change. The broad functions of rear area operations, as delineated in within both joint and Marine Corps doctrine, include—

- Communications.
- Intelligence.
- Sustainment.
- Security.

- Movement.
- Area management.
- Infrastructure development.
- Host nation support.

To provide command and control of rear area operations, the commander may assign a rear area coordinator or commander with specific, designated functions. He usually establishes a rear area operations center to assist in the conduct and coordination of those functions of rear area operations assigned. For more information, see MCWP 3-41.1, *Rear Area Operations*.

**(4) Noncontiguous/Contiguous.** The battlefield framework may reflect linear operations where there is a continuous and contiguous array of units across the AO and through the depth of the deep, close, and rear areas. A more likely situation is one in which the MEF conducts non-linear operations within a non-contiguous battlespace and within an operational framework with non-contiguous deep, close and rear areas. Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia (1992-93) is an example of a battlefield framework with non-contiguous areas. The rear area was centered around the separate sites of the embassy compound, port, and airfield in the city of Mogadishu, while its close area was widely scattered around the towns and villages of the interior that were occupied by the Marines. The deep area included the rest of the country and particularly those population and relief centers not under the joint force commander's supervision.

A MEF commander must be well versed in the capabilities and limitations of his forces and their role in deep, close, and rear operations to conduct the single battle. He must consider that there may be deep, close, and rear operations at every level of command. For example, a subordinate commander's deep operations may constitute part of the higher commander's close operations. (See Figure 2-5, page 40.)

By conceptually dividing the AO and using the warfighting functions to conduct integrated planning for each area, the commander ensures the coordination of his forces in executing the single battle. It is important to remember that the enemy's disposition and actions will seldom coincide with how the MEF commander has organized his AO. Therefore, the commander's planning and execution must be flexible enough to accommodate this difference and exploit resulting opportunities.

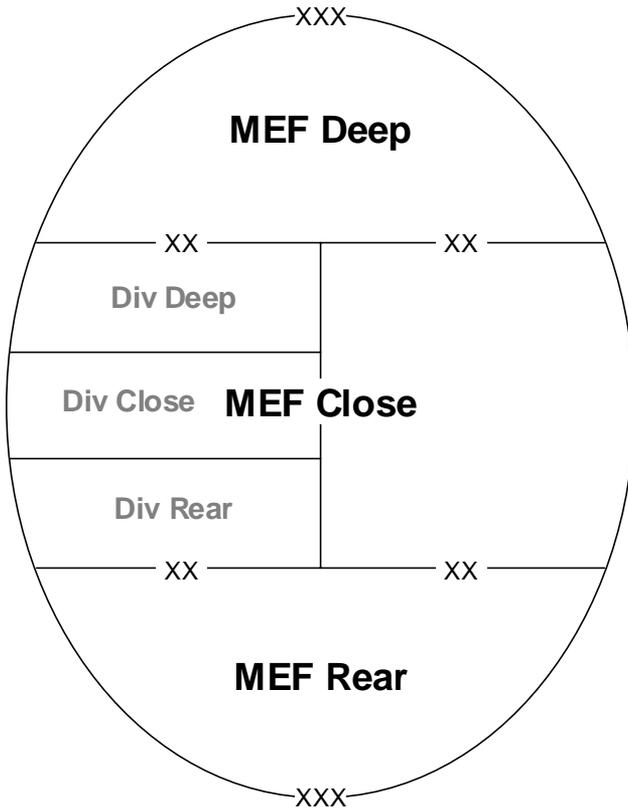


Figure 2-5. Battlespace organization.

### g. Main and Supporting Efforts

The main effort is a central concept of maneuver warfare according to MCDP 1. It calls for concentrating efforts on achieving objectives that lead to victory. The main effort is that unit assigned to accomplish the mission or task critical to mission success. *The main effort normally is that unit with which the commander plans to conduct the decisive action and it should be selected, reinforced, and supported accordingly.* The commander assigns the main effort to a specifically designated subordinate unit. The commander focuses the combat power of the force against enemy critical vulnerabilities in a bold bid to achieve decisive results. The main effort may be viewed as a harmonizing force for subordinate's initiative.

The main effort may be from any element of the MEF or force assigned. MCDP 1-3 says the commander provides the bulk of his combat power or other assets to the main effort to maintain momentum and ensure accomplishment of the mission. These assets may include not only maneuver forces but also capabilities that enhance the main effort's ability to accomplish its mission. The commander normally gives the main effort priority of various types of support. It is also provided with the greatest mobility and the preponderance of combat support and combat service support. However, overburdening the main effort with unnecessary assets can degrade its ability to move rapidly and decisively. The reserve is positioned to best exploit the main effort's success.

The commander may concentrate the combat power of the main effort by assigning it a narrower zone of action or reducing its AO. In summary, the commander weights the main effort by task organizing his force or by providing priority of—

- Air support.
- Fire support assets.
- Transportation and mobility assets such as heavy equipment transporters, assault support helicopters, bridging, and obstacle clearing engineer support.
- Combat service support to preclude the main effort from reaching the culminating point prematurely. This support might include mobile CSSEs, critical supplies like fuel and ammunition, and exchange or rapid repair of essential equipment.
- Specialized units or capabilities, such as civil affairs or psychological operations units during MOOTW.
- Personnel replacements.
- Command and control support.
- Intelligence support.

The commander disguises the main effort until it is too late for the enemy to react to it in strength. He accomplishes this through the use of demonstrations and feints, security, cover and concealment, and by dispersing his forces until the last instant and achieving mass at the critical time and place.

Supporting efforts help shape the battlespace in support of the main effort's envisioned decisive action. Faced with a decision, commanders of supporting efforts must ask themselves: How can I best support the main effort? Conversely, they must avoid actions that do not contribute to the success of the main effort. There may be more than one supporting effort in support of the main effort.

Massing of combat power to support the main effort may require time and additional transportation assets to marshal the necessary support. Task organization of supporting units may also be required to provide responsive and flexible support.

Commanders apply the principle of economy of force to supporting efforts. They make effective use of available assets needed to support the main effort, while conserving others for future actions. MCDP 1-3 says that forces not in a position to directly support the main effort should be used to indirectly support it. For example, a commander may use other forces to deceive the enemy as to the location of the main effort. Such forces might be used to distract the enemy or to tie down enemy forces that might otherwise reinforce the threatened point. The commander weighs the value of the deception against the cost in terms of forces and assets needed to portray a credible force. Uncommitted forces can be used in this effort by maneuvering them in feints and demonstrations that keep the enemy off balance.

The reserve may be tasked to support the main effort and often will become the main effort when employed. It is important for the commander to ensure that the reserve is not assigned nonessential tasks that degrade its ability to respond rapidly to fleeting opportunities created by the main effort or to reinforce the main effort at the decisive time and place.

While a commander always designates a main effort, it may shift—either planned or unplanned—during the course of a battle as events unfold. Because events and the enemy are unpredictable, few battles flow exactly as the commander has planned. A supporting effort may achieve unexpected success during execution. As a result, the commander must make adjustments. After assessing the changing situation, he may designate the supporting effort as the main effort. Commanders of supporting efforts must be prepared to assume the role of the main effort as the situation changes as a result of emerging opportunities or unforeseen setbacks.

There may be costs in shifting the main effort. The larger the organization, the more costly this shift may be. The costs include the time and effort to shift resources and priority of support (fires, supply, transportation, medical, engineering). The commander must weigh the benefits and costs for shifting the main effort. He should only shift the main effort when he is convinced this will lead to decisive action.

The flexibility inherent in Marine aviation allows the commander to shift the main effort to the ACE rapidly and usually with significantly less repositioning of resources than other forces of the MEF. Normally the greatest impact on the ACE is that the new tasks resulting from the shift of the main effort may not be performed as timely or with the optimum combination of forces and ordnance as the previously planned tasks. Forces may be required to reorganize and plan new missions or to redirect previously planned missions designed to attack specific targets against new targets.

To conduct decisive actions and to weight the main effort sufficiently so that he can achieve a decision, the commander must organize his assigned and attached forces for specific missions and tasks. This process of allocating available assets to subordinate commanders and establishing appropriate command and supporting relations is called task-organizing. The grouping of forces or units to accomplish a specific mission or task is task-organization. Marine Corps forces are task organized routinely and are used to operating in task forces to accomplish specific missions and then rapidly resuming their duties with their parent command. While taking advantage of the close coordination and cooperation realized by units with habitual relations with other units, e.g., Marine artillery units habitually support certain infantry regiments, these forces are agile enough to assume a new supporting relationship or attachment to a different unit.

The ability to rapidly tailor Marine Corps forces through task organization to accomplish a wide array of missions or tasks allows the commander to effectively and efficiently use the forces and assets available to him. It is incumbent on the commander to understand the capabilities and limitations of the forces available to develop the best possible task organizations. He must also realize that the creation of a task-organized force will take some time and may have an affect on his forces' tempo. Frequent or gratuitous task organizing may actually reduce the effectiveness of the force.

## **h. Reserve**

The reserve is an essential tool used by the commander to exploit success. The reserve is part of the commander's combat power initially withheld from action in order to influence future action and deal with emerging opportunities or a crisis. The reserve provides the commander the flexibility to react to unforeseen developments. Often a commander's most difficult and important decision concerns the time, place, and circumstances for committing the reserve. While the commander sometimes must employ his reserve to deal with a crisis, he should always attempt to use the reserve to reinforce success and exploit opportunities to achieve a decision. The commander uses his reserve to restore momentum to a stalled attack, defeat enemy counterattacks, and exploit success. Once committed, the reserve's actions normally become the decisive operation, and every effort is made to reconstitute another reserve from units made available by the revised situation. Since the reserve is often the commander's bid to achieve a decision, it is usually designated the main effort when committed. The reserve is not to be used as a follow and support force or a follow and assume force.

The reserve should be as strong a force as possible, with appropriate mobility and firepower. Its strength and location will vary with its contemplated mission, the form of maneuver, the terrain, the possible enemy reaction, and the clarity of the situation. The commander should organize, equip, and rehearse the reserve for the mission he intends it to perform. He should not constitute his reserve by weakening his decisive operation. A reserve must have mobility equal to or greater than the most dangerous enemy threat, and it must be able to fight the most dangerous enemy threat. The more uncertain the situation, the larger should be the reserve. When the situation is obscure, the reserve may consist initially of the bulk of the force, centrally located and prepared to be employed at any point. The commander only needs to provide a small reserve to respond to unanticipated enemy reactions when he has detailed information about the enemy. However, the reserve must always be sufficient to exploit success.

The commander must also consider intangible factors when selecting and tasking a reserve, including the proficiency, leadership, morale, fatigue and combat losses, and maintenance and supply status of the unit. Care is taken in the positioning of the reserve to balance force protection requirements with the imperative to best position the reserve to enhance its ability to

exploit opportunities. When committed, the reserve—as the main effort—receives priority for resources and services.

## i. Security

Security is inherent in all MEF operations and includes those measures taken by a military unit, an activity, or installation to protect itself against all acts designed to, or which may, impair its effectiveness. See Part VI, “MEF Reconnaissance and Security Operations”. Security operations are an element of overall force protection measures that must be conducted in all operations, whether offense or defense. Sound security operations are based on—

- **Orientation.** Security forces position themselves between the main force and the enemy. Security elements are dependent on the movement of the main force. As a result, the operations of the security force must be closely coordinated with the concept of operations.
- **Reconnaissance.** Security forces conduct reconnaissance, which seeks to reduce unknowns for the commander. The security force reduces the chance of surprise to friendly forces.
- **Early and Accurate Warning.** Unless warning of an enemy threat reaches the commander in time for him to react, the warning is useless. An erroneous warning may be as detrimental as no warning at all.
- **Reaction Time and Maneuver Space.** The security force gives the commander the time and space necessary to counteract an enemy threat. To accomplish this, a security force executes its mission to the greatest depth possible based on its capabilities and the tactical situation.
- **Gain and Maintain Contact.** Security forces seek to gain contact with the enemy as early as possible. Based on the assigned mission and the capabilities of the security force, contact may vary from observation to combat. Contact is normally not broken off without permission from higher headquarters because accurate information about the enemy’s location, disposition, and movement prevents surprise by the enemy. However, the requirement to maintain contact must be balanced with the friendly concept of operations.

- **Conduct Counterreconnaissance.** Counterreconnaissance is an important aspect of all security operations. It is all measures taken to prevent hostile observation of a force, area, or place.
- **Mobility.** Security forces normally require mobility equal or greater than that of the enemy. In terrain such as mountains, dense forests, or built up urban areas, dismounted lighter forces may have greater relative mobility than mechanized forces. The inherent mobility of the ACE provides the MEF with an ideal force for the conduct of selected security operations.

## j. Phasing

Phasing assists the commander and staff in planning and executing operations. The commander uses phasing to divide his vision for how he intends to accomplish his mission into portions that reflect the requirement to perform a major task in order to achieve a decision. A change in phase usually involves a change of a major task. I MEF offensive operations during Operation DESERT STORM (1991) was conducted using the following phases:

- Phase I. Strategic air operations to attain air supremacy, attack Iraqi war making infrastructure, destroy the Republican Guard.
- Phase II. Attainment of air supremacy in the Kuwait theater of operations and the suppression of the Iraqi integrated air defense system.
- Phase III. Preparation of the battlespace to reduce the combat effectiveness of the enemy in the Kuwait theater of operations, specifically the reduction of Iraqi armor and artillery by 50% and FROG (free rocket over ground) missiles and multiple rocket launchers by 100%.
- Phase IV. Ground offensive operations.

Commanders should establish clear conditions for the initiation and termination of each phase. While phases are distinguishable by friendly forces, they should not be readily apparent to the enemy. The commander should take whatever actions necessary to conceal from the enemy the distinctions and, most especially, the transitions between phases.

Phases may be further sub-divided into stages to provide greater detail in planning and enhance control and coordination in execution. I MEF's Phase

IV ground offensive operations during Operation DESERT STORM consisted of the following stages:

- Stage A. Penetration of forward Iraqi defenses.
- Stage B. Exploit the success of the penetration to destroy Iraqi forces in zone.
- Stage C. Consolidate to prevent reinforcement or escape of Iraqi forces in zone.

Phases and stages should be aligned as closely as possible with those adopted by higher headquarters to reduce confusion during transition from one phase or stage to another and to enhance coordinated efforts.

## **k. Operation Plans and Orders**

Operation plans and orders communicate the commander's intent, guidance, and decisions in a clear, useful, and timely form. They should be easily understood by those who must execute the order. Operations plans and orders should only contain critical or new information—not routine information and procedures normally found in standing operating procedures.

Plans and orders should be the product of integrated planning to eliminate stovepiping of information. Critical information, such as the mission, commander's intent, and tactical tasking should be prominently positioned in the basic order. Concepts of maneuver, fires, and support should also be in the basic order. Planners need to reconcile plans and orders to ensure all critical information is presented. Comparison, or "cross walking" of the plan or order with those of higher, adjacent, and subordinate commands help to identify conflicts or omissions and achieve unity of effort. The operation plan or order is the source of authority on the operation *not* briefing slides and e-mail messages. Further, chiefs of staff must maintain close control over versions and changes to the plan or order to ensure unauthorized changes do not get promulgated and that the approved version is properly disseminated.

## **l. Transitioning Between Planning and Execution**

The actions of the commander and the staff during the transition from planning to execution may be of critical importance in accomplishing the

mission. The purpose of transition is to ensure a successful shift from planning to execution. It enhances the situational awareness of those who must execute the plan, maintains the intent of the concept of operations, promotes unity of effort, and generates tempo. Transition facilitates the synchronization of plans between higher and subordinate commands and aids in integrated planning by ensuring the synchronization of the warfighting functions. At the MEF level, where the planners may not be the executors, transition provides a full understanding of the plan to those who were not involved in its development.

Transition occurs at all levels of command. A formal transition normally occurs on staffs with separate planning and execution teams. Planning time and personnel may be limited at lower levels of command, such as the regiment, aircraft group, or below; therefore transition may take place intuitively as the planners are also the executors. Transition may be accomplished through the assignment of a plan proponent—a planner who aids the executors in interpreting and applying the plan in action—and through participation in transition briefs, drills, and a confirmation brief. Confirmation briefs are a particularly valuable technique to ensure synchronization or nesting of higher, adjacent, and subordinate command's plans. For more details on transition, see MCWP 5-1.

## **2004. Execution**

Execution of MEF operations is the concerted action of the commander and his forces to conduct operations based on the operation plan or order, modified as the current tactical situation dictates, to achieve the commander's end state and accomplish the mission. The commander and his forces must seize and retain the initiative, create overwhelming tempo, establish and maintain momentum, exploit success, and successfully finish the operation. He commands the activities of his various subordinate units and assesses the success of those activities in obtaining the goals of the operation.

The commander, assisted by his deputy commander and the staff, must control or coordinate the activities of all the elements of the MEF. These activities include the movement and maneuver of the force, coordination and control of fires, collection of intelligence, sustainment and protection of the force, and assessment of these activities to determine the progress of the

command in achieving the desired end state. He must command the force and supervise the activities of his subordinate commanders in carrying out his mission and intent.

### **a. Command and Control**

MCDP 6, *Command and Control*, states that no single activity in war is more important than command and control. It is the means by which the commander recognizes what needs to be done and sees to it that appropriate actions are taken. Command and control provides purpose and direction to the varied activities of a military unit. If done well, command and control adds to the strength of the force—if done poorly, it may be a liability to the force.

According to Joint Pub 1-02, command is “the authority that a commander in the Armed Forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions”. The commander must effectively command the activities of his subordinate commanders during operations. His span of control should not exceed his capability to effectively command. Command in battle incorporates two vital skills—the ability to decide and the ability to lead. They integrate a commander’s vision of the situation and battlespace and how he plans to achieve his desired end state with leading, guiding, and motivating subordinates. These two skills are tightly interwoven and are the central factors from which the warfighting functions are integrated to create combat power and conduct expeditionary maneuver warfare.

Leadership is the influencing of people to work toward the accomplishment of a common objective and is essential to effective command, according to MCDP 6, *Command and Control*. While the component, MEF, and major subordinate command commanders exercise leadership by visualizing and describing how the operation will be conducted, commanders at lower levels accomplish the goals of the operation by motivating and directing the actions of their units.

The ability to command and control an organization is enhanced when the commander decentralizes decisionmaking authority as much as each

situation allows. This means that commanders on the scene and closest to the events have the latitude to deal with the situation as required *on their own authority*—but always in accordance with the higher commander’s intent. Decentralization speeds up reaction time: the commander does not have to wait for information to flow up to a higher commander and orders to flow back down. Confidence in the abilities of subordinates is an important part in decentralization. Leaders who have confidence in the capabilities of their subordinates will feel more comfortable in granting them greater latitude in accomplishing tasks. It fosters a climate where senior leaders know that their intent will be carried out.

Control can generally be divided into two types: *centralized* and *decentralized*. Centralized control tends to work from the top down: the commander determines what his subordinates will and will not do. Decentralized control works from the bottom up. While cooperation is required for both types of control, it is essential in decentralized control. Subordinates work together laterally and from the bottom up to accomplish tasks that fulfill the commander’s intent.

Battle rhythm is an important aspect of command and control. The commander must ensure that the planning, decision, and operating cycles of his command is nested or linked to that of his higher headquarters and that his subordinate commanders synchronize their battle rhythms with his headquarters. By ensuring information and requests for support are forwarded to higher headquarters in time for that headquarters to act, increases the likelihood that the command will obtain the desired support or effects. Some of the planning, decision, and operating cycles that influence the battle rhythm of the command include the intelligence collection cycle, targeting cycle, air tasking order cycle, reconnaissance tasking cycle and the battle damage assessment collection cycle.

Effective decisionmaking is essential to command and control. Commanders develop information management processes to ensure access to timely and useful information to make decisions. Information management is the processes and techniques the command uses to obtain, manipulate, direct, control, and safe guard information. Sound information management practices facilitates the rapid, distributed, and unconstrained flow of information in all directions—to higher headquarters, adjacent units, and subordinate commanders. Information management policies and procedures enable the staff to determine the importance, quality, and

timeliness of information to provide the commander with focused information to prevent information overload.

## **b. Assessment**

Assessment is the continuous appraisal of military operations to determine progress toward established goals. It answers the commander's question, "*How are we doing?*" It helps the commander recognize whether his planned activities are achieving their desired effects and whether he has to modify or cease those activities to achieve his desired end state. Assessment is continuous and is focused on the overall effectiveness of the command in achieving the commander's goals. Assessment is the basis for the commander's decisions concerning future actions. It allows him to rapidly act to exploit unexpected success or opportunity and to counter unanticipated enemy success.

Successful assessment requires a commander who is able to clearly and accurately visualize the battlespace and the operation. It requires situational awareness on the part of the commander that allows him to recognize the difference between the desired effects and the actual effects of the operation. This perceived difference between what was planned and what actually happened then becomes the catalyst for decisionmaking.

Commanders assess the effectiveness of their operations by measuring how successful they have been in completing the tasks stated or inherent in their mission. They do this by determining whether operations have met the *conditions* previously established which supports an upcoming decision by the commander or whether the task has been completed. Conditions should be linked to the purpose of the task and be understandable, relevant, and measurable. Since some conditions are necessarily complex, commanders and their staffs may also use *measures of effectiveness* to further describe those conditions that must be met before a task is completed or a new phase of the operation can commence. Measures of effectiveness are indicators that demonstrate the degree to which a condition has been satisfied. They provide the commander with a tangible indicator of how close he is to achieving his desired conditions.

The intelligence collection effort, as well as the overall combat reporting process in the force, must be focused on providing timely and useful information to the commander to aid him in his assessment of operations.

The fulfillment of CCIRs and priority intelligence requirements will often be critical in determining whether the task has been completed and the conditions exist to support transition from one phase of the operation to another.

While assessment takes place throughout the planning, deployment, and redeployment phases of an operation it is truly essential during execution.

## **2005. Actions at the Tactical Level**

Actions at the tactical level of war are the building blocks that the MEF commander uses to achieve operational success and fulfill the joint force commander's operational goals. Every action that the MEF commander and the major subordinate elements commanders take is aimed at achieving the senior commander's goals and accomplishing their mission. The tactical level of war is the province of combat. It includes the maneuver of forces to gain a fighting advantage; the use and coordination of fires; the sustainment of forces throughout combat; the immediate exploitation of success; and the combination of different arms and weapons—all to cause the enemy's defeat. It is the MEF that *conducts* these tactical operations through the major subordinate commands that *execute* these tactical operations.

The successful execution of Marine Corps tactics requires the thoughtful application of a number of tactical concepts to achieve success on the battlefield. Key among these concepts are *achieving a decision*, *gaining advantage*, *tempo*, *adapting*, and *exploiting success and finishing*. Creative and practical employment of these ideas throughout planning and execution leads to success. These concepts are not stand-alone ideas but are to be combined to achieve an effect that is greater than their separate sum. Part of the art of tactics is knowing where and when to apply these concepts and which combinations to use to achieve the desired effect.

### **a. Achieving a Decision**

The objective of tactics is to achieve military success through a decision in battle. In combat, the success the commander seeks is victory—not a partial or marginal outcome, but a victory that settles the issue in his favor and contributes to the success of the overall campaign.

Achieving a decision *is not easy*. The enemy's skill and determination may prevent even a victorious commander from achieving the decision he seeks. Commanders must not engage in battle without envisioning a larger result for their actions.

Perfect understanding of the situation or a highly detailed plan is useless if the commander is not prepared to act decisively. When the opportunity arrives, the commander must exploit it fully and aggressively, committing every ounce of combat power he can muster and pushing the force to the limits of exhaustion. Key to this effort is identifying enemy critical vulnerabilities, shaping the operating area to gain an advantage, designating a main effort to focus the MEF's combat power, and acting in a bold and relentless manner.

Forcing a successful decision requires the commander to be bold and relentless. Boldness refers to daring and aggressiveness in behavior. It is one of the basic requirements for achieving clear-cut outcomes. The commander must have a desire to "win big," even if he realizes that in many situations the conditions for victory may not yet be present. Relentlessness refers to pursuing the established goal single-mindedly and without let up. Once he has an advantage, he should exploit it to the fullest. He should not ease up, but instead increase the pressure. Victory in combat is rarely the product of the initial plan, but rather of relentlessly exploiting any advantage, no matter how small, until it succeeds.

## **b. Gaining Advantage**

Combat is a test of wills where the object is to win. One way to win is to gain and exploit every possible advantage. The commander uses maneuver and surprise whenever possible. He employs complementary forces as combined arms. He exploits the terrain, weather, and times of darkness to his advantage. He traps the enemy by fires and maneuver. He fights asymmetrically to gain added advantage. He strives to gain an advantage over the enemy by exploiting every aspect of a situation to achieve victory, not by overpowering the enemy's strength with his own strength.

**(1) Combined Arms.** Combined arms is a Marine Corps core competency. The use of combined arms is a key means of gaining advantage. Combined arms presents the enemy not merely with a problem, but with a dilemma—a no-win situation. The commander combines

supporting arms, organic fires, and maneuver in such a way that any action the enemy takes to avoid one threat makes him more vulnerable to another.

Modern tactics is combined arms tactics. It combines the effects of various arms—infantry, armor, artillery, and aviation—to achieve the greatest possible effect against the enemy. The strengths of the arms complement and reinforce each other. At the same time, the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of each arm are protected or offset by the capabilities of the other.

The MEF is a perfect example of a balanced combined arms team. For example, an entrenched enemy discovers that if he stays in fighting holes, Marine infantry will close with and destroy him. If he comes out to attack, Marine artillery and aviation will blast him. If he tries to retreat, Marine mechanized and aviation forces will pursue him to his destruction. Combined arms tactics is standard practice and second nature for all Marines.

**(2) Exploiting the Environment.** The use of the environment offers tremendous opportunities to gain advantage over the enemy. Marines must train for and understand the characteristics of any environment where they may have to operate: jungle, desert, mountain, arctic, riverine, or urban. More importantly, Marines must understand how the terrain, weather, and periods of darkness or reduced visibility impact on their own and the enemy's ability to fight.

In addition to the physical aspects of the environment, Marines must consider the impact on the operation by the peoples and the culture, political and social organization, and any external agencies or organizations that exist within the AO. As most expeditionary operations take place in the world's littoral regions that are more densely populated and contain more urban areas than the hinterlands, Marines must plan for and be prepared to conduct more civil-military operations.

**(3) Complementary Forces.** Complementary forces—the idea of fix-and-flank—are an important way of gaining advantage. The commander seeks to crush the enemy—as between a hammer and an anvil—with two or more actions. With its two combat arms, the MEF has organic complementary and asymmetric forces. Ground combat forces may attack an enemy in one direction and dimension, while aviation combat forces are

attacking from another direction and dimension. This capability places the enemy in a dilemma. The opponent is now vulnerable to one or the other of the two combat forces. He has no protection against both—no matter how he moves he is exposed.

One of the complementary forces may take a direct, obvious action to fix the enemy. The other force takes the unexpected or extraordinary action. These two actions work together against the enemy. The two actions are inseparable and can be interchangeable in battle. The concept is basic, but it can be implemented in a variety of combinations limited only by imagination.

**(4) Surprise.** Achieving surprise can greatly increase advantage. In fact, surprise can often prove decisive. The commander tries to achieve surprise through information operations that result in deception, stealth, and ambiguity.

The commander uses deception to mislead the enemy with regard to his real intentions and capabilities. By employing deception, he tries to cause the enemy to act in ways that will eventually prove prejudicial for them. He may use deception to mislead the enemy as to the time and location of a pending attack. He may use deception to create the impression that his forces are larger than they really are. Forces used to support deception operations must be appropriate to and of sufficient size to make the deception credible. The commander hopes the enemy will realize this deception only when it is too late for them to react.

Surprise can be generated through stealth. Stealth is used to advantage when maneuvering against an enemy. It provides less chance of detection by the enemy, leaving him vulnerable to surprise action for which he may be unprepared.

The commander can also achieve surprise through ambiguity. It is usually difficult to conceal all friendly movements from the enemy, but the commander can sometimes confuse him as to the meaning of what he sees, especially his awareness of where the main effort is or where the commander has placed his bid for a decision. Clearly, the ambiguity created in the minds of the Iraqi high command by the amphibious force contributed to fixing the Iraqi forces, allowing coalition forces to succeed in Operation DESERT STORM.

**(5) Asymmetry.** Fighting asymmetrically means gaining advantage through imbalance, applying strength against an enemy weakness. Fighting asymmetrically uses dissimilar techniques and capabilities to maximize the MEF's strengths while exploiting enemy weaknesses. By fighting asymmetrically, the MEF does not have to be numerically superior to defeat the enemy. It only has to be able to exploit the enemy's vulnerabilities. For example, using tanks to fight enemy tanks, infantry to fight enemy infantry, and air to fight enemy air is symmetrical. Using tanks to fight enemy artillery or attack helicopters against enemy tanks are examples of fighting asymmetrically. In these examples, the tanks' and aircraft's greater speed and mobility provides an advantage over the enemy. Fast moving tanks operating in the enemy's rear against stationary or slow moving artillery can disrupt the enemy's cohesion. Ambushing tanks with attack helicopters in terrain that hampers tank maneuver provides even greater effect and generates even more advantage. U.S. attack helicopters assisted in blunting a rapid and powerful North Vietnamese advance and destroyed the enemy's armor using just such tactics during the Easter offensive of 1972 in the Republic of Vietnam.

### **c. Tempo**

One of the most powerful weapons available to the commander is speed. The unit that can consistently move and act faster than its enemy has a powerful advantage. The ability to plan, decide, execute, and assess faster than the enemy creates advantage that commanders can exploit.

In a military sense, there is more to speed than simply going fast, and there is a vital difference between acting rapidly and acting recklessly. Closely related to time is the factor of time. Speed and time are closely related. In tactics, time is always of the utmost importance. Time that cannot be spent in action must be spent preparing for action and shaping conditions for decisive actions. If speed is a weapon, so is time. Speed and time create tempo. Tempo is the rate of military action and has significance only in relation to that of the enemy. When friendly tempo exceeds that of the enemy to react, friendly forces seize and maintain the initiative and have a marked advantage.

Tempo is not merely a matter of acting fastest or at the earliest opportunity. It is also a matter of timing—acting at the right time. The commander must be able to generate and maintain a fast pace when the situation calls for it

and to recover when it will not hurt. Timing means knowing when to act and, equally important, when not to act. To be consistent, superiority in tempo must continue over time. It is not enough to move faster than the enemy only now and then. When the friendly force is not moving faster, the advantage and initiative passes to the enemy. Most forces can manage an intermittent burst of speed but must then halt for a considerable period to recover. During that halt, they are likely to lose their advantage. While a force cannot operate at full speed indefinitely, the challenge is to be consistently faster than the enemy.

To act consistently faster than the enemy, it is necessary to do more than move quickly. It is also necessary to make rapid transitions from one action to another. While there are many types of transitions in combat, the important thing to remember is that transitions produce friction. Reduction of friction minimizes the loss of tempo that is generated at the point of transition. A unit that can make transitions faster and more smoothly than another can be said to have greater relative speed.

#### **d. Adapting**

War is characterized by friction, uncertainty, disorder, and rapid change. Each situation is a unique combination of shifting factors that cannot be controlled with precision or certainty. A tactically proficient leader must be able to adapt actions to each situation. For adaptation to be effective, commanders must readily exploit the opportunities uncovered by subordinates. While making the best possible preparations, they must welcome and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.

There are two basic ways to adapt. Sometimes the commander has enough situational awareness to understand a situation in advance and take preparatory action. This is *anticipation*. At other times he has to adapt to the situation on the spur of the moment without time for preparation. This is *improvisation*. A successful commander must be able to do both.

**(1) Anticipation.** To anticipate, the commander must be able to forecast future actions, at least to some extent. These forecasts are usually based on past experiences, learned through trial and error in training, exercises, or actual combat. Planning is a form of anticipatory adaptation—adapting actions in advance. Another form of adaptation is the use of immediate-action drills or standing operating procedures. These tools allow Marines to

react immediately in a coordinated way to a broad variety of tactical situations—they provide the basis for adaptation.

**(2) Improvisation.** The second way to adapt is to improvise—to adjust to a situation on the spur of the moment without any preparation. Improvisation requires creative, intelligent, and experienced leaders who have an intuitive appreciation for what will work and what will not. Improvisation is of critical importance to increasing speed. It requires commanders with a strong situational awareness and a firm understanding of their senior commander’s intent so that they can adjust their own actions in accordance with the higher commander’s desires.

### **e. Exploiting Success and Finishing**

The successful commander exploits any advantage aggressively and relentlessly, not once, but repeatedly, until the opportunity arises for the finishing stroke. He uses this advantage to create opportunities. The commander builds on successfully exploited advantages to create new advantage, reflecting the changing situation resulting from both friendly and enemy adaptation. Advantages don’t have to be large—small favorable circumstances exploited repeatedly and aggressively can quickly multiply into decisive advantages. In the same way, the commander exploits opportunities to create others. Victories are usually the result of aggressively exploiting some advantage or opportunity until the action becomes decisive.

Such victories are realized through development and maintenance of momentum and the successful attack of enemy critical vulnerabilities. Momentum is the increase of combat power, gained from seizing the initiative and attacking aggressively and rapidly. Once the commander decides to exploit an advantage, he makes every effort to build momentum until the offensive becomes overwhelming and the objective is achieved. He should not sacrifice momentum to preserve the alignment of advancing units and he should drive hard at gaps in the enemy defense. The commander should not waste time or combat power on enemy units that cannot jeopardize the overall mission, choosing instead to fix them with minimal forces and bypass them with his main force. The commander exploits enemy weaknesses such as tactical errors, faulty dispositions, assailable flanks, poor or no preparation, lack of support, numerical and equipment inferiority, low morale, and predictable operational patterns.

Subordinates must be accustomed through practice and training to seize opportunities on their own volition. For example, a major subordinate commander should have a complete understanding of the MEF commander's intent so that he will recognize a decisive opportunity and have the confidence to rapidly exploit the opportunity without further orders from the MEF commander. The commander exploits opportunities by conducting consolidation, exploitation, or pursuit.

Exploiting advantages without applying the finishing stroke to defeat the enemy or achieve the objective cannot be decisive. Once the commander has created the opportunity to deliver the decisive blow he must strike the enemy vigorously and relentlessly, until the enemy is defeated. At the same time, the commander must exercise judgment to ensure that the force committed to the decisive action is not unduly or unintentionally made vulnerable to enemy counteraction. Rapid and accurate assessment by the MEF commander and his major subordinate commanders is critical in determining the appropriate time and place of the decisive action.

According to MCDP 1-3,

*Tactical excellence is the hallmark of a Marine Corps leader. We fight and win in combat through our mastery of both the art and science of tactics. The art of tactics involves the creative and innovative use of maneuver warfare concepts, while the science of tactics requires skill in basic warfighting techniques and procedures. It is our responsibility as Marine leaders to work continuously to develop our own tactical proficiency and that of our Marines.*<sup>3</sup>

Understanding the concepts presented in this chapter provides the foundation for conducting expeditionary operations.

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## Part III

# The MEF in the Offense

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The offense is the decisive form of warfare. While defensive operations can do great damage to an enemy, offensive operations are the means to a decisive victory. Offensive operations are conducted to take the initiative from the enemy, gain freedom of action, and mass effects to achieve objectives. These operations impose the commander's will on the enemy. According to MCDP 1, offensive operations allow the commander to impose his will on the enemy by shattering the enemy's moral, mental, and physical cohesion. The enemy loses his ability to fight as an effective, coordinated force as Marine Corps forces generate an overwhelming tempo by conducting a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected offensive actions.

### 3001. Purpose

The offense is undertaken to gain, maintain, and exploit the initiative—thus causing the enemy to react to our actions. The focus of offensive operations is the enemy, not seizure of terrain. Even in the defense, a commander must take every opportunity to seize the initiative by offensive action. Offensive operations are conducted to—

- Destroy enemy forces and equipment.
- Deceive and divert the enemy.
- Deprive the enemy of resources.
- Gain information.
- Fix the enemy in place.
- Seize key terrain
- Disrupt enemy actions or preparations.

Successful offense operations—

- Avoid the enemy's strength and attack his weakness by massing combat power or its effects against the enemy's critical vulnerabilities.

- Isolate the enemy from his source of support, to include logistics, fires, and reinforcements.
- Strike the enemy from an unexpected direction, disrupting his plan.
- Aggressively exploit every advantage.
- Overwhelm the enemy commander's ability to observe, orient, decide, and act.
- Employ accurate and timely assessment of effects against the enemy to exploit success.

The Marine Corps' warfighting philosophy—as prescribed in MCDP-1, *Warfighting*—is offensive in nature, focuses on the threat, uses speed to seize the initiative, and surprise to degrade the enemy's ability to resist. Offensive operations require the attacker to weight the main effort with superior combat power. The requirement to concentrate and the need to have sufficient forces available to exploit success imply accepting risk elsewhere. Local superiority must be created by maneuver, speed, surprise, and economy of force.

Before conducting offensive operations, the commander seeks to discover where the enemy is most vulnerable through reconnaissance and surveillance. Shaping actions set the conditions for decisive action by disrupting the enemy's command and control, limiting his ability to apply combat power, and further exposing weaknesses in the defense. Shaping actions should place the enemy at the greatest disadvantage possible. The commander directs the battle from a position that allows him to develop a firsthand impression of the course of the battle. He provides personal leadership and inspires confidence at key points in the battle.

The fundamentals of offensive action are general rules evolved from logical and time-proven application of the principles of war to the offense. Many of the fundamentals are related and reinforce one another.

- Orient on the enemy.
- Gain and maintain contact.
- Develop the situation.
- Concentrate superior firepower at the decisive time and place.
- Achieve surprise.
- Exploit known enemy weaknesses.
- Seize or control key terrain.
- Gain and retain the initiative.

- Neutralize the enemy’s ability to react.
- Advance by fire and maneuver.
- Maintain momentum.
- Act quickly.
- Exploit success.
- Be flexible.
- Be aggressive.
- Provide for the security of the force.

## 3002. Characteristics

### a. Organization of the Battlespace

**(1) Deep Operations.** Deep operations in the offense are conducted using maneuver forces, fires, and information operations. They seek to create windows of opportunity for decisive maneuver and are designed to restrict the enemy’s freedom of action, disrupt the coherence and tempo of his operations, nullify his firepower, disrupt his command and control, interdict his supplies, isolate or destroy his main forces, and break his morale.

The enemy is most easily defeated by fighting him close and deep simultaneously while protecting the MEF rear area. Well-orchestrated deep operations, integrated with simultaneous close operations, may be executed with the goal of defeating the enemy outright or setting the conditions for successful future close operations. Deep operations enable friendly forces to choose the time, place, and method for close operations. Deep operations may include—

- Deception.
- Deep interdiction through deep fires, deep maneuver, and deep air support.
- Deep surveillance and target acquisition.
- Information operations.
- Offensive anti-air warfare.

**(2) Close Operations.** Close operations in the offense are required for decisive and lasting effects on the battlefield. The MEF commander shapes the course of the battle and takes decisive action, deciding when and where

to commit the main effort to achieve mission success. The MEF commander picks a combination of the types of offensive operations and forms of maneuver to use at the critical time and place to defeat the enemy. Commanders weight their combination of options to mass effects. For example, commanders may fix a part of the enemy force with a frontal attack by a smaller combined arms force, while maneuvering the rest of the force in an envelopment to defeat the enemy force. The reserve enters the action offensively at the proper place and moment to exploit success. In this way the reserve provides the source of additional combat power to commit at the decisive moment.

**(3) Rear Operations.** Rear area operations protect assets in the rear area to support the force. Rear area operations encompass more than just rear area security. While rear area operations provide security for personnel, materiel, and facilities in the rear area, their sole purpose is to provide uninterrupted support to the force as a whole. Rear area operations enhance a force's freedom of action while it is involved in the close and deep fight and extend the force's operational reach. The primary focus of rear area operations during the offensive is to maintain momentum and prevent the force from reaching a culminating point.

## **b. Organization of the Force**

During offensive operations, the commander will normally organize his force differently depending on which type of offensive operation he is conducting. There are four basic types of forces: *security forces*, *main body*, *reserve*, and *sustainment forces*.

**(1) Security Forces.** In the offense the commander may use security forces to:

- Gain and maintain enemy contact.
- Protect the main battle force's movement.
- Develop the situation before committing the main battle force.

Security forces are assigned cover, guard, or screen missions. Operations of security forces must be an integral part of the overall offensive plan. The element of the MEF assigned as the security forces is dependent on the factors of METT-T. Security forces are discussed in detail in Part VI, "MEF Reconnaissance and Security Operations".

**(2) Main Body.** The main body constitutes the bulk of the commander's combat power. It is prepared to respond to enemy contact with the security forces. Combat power that can be concentrated most quickly, such as fires, is brought to bear while maneuver units move into position. The main body maintains an offensive spirit throughout the battle, looking to exploit any advantageous situations.

The main body engages the enemy as early as possible unless fires are withheld to prevent the loss of surprise. Commanders make maximum use of fires to destroy and disrupt enemy formations. As the forces close, the enemy is subjected to an ever-increasing volume of fires from the main body and all supporting arms.

**(3) Reserve.** The commander uses his reserve to restore momentum to a stalled attack, defeat enemy counterattacks, and exploit success. The reserve provides the commander the flexibility to react to unforeseen circumstances. Once committed, the reserve's actions normally become the decisive operation, and every effort is made to reconstitute another reserve from units made available by the revised situation.

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

In an attack the commander generally locates his reserve to the rear of the main effort. However, it must be able to move quickly to areas where it is needed in different contingencies. This is most likely to occur if the enemy has strong counterattack forces. For heavy reserve forces, the key factor is cross-country mobility or road networks. For light forces, the key factor is the road network, if trucks are available, or the availability of landing zones for helicopterborne forces. The commander prioritizes the positioning of his reserve to counter the worst case enemy counterattack first, then to reinforce the success of the decisive operation.

**(4) Sustainment Forces.** The commander task-organizes his sustainment forces to the mission. He decentralizes the execution of sustainment support, but that support must be continuously available to the main body. This includes the use of preplanned logistics packages. Aerial resupply may also be necessary to support large-scale movements to contact or to maintain the main body's momentum. Combat trains containing fuel, ammunition, medical, and maintenance assets move with their parent unit. Fuel and ammunition stocks remain loaded on tactical vehicles in the combat trains so they can instantly move when necessary. Aviation assets may use forward operating bases (including forward arming and refuel points and rapid ground refueling sites) to reduce aircraft turnaround time. The commander will frequently find that his main supply routes become extended as the operation proceeds.

In an attack, the commander tries to position his sustainment forces well forward. From these forward locations they can sustain the attacking force, providing priority of support to the decisive operation. As the attacking force advances, sustainment forces displace forward as required to shorten the supply lines to ensure uninterrupted support to maneuver units. The size of the force a commander devotes to sustainment force security depends on the threat. A significant enemy threat requires the commander to provide a tactical combat force.

During periods of rapid movement sustainment forces may be attached to the moving or attacking force. Alternatively, sustainment forces may follow the moving or attacking force in an echeloned manner along main supply routes. Transportation and supplies to sustain the moving or attacking force become increasingly important as the operation progresses. As supply lines lengthen, the condition of lines of communications and the conduct of route and convoy security can become problems. The largest possible stocks of fuel, spare parts, and ammunition should accompany the moving or attacking force so that it does not lose momentum because of a lack of support. The offensive operation may be limited more by vehicle mechanical failures and the need for fuel than by combat losses or a lack of ammunition. Therefore, direct support maintenance support teams accompany the moving or attacking force to repair disabled vehicles or evacuate them to maintenance collection points for repair by general support maintenance units. The commander may also use helicopters to move critical supplies forward.

### 3003. Types

There are four types of offensive operations—*movement to contact*, *attack*, *exploitation*, and *pursuit*. These operations may occur in sequence, simultaneously, or independently across the depth of the battlespace. For example, a movement to contact may be so successful that it immediately leads to an exploitation, or an attack may lead directly to pursuit. (See Figure 3-1.)

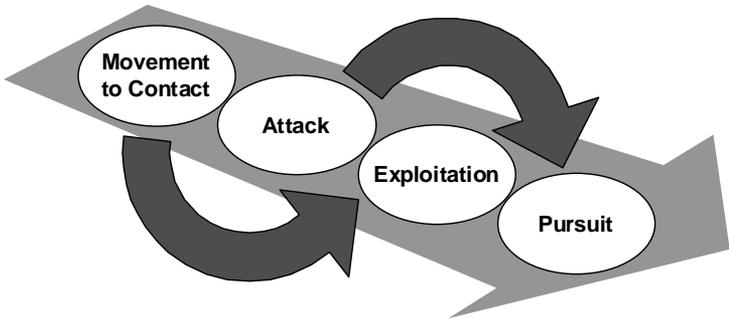


Figure 3-1. Types of offensive operations.

These types of offensive operations are rarely all performed in one campaign or in the sequence presented in this chapter. Nor are the dividing lines between the types of offensive operations as distinct in reality as they are in a doctrinal publication. The successful commander uses the appropriate type of offensive operation for his mission and situation, not hesitating to change to another type if the battle dictates. The goal is to move to exploitation and pursuit as rapidly as possible. The commander seeks to take advantage of enemy weaknesses and maneuver to a position of advantage, creating the conditions that lead to exploitation.

#### a. Movement to Contact

Movement to contact seeks to gain, or regain contact, with the enemy and develop the situation. Movement to contact helps the commander to understand the battlespace; it allows him to make initial contact with the enemy with minimum forces, thereby avoiding an extensive engagement or battle before he is prepared for decisive action. When successfully executed, it allows the commander to strike the enemy at the time and place of his

choosing. A movement to contact ends when the commander has to deploy the main body—to conduct an attack or establish a defense.

A force conducting movement to contact normally organizes in an approach march formation, with advance, flank, and rear security elements protecting the main body. (See Figure 3-2.) The main body contains the bulk of the MEF's forces. The advance force, flank, and rear security formations may consist of aviation or ground combat units (one or both as individual elements or as task-organized combined arms teams) and appropriate combat service support organizations, based on METT-T.

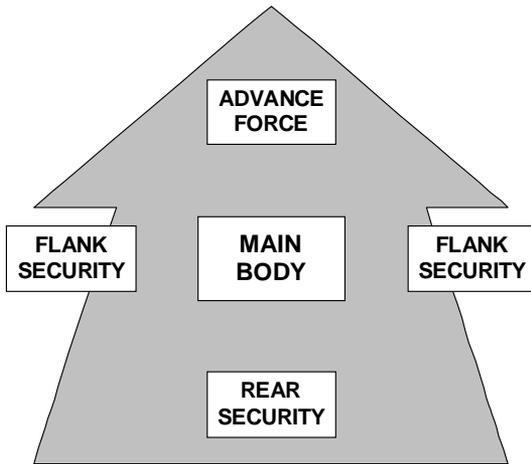


Figure 3-2. Movement to contact.

As the purpose of movement to contact is to gain contact with the enemy, the MEF commander will normally designate the advance force as the main effort. As contact with the enemy is made and the situation develops, the MEF commander has two options. If he decides that this is not the time or place to offer battle, he bypasses the enemy and the advance force remains the main effort. When bypassing an enemy unit it may be necessary to task a subordinate unit to fix or block the bypassed enemy. As the second option, if the MEF commander determines that his shaping actions have set the conditions for decisive action, he will shift the main effort—probably to the main body or a unit in the main body. During movement to contact, the MEF commander may designate all or part of the main body as the MEF reserve.

The MEF commander may use the ACE to exploit the situation as it is developed by the advance force. Aviation forces can attack enemy forces involved in a meeting engagement or fix enemy forces while the advance force makes contact, allowing the main body to maneuver without becoming decisively engaged. Aviation forces can also attack second echelon forces, limiting the enemy's ability to reinforce his first echelon or fight in depth.

Even if the MEF commander properly develops the situation during a movement to contact, he may be faced with a *meeting engagement*. Meeting engagements are clashes that take place at unexpected places and times when forces are not fully prepared for battle. A meeting engagement may result in confusion, delay, or even in the premature employment of the main body before the MEF commander has set the conditions for decisive action. The premature employment of the main body slows the MEF's tempo of operations and may cause it to lose the initiative.

When organizing his forces for movement to contact, the MEF commander considers span of control, communications, and the capabilities of the major subordinate commands. Both the GCE and the ACE can provide forces for all the formations—main body, advanced force, flank security, and rear security. The GCE is capable of gaining and maintaining physical contact with the enemy. The ACE is capable of establishing initial visual and electromagnetic contact with the enemy at extended ranges.

The MEF commander should give the major subordinate commanders the widest latitude to conduct movement to contact. This allows them the freedom to maneuver and exercise initiative in developing the situation once contact with the enemy is made. Unnecessary subdivision of the MEF's battlespace or constraints placed on the major subordinate commands for fire and maneuver within their respective AO may only slow the MEF's tempo. The MEF commander must consider airspace requirements and the capability of the Marine air command and control system during movement to contact.

The frontage assigned to the unit conducting a movement to contact must allow it sufficient room to deploy its main body, but not be so wide that large enemy forces might be inadvertently bypassed. The unit's frontage will be affected by the MEF commander's guidance on bypassing enemy forces or the requirement to clear his zone of all enemy forces. The MEF commander must ensure that the desired rate of advance is supportable by

the CSSE to ensure that he does not reach a culminating point or an unplanned operational pause.

The MEF may encounter enemy forces too small to threaten the main body and which do not require its deployment with the resulting loss of momentum. While such enemy forces may pose little threat against the ground or ACE's combat power, they may pose a serious threat to the CSSE. The MEF commander must therefore establish criteria concerning the size, nature, or type of enemy activity that the main body may bypass and how assigned follow and support forces will deal with bypassed enemy forces.

The MEF commander identifies potential danger areas where his forces may make contact with the enemy, such as likely enemy defensive locations, engagement areas, observation posts, and natural and artificial obstacles. The MEF's reconnaissance and surveillance plan must provide for coverage of these danger areas. The MEF commander must recognize the enemy's most dangerous course of action and be prepared to focus his combat power at those times and places where the MEF is most vulnerable.

Because the MEF may be engaged by the enemy's air forces well before coming into contact with the enemy's ground forces, offensive air support (close air support and air interdiction specifically) and antiair warfare functions are essential to success of the movement to contact. The ACE must gain and maintain contact with the enemy. The MEF commander may also task the ACE to conduct deep reconnaissance to determine or confirm the location of enemy reserve, follow-on, and support forces. If he has enough intelligence to target these enemy forces, he may task the ACE to conduct an attack.

The CSSE must provide the full range of combat service support during movement to contact without slowing or jeopardizing the MEF's tempo. The support must be responsive and provide only what is needed—it should not encumber movement or maneuver. This requires a fine balance between push- and pull-logistics. The CSSE must take advantage of natural pauses during the course of the MEF's movement to replenish expended resources. Support for security forces is more difficult due to their separation from the main body and the need for self-contained maintenance and supply capabilities. This may also require a greater reliance on ACE assets to ensure prompt and effective support.

The MEF commander must ensure that once contact with the enemy has been gained, that it is maintained—with whatever assets available. Aviation and ground combat assets may have to be shifted to maintain contact. The CSSE can also assist by ensuring that combat units do not reach a culminating point.

As the situation becomes clearer, the MEF commander is better able to determine how best to exploit the opportunity. Ideally, this means shifting to an attack, exploitation, or pursuit. The major subordinate commanders must be ready to support a transition from one type of offensive operation to another.

## **b. Attack**

An attack is an offensive operation characterized by coordinated movement, supported by fire, conducted to defeat, destroy, neutralize, or capture the enemy. An attack may be conducted to seize or secure terrain. Focusing combat power against the enemy with a tempo and intensity that the enemy cannot match, the commander attacks to shatter his opponent's will, disrupt his cohesion, and to gain the initiative. If an attack is successful, the enemy is no longer capable of—or willing to offer—meaningful resistance.

Attacks rarely develop exactly as planned. As long as the enemy has any freedom of action, unexpected difficulties will occur. As the attack progresses, control must become increasingly decentralized to subordinate commanders to permit them to meet the rapidly shifting situation. This is achieved through the use of the commander's intent and mission tactics. The commander sets conditions for a successful attack by attacking enemy fire support assets, command and control assets and support facilities, and front-line units. These fires protect the main effort and restrict the enemy's ability to counterattack. During the final stages of the attack, the main effort may rely primarily on organic fires to overcome remaining enemy resistance. The attack culminates in a powerful and violent assault. The commander immediately exploits his success by continuing the attack into the depth of the enemy defense to disrupt his cohesion.

Attacks can be *hasty* or *deliberate* based on the degree of preparation, planning, and coordination involved prior to execution. The distinction between hasty and deliberate attacks is a relative one.

A *hasty attack* is an attack in which the commander decides to trade preparation time for speed to exploit an opportunity. A hasty attack takes advantage of audacity, surprise, and speed to achieve the commander's objectives before the enemy can effectively respond. The commander launches a hasty attack with the forces at hand, or in immediate contact with the enemy and with little preparation before the enemy can concentrate forces or prepare an effective defense.

By necessity, hasty attacks do not employ complicated schemes of maneuver and require a minimum of coordination. Habitual support relationships, standing operating procedures, and battle drills contribute to increased tempo and the likelihood of success of the hasty attack. Unnecessary changing of the task organization of the force should be avoided to maintain momentum.

A *deliberate attack* is a type of offensive action characterized by pre-planned and coordinated employment of firepower and maneuver to close with and destroy the enemy. Deliberate attacks usually include the coordinated use of all available resources. Deliberate attacks are used when the enemy cannot be defeated with a hasty attack or there is no readily apparent advantage that must be rapidly exploited.

Main and supporting efforts and the forward positioning of resources are planned and coordinated throughout the battlespace to ensure the optimal application of the force's combat power. The commander must position follow-on forces and the reserve to best sustain the momentum of the attack. Deliberate attacks may include time for rehearsals and refinement of attack plans. The commander must weigh the advantages of a deliberate attack with respect to the enemy's ability to create or improve his defenses, develop his intelligence picture, or take counteraction. Commanders conduct various types of attack to achieve different effects—

**(1) Spoiling Attack.** A spoiling attack is a tactical maneuver employed to seriously impair a hostile attack while the enemy is in the process of forming or assembling for an attack. A spoiling attack is usually an offensive action conducted in the defense. Part IV, "The MEF in the Defense", contains a detailed discussion of spoiling attacks in the defense.

**(2) Counterattack.** A counterattack is a limited-objective attack conducted by part or all of a defending force to prevent the enemy from

attaining the objectives of his attack. It may be conducted to regain lost ground, destroy enemy advance units, and wrest the initiative from the enemy. It may be the precursor to resuming offensive operations. Part IV contains a detailed discussion of counterattacks in the defense.

**(3) Feint.** A feint is a limited-objective attack made at a place other than that of the main effort with the aim of distracting the enemy's attention away from the main effort. A feint is a supporting attack that involves contact with the enemy. A feint must be sufficiently strong to confuse the enemy as to the location of the main attack. Ideally, a feint causes the enemy to commit forces to the diversion and away from the main effort. A unit conducting a feint usually attacks on a wider front than normal, with a consequent reduction in mass and depth. A unit conducting a feint normally keeps only a minimal reserve to deal with unexpected developments.

**(4) Demonstration.** A demonstration is an attack or a show of force on a front where a decision is not sought. Its aim is to deceive the enemy. A demonstration, like a feint, is a supporting attack. A demonstration, unlike a feint, does not make contact with the enemy. The commander executes a demonstration by an actual or simulated massing of combat power, troop movements, or some other activity designed to indicate the preparations for or beginning of an attack at a point other than the main effort. Demonstrations are used frequently in amphibious operations to draw enemy forces away from the actual landing beaches or to fix them in place. Demonstrations and feints increase the enemy's confusion, while conserving combat power for the main and supporting efforts.

**(5) Reconnaissance in Force.** A reconnaissance in force is a deliberate attack made to obtain information and to locate and test enemy dispositions, strengths, and reactions. It is used when knowledge of the enemy is vague and there is insufficient time or resources to develop the situation through other means. While the primary purpose of a reconnaissance in force is to gain information, the commander must be prepared to exploit opportunity. Reconnaissance in force usually develops information more rapidly and in more detail than other reconnaissance methods. If the commander must develop the enemy situation along a broad front, reconnaissance in force may consist of strong probing actions to determine the enemy situation at selected points.

The commander may conduct reconnaissance in force as a means of keeping pressure on the defender by seizing key terrain and uncovering enemy weaknesses. The reconnoitering force must be of a size and strength to cause the enemy to react strongly enough to disclose his locations, dispositions, strength, planned fires, and planned use of the reserve. Since a reconnaissance in force is conducted when knowledge of the enemy is vague, a task-organized combined arms force normally is used. Deciding whether to reconnoiter in force, the commander considers—

- His present information on the enemy and the importance of additional information.
- Efficiency and speed of other intelligence collection assets.
- The extent to which his future plans may be divulged by the reconnaissance in force.
- The possibility that the reconnaissance in force may lead to a decisive engagement that the commander does not desire.

**(6) Raid.** A raid is an attack, usually small scale, involving a penetration of hostile territory for a specific purpose other than seizing and holding terrain. It ends with the planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. The organization and composition of the raid force are tailored to the mission. Raids are characterized by surprise and swift, precise, and bold action. Raids are typically conducted to—

- Destroy enemy installations and facilities.
- Disrupt enemy command and control or support activities.
- Divert enemy attention.
- Secure information.

Raids may be conducted in the defense as spoiling attacks to disrupt the enemy's preparations for attack; during delaying operations to further delay or disrupt the enemy; or in conjunction with other offensive operations to confuse the enemy, divert his attention, or disrupt his operations. Raids require detailed planning, preparations, and special training.

A single attack that results in the complete destruction or defeat of the enemy is rare. The commander must capitalize on the resulting disruption of the enemy's defenses through exploitation to reap the benefits of a successful attack.

### **c. Exploitation**

Exploitation is an offensive operation that usually follows a successful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth. The exploitation extends the initial success of the attack by preventing the enemy from disengaging, withdrawing, and reestablishing an effective defense. The exploitation force expands enemy destruction through unrelenting pressure thus weakening his will to resist. The exploitation is characterized by initiative, boldness, and the unhesitating employment of uncommitted forces.

The commander must be prepared to exploit the success of every attack without delay. In the hasty attack, the force in contact normally continues the attack, transitioning to exploitation. In the deliberate attack, the commander's principal tool for the exploitation is normally the reserve. At the MEF level, aviation forces may support the reserve, or be additionally tasked as the exploitation force. The commander retains only those reserves necessary to ensure his flexibility of operation, continued momentum in the advance, and likely enemy responses to the exploitation. The reserve is generally positioned where it can exploit the success of the main effort or supporting efforts. Exploitation forces execute bold, aggressive, and rapid operations using the commander's intent and mission tactics.

The decision to commence the exploitation requires considerable judgment, intuition, and situational awareness by the commander. Committing the exploitation force prematurely or too late may fail to exploit the opportunity presented by a successful attack. Conditions favorable for an exploitation may include—

- Increased number of enemy prisoners of war.
- Absence of organized defenses.
- Absence of accurate enemy massed direct and indirect fires.
- Loss of enemy cohesion upon contact.
- Capture, desertion, or absence of enemy commanders and senior staff officers.

Typical objectives for the exploitation force include command posts, reserves, seizure of key terrain, and the destruction of combat support and service support units deep in the enemy's rear. The destruction or defeat of these objectives further disrupt and disorganize the enemy, preventing

reconstitution of the defense or the enemy's force. The commander must be prepared to assess the effects of his exploitation and determine when the time is at hand to commence the pursuit of the enemy.

#### **d. Pursuit**

A pursuit is an offensive operation designed to catch or cut off a hostile force attempting to escape, with the aim of destroying it. Pursuits often develop from successful exploitation operations in which the enemy defenses begin to disintegrate. A pursuit may also be initiated when the enemy has lost his ability to fight effectively and attempts to withdraw.

Since the conditions that allow for pursuit can seldom be predicted, a pursuit force is not normally established ahead of time. The commander must quickly designate appropriate forces to conduct and support pursuit operations or the exploitation force may continue as the pursuit force. A pursuit is normally made up of a direct pressure force and an encircling force. (See Figure 3-3.)

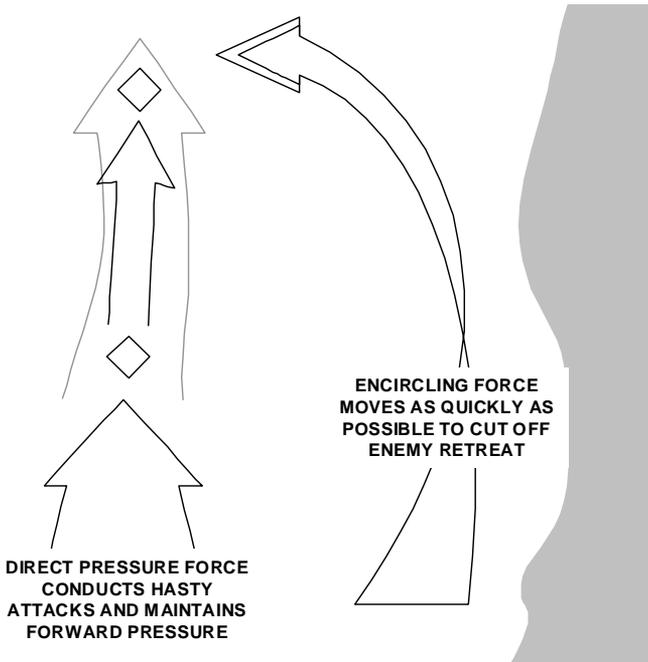


Figure 3-3. Pursuit.

These forces are similar to a hammer and anvil. The direct pressure force is like the hammer. It is usually a powerful maneuver force that maintains continuous contact with the retreating enemy, driving the enemy before them. The encircling force serves as the anvil. The encircling force requires sufficient mobility and speed to get itself into position ahead of or on the flank of the fleeing enemy to halt and fix the enemy in place. Aviation forces are particularly well suited to act as the encircling force. By using its superior tactical mobility and agility in concert with its potent firepower, aviation forces can destroy enemy forces, interdict lines of retreat, and add to the demoralization of the enemy force.

Pursuits are pushed to the utmost limits of endurance of troops, equipment, and supplies. If the pursuit force is required to pause for any reason, the enemy has an opportunity to break contact, reorganize, and establish organized defenses. Pursuit, like exploitation, must therefore be conducted relentlessly. Highly mobile and versatile combat service support forces are particularly critical to sustaining a relentless pursuit and preventing the MEF from reaching its culminating point before the enemy is completely defeated.

### **3004. Forms of Maneuver**

The forms of offensive maneuver are the basic techniques a force conducting offensive operations uses to gain advantage over the enemy. Each form of maneuver has a resultant effect on the enemy. The MEF commander chooses the form of maneuver that fully exploits all the dimensions of the battlespace and best accomplishes his mission. He generally chooses one of these as a foundation upon which to build a course of action.

The MEF commander organizes and employs the ACE, GCE, or CSSE to best support the chosen form of maneuver. The GCE and ACE are the two combat arms of the MEF. They execute tactical actions to support or accomplish the MEF commander's mission. Either can be used as a maneuver force or a source of fires as the MEF commander applies combined arms. The MEF commander may task-organize aviation and ground combat units, along with combat service support units, under a single commander to execute the form of offensive maneuver selected. Aviation forces may be comprised of fixed wing aircraft, rotary wing aircraft, or a combination with GCE and CSSE units attached or in support.

## a. Frontal Attack

A frontal attack is an offensive maneuver in which the main action is directed against the front of the enemy forces. It is used to rapidly overrun or destroy a weak enemy force or fix a significant portion of a larger enemy force in place over a broad front to support a flanking attack or envelopment. It is generally the least preferred form of maneuver because it strikes the enemy where he is the strongest. (See Figure 3-4.) It is normally used when commanders possess overwhelming combat power and the enemy is at a clear disadvantage.

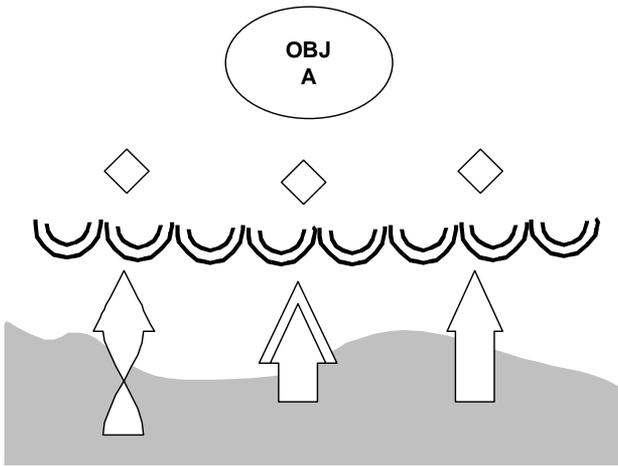


Figure 3-4. Frontal attack.

For deliberate attacks, the frontal attack may be the most costly form of maneuver since it exposes the attacker to the concentrated fires of the defender while limiting the effectiveness of the attacker's own fires. As the most direct form of maneuver, however, the frontal attack is useful for overwhelming light defenses, covering forces, or disorganized enemy forces.

Frontal attacks may be used by supporting efforts to fix the enemy in place and enable the main effort to maneuver to a position of advantage during an envelopment or a flanking attack. A frontal attack can create a gap through which the attacking force can conduct a penetration. Frontal attacks are often used together with feints and demonstrations. Aviation forces and supporting arms are often used to create gaps with fires in the enemy's front or to prevent or delay enemy reinforcements reaching the front lines.

## b. Flanking Attack

A flanking attack is a form of offensive maneuver directed at the flank of an enemy force. (See Figure 3-5.) A flank is the right or left side of a military formation and is not oriented toward the enemy. It is usually not as strong in terms of forces or fires as is the front of a military formation. A flank may be created by the attacker through the use of fires or by a successful penetration. It is similar to an envelopment but generally conducted on a shallower axis. Such an attack is designed to defeat the enemy force while minimizing the effect of the enemy's frontally oriented combat power. Flanking attacks are normally conducted with the main effort directed at the flank of the enemy. Usually, there is a supporting effort that engages by fire and maneuver the enemy force's front while the main effort maneuvers to attack the enemy's flank. This supporting effort diverts the enemy's attention from the threatened flank. It is often used for a hasty attack or meeting engagement in which speed and simplicity are paramount to maintaining battle tempo and, ultimately, the initiative.

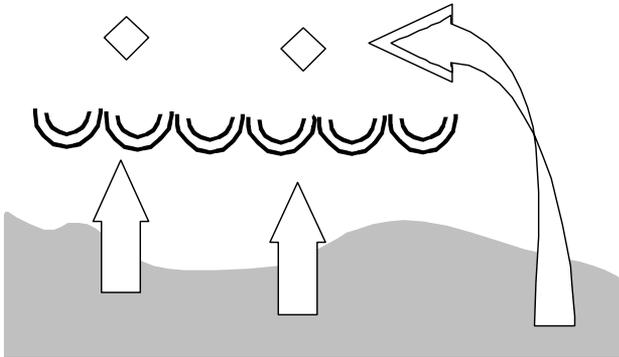


Figure 3-5. Flanking attack.

## c. Envelopment

An envelopment is a form of offensive maneuver by which the attacker bypasses the enemy's principal defensive positions to secure objectives to the enemy's rear. (See Figures 3-6 and 3-7.) The enemy's defensive positions may be bypassed using ground, waterborne, or vertical

envelopment. An envelopment compels the defender to fight on the ground of the attacker's choosing. It requires surprise and superior mobility relative to the enemy. The operational reach and speed of aviation forces, coupled with their ability to rapidly mass effects on the enemy make them an ideal force to conduct an envelopment. An envelopment is designed to:

- Strike the enemy where he is weakest (critical vulnerabilities).
- Strike the enemy at an unexpected place.
- Attack the enemy rear.
- Avoid the enemy's strengths.
- Disrupt the enemy's command and control.
- Disrupt the enemy's logistics effort.
- Destroy or disrupt the enemy's fire support assets.
- Sever the enemy's lines of communications.
- Minimize friendly casualties.

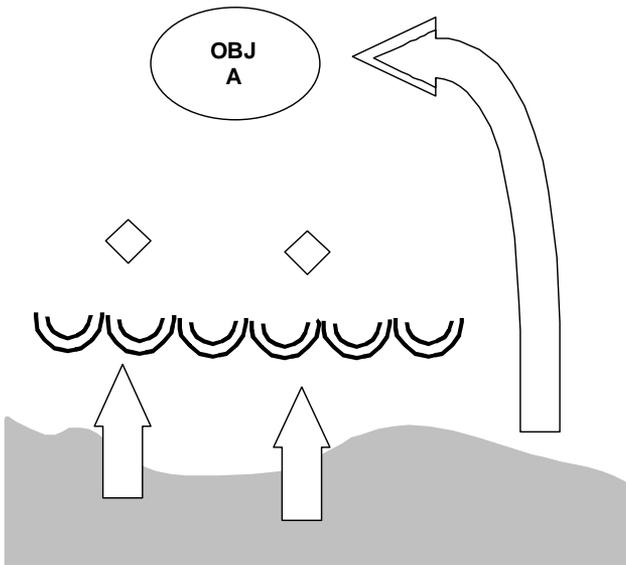


Figure 3-6. Single envelopment.

When enveloping, the commander applies strength against weakness by maneuvering the main effort around or over an enemy's main defenses. Envelopments normally require a supporting effort to fix the enemy, prevent his escape, and reduce his ability to react against the main effort.

They fix the enemy by forcing him to fight in multiple directions simultaneously or by deceiving him regarding the location, timing, or existence of the main effort. Supporting efforts must be of sufficient strength to ensure these tasks are successful, as the success of the attack is often dependent on the effects achieved by the supporting effort.

An envelopment is conducted at sufficient depth so that the enemy does not have time to reorient his defenses before the commander concentrates his force for the attack on the objective. Because of their ability to rapidly mass, aviation forces are particularly well suited to function as the enveloping force or to enable the success of the enveloping force.

The commander may choose to conduct a double envelopment. Double envelopments are designed to force the enemy to fight in two or more directions simultaneously to meet the converging axis of the attack. It may lead to the encirclement of the enemy force so the commander must be prepared to contain and defeat any break out attempts. The commander selects multiple objectives to the rear of the enemy's defense and the enveloping forces use different routes to attack, seize, or secure those objectives.

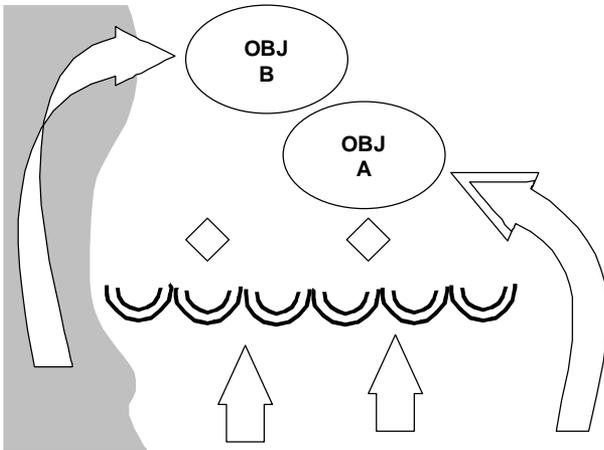


Figure 3-7. Double envelopment.

#### **d. Turning Movement**

A turning movement is a form of offensive maneuver in which the attacker passes around or over the enemy's principal defensive positions to secure

objectives deep in the enemy's rear. (See Figure 3-8.) Normally, the main effort executes the turning movement as the supporting effort fixes the enemy in position. A turning movement is different than an envelopment. Unlike an envelopment, the turning force usually operates at such distances from the fixing force that mutual support is unlikely. Therefore, the turning force must be capable of operating independently.

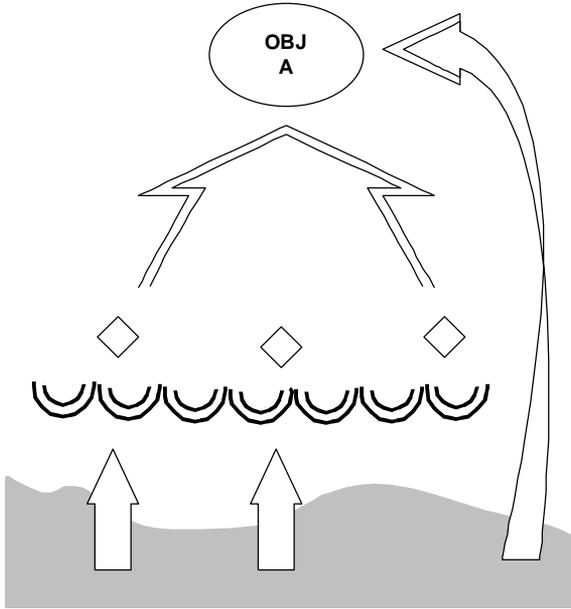


Figure 3-8. Turning movement.

The goal of a turning movement is to force the enemy to abandon his position or reposition major forces to meet the threat. Once “turned” the enemy loses his advantage of fighting from prepared positions on ground of his choosing. Typical objectives of the main effort in a turning movement may include:

- Critical logistics sites.
- Command and control nodes.
- Lines of communication.

Using operational maneuver from the sea, the MEF is particularly well-suited to conduct a turning movement for the joint force commander. The

ACE's speed and agility allow it to mass at the necessary operational depth to support the MEF commander's plan.

### e. Infiltration

Infiltration is a form of maneuver in which forces move covertly through or into an enemy area to attack positions in the enemy's rear. This movement is made, either by small groups or by individuals, at extended or irregular intervals. Forces move over, through, or around enemy positions without detection to assume a position of advantage over the enemy. (See Figure 3-9.)

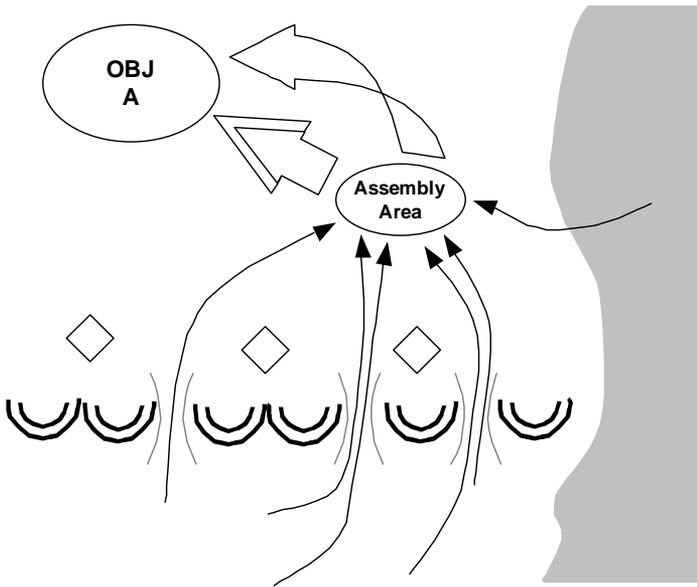


Figure 3-9. Infiltration.

Infiltration is normally conducted in conjunction with other forms of maneuver. The commander orders an infiltration to move all or part of his force through gaps in the enemy's defense to—

- Achieve surprise.
- Attack enemy positions from the flank or rear.
- Occupy a position from which to support the main attack by fire.
- Secure key terrain.

- Conduct ambushes and raids in the enemy's rear area to harass and disrupt his command and control and support activities.
- Cut off enemy forward units.

Infiltrations normally take advantage of limited visibility, rough terrain, or unoccupied or unobserved areas. These conditions often allow undetected movement of small elements when the movement of the entire force would present greater risks. The commander may elect to conduct a demonstration, feint, or some other form of deception to divert the enemy's attention from the area to be infiltrated.

To increase control, speed, and the ability to mass combat power, a force infiltrates by the largest possible units compatible with the need for stealth, enemy capabilities and speed. Infiltrating forces may depend heavily on aviation forces for aerial resupply and close air support.

The infiltrating force may be required to conduct a linkup or series of linkups after infiltrating in order to assemble for its subsequent mission. Infiltration requires extremely detailed and accurate information about terrain and enemy dispositions and activities. The plan for infiltration must be simple, clear, and carefully coordinated.

## **f. Penetration**

A penetration is a form of offensive maneuver in which an attacking force seeks to rupture the enemy's defense on a narrow front to disrupt the defensive system. Penetrations are used when enemy flanks are not assailable or time, terrain, or the enemy's disposition does not permit the employment of another form of maneuver. Successful penetrations create assailable flanks and provide access to the enemy's rear. A penetration generally occurs in three stages:

- Rupturing the position.
- Widening the gap.
- Seizing the objective.

A penetration is accomplished by concentrating overwhelmingly superior combat power on a narrow front and in depth. As the attacking force ruptures the enemy's defenses, units must be tasked to secure the shoulders of the breach and ultimately widening the gap for follow-on units.

Rupturing the enemy position and widening the gap are not in themselves decisive. The attacker must exploit the rupture by attacking into the enemy's rear or attacking laterally to roll up the enemy's positions. (See Figure 3-10.) The shock action and mobility of a mechanized force, in conjunction with aviation forces, are useful in rupturing the enemy's position and exploiting that rupture.

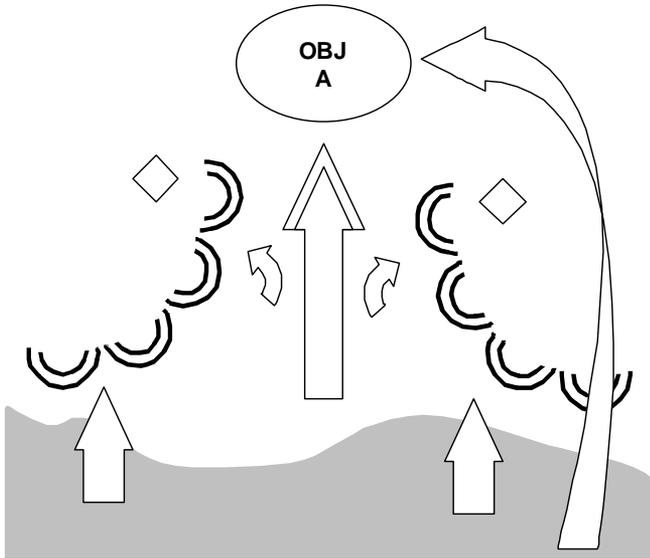


Figure 3-10. Penetration.

The commander may conduct multiple penetrations. In such cases, the exploitation forces may converge upon a single, deep objective or seize independent objectives. When it is impracticable to sustain more than one penetration, the commander generally exploits the one enjoying the greatest success. Due to their inherent flexibility and ability to rapidly mass effects, aviation forces are well suited to the role of an exploitation force or to enable the success of the exploitation force. Because the force conducting the penetration is vulnerable to flanking attack, it must move rapidly and follow-on forces must be close behind to secure and widen the shoulders of the breach.

Offensive operations emphasize the maximum application of combat power, combined with bold maneuver and the prompt exploitation of success. A

successful commander selects the form of maneuver, based on the factors of METT-T, which allows him to strike the enemy from an unexpected direction during movement to contact or the attack. The resulting disruption of the enemy's defense allows the commander to exploit this success and rapidly transition to the pursuit and ultimate defeat of the enemy.

### **3005. Future Offensive Operations**

Expeditionary maneuver warfare and emerging technologies will have a major impact on how the Marine Corps will conduct offensive operations in the future. New information technologies will allow the commander to share his operational design and situational awareness with his subordinates much faster and clearer than in the past. All commanders will share a common operational picture, specifically tailored for their echelon of command. This situational awareness, coupled with a common operating picture will allow commanders to synchronize the actions of their forces, assess the effects of their operations, and make rapid adjustments to the plan as necessary. Subordinate commanders will have the same situational awareness as their commander allowing them to exercise their initiative to meet the commander's intent without waiting for direction from their higher headquarters. This increased ability to fuse information, determine its significance, and exploit the resulting opportunities will help to maintain the initiative and generate tempo.

New doctrine, organizations, and training based on evolving tactics and equipment will allow commanders to mass the effects of long range fires and agile maneuver, rather than massing forces to deliver the decisive stroke. New intelligence collection and surveillance technologies will allow the commander to accurately and rapidly locate the enemy and will reduce the need to conduct costly and time consuming movements to contact or meeting engagements. New target acquisition equipment and fire support command and control systems will increase responsiveness and enable emerging "sensor to shooter" technologies.

Expeditionary maneuver warfare and emerging technologies will enable the MAGTF commander to conduct simultaneous operations across the battlespace to defeat specific enemy capabilities. The effects of these operations will present the enemy with multiple, simultaneous dilemmas for the MAGTF commander to exploit.

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## Part IV

# The MEF in the Defense

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The MEF conducts defensive operations, in combination with offensive operations, to defeat an enemy attack. During the early days of the Korean War (1950-53) the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade (Provisional) conducted defensive operations along the Pusan Perimeter, buying time for the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to embark and deploy to Korea where it conducted an amphibious assault at Inchon to kick off the United Nation's long awaited offensive.

Defensive operations are conducted to:

- Counter surprise action by the enemy.
- Cause an enemy attack to fail.
- Gain time.
- Concentrate combat power elsewhere.
- Increase the enemy's vulnerability by forcing him to concentrate his forces.
- Attrite or fix the enemy as a prelude to offensive operations.
- Retain decisive terrain or deny a vital area to the enemy.
- Prepare to resume the offensive.

Forward deployed or early arriving combat forces may conduct defensive operations in theater to protect the force during the build-up of combat power. During initial entry, the MEF may not be capable of conducting offensive operations to defeat an enemy rapidly. A classic example was the defensive operations conducted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division on Guadalcanal in 1942. These defensive operations allowed aircraft to operate from Henderson Field. It was not until four months after the initial landing that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division and Army units could conduct offensive operations to secure the island. Initial MEF forces may be assigned a mission to defend follow-on forces, air bases, and seaports in the lodgment area to provide time for the joint force commander to build sufficient combat power to support future operations. Under this condition the MEF must ensure

sufficient combat power is available to deter or defend successfully while the buildup continues.

As a supporting effort during offensive operations, the MEF may be assigned to conduct defensive operations such as economy-of-force missions. This could be accomplished using air assault or amphibious forces until a larger force could link up or composite.

In keeping with the single battle concept, the preferred method is to conduct operations simultaneously across the depth and space of the assigned battlespace; however it is recognized this may dictate defensive operations in some areas. The MEF commander and his staff will continuously make recommendations to the Marine Corps component commander and joint force commander on the proper employment of Marine forces in any type of defensive operations.

## **4001. Purpose**

The purpose of defensive operations is to defeat an enemy attack. The MEF defends in order to gain sufficient strength to attack. Although offensive action is generally the decisive form of combat, it may be necessary for the MEF to conduct defensive operations when there is a 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. Defensive operations require precise synchronization since the defender is constantly seeking to regain the initiative. An effective defense consists of—

- Combined use of fire and maneuver to blunt the enemy's momentum.
- Speed that facilitates transition of friendly forces to the offense.
- Reducing enemy options while simultaneously increasing friendly options, thereby seizing the initiative.
- Forcing unplanned enemy culmination, gaining the initiative for friendly forces, and creating opportunities to shift to the offensive.

While the defense can deny victory to the enemy, it rarely results in victory for the defender. In many cases, however, the defense can be stronger than

the offense. For example, favorable and familiar terrain, friendly civilian populations, and interior lines may prompt a commander to assume the defense to counter the advantages held by a superior enemy force. The attacking enemy usually chooses the time and place he will strike the defender. The defender uses his advantages of prepared defensive positions, concentrated firepower, obstacles, and barriers to slow the attacker's advance and disrupt the flow of his assault. Marines exploited these advantages in the defense of the Khe Sanh Combat Base, Republic of South Vietnam during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Using aggressive defensive tactics and well-placed obstacles that were supported by responsive and continuous fires, the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines (Reinforced) destroyed two North Vietnamese Army divisions.

While on the defense, the commander conducts shaping actions, such as attacking enemy forces echeloned in depth, essential enemy sustainment capabilities, or moves his own forces and builds up fuel and ammunition to support future offensive operations. These shaping actions help to set the conditions for decisive action in the defense such as the defeat of the enemy's main effort, destruction of a critical enemy command and control node, or a counterattack as the force transitions to offensive operations.

## **4002. Characteristics**

The objective of the defense is to force the enemy to reach his culminating point without achieving his objectives, to rapidly gain and maintain the initiative for friendly forces, and to create opportunities to shift to the offense. The integrity of the defense depends on maneuver and counterattack, as well as on the successful defense of key positions. Early identification of the enemy's committed units and direction of attack allow the defense time to react. Security forces, intelligence units, special operations forces, and aviation elements conducting deep operations will be the MEF's first sources of this information.

Command and control in the defense differs from the offense. Defensive operations require closer coordination, thus commanders tend to monitor the battle in more detail. Situational awareness and assessment are difficult making identification of conditions for the resumption of the offense equally difficult.

During the defense, commanders shift their main effort to contain the enemy's attack until they can take the initiative themselves. This requires the adjustment of sectors, shifting priority of fires, repeated commitment and reconstitution of reserves, and modification of the original plan. To deny the enemy passage through a vital area, commanders may order a force to occupy a defensive position on key terrain. They also might leave a unit in position behind the enemy or give it a mission that entails a high risk of entrapment. During operations in a noncontiguous AO, units will routinely be separated from adjacent units and may be encircled by the enemy. Defending units may be unintentionally cut off from friendly forces. Whenever an unintentional encirclement occurs, the encircled commander who understands his mission and his higher commander's intent can continue to contribute to the mission of his higher commander.

An encircled force acts rapidly to preserve itself. The senior commander assumes control of all encircled elements and assesses the all-around defensive posture of the force. He decides whether the next higher commander wants the force to break out or to defend its position. He reorganizes and consolidates expeditiously. If the force is free to break out, it should do so before the enemy has time to block escape routes. Breaking out might mean movement of the entire encircled force, where one part is attacking and the other defending. The entire formation moves through planned escape routes created by the attacking force. If the force cannot break out, the senior commander continues to defend while planning for and assisting in a link-up with a relieving force.

Reserves preserve the commanders' flexibility and provide the offensive capability of the defense. They provide the source of combat power that commanders can commit at the decisive moment. The 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 organize his reserve so it can repeatedly attack, regroup, move, and attack again. Commanders may use reserves to counterattack the enemy's main effort to expedite his defeat, or they may elect to exploit enemy vulnerabilities, such as exposed flanks or support units and unprotected forces in depth. Reserves also provide a hedge against uncertainty. Reserves may reinforce forward defensive operations, block penetrating enemy forces, conduct counterattacks, or react

to a rear area threat. Reserves must have multiple counterattack routes and plans that anticipate enemy's scheme of maneuver.

Helicopterborne forces can respond rapidly as reserves. On suitable terrain, they can reinforce positions to the front or on a flank. In a threatened sector, they are positioned in depth and can respond to tactical emergencies. These forces are also suitable for swift attack against enemy airborne units landing in the rear area; however once committed they have limited mobility.

Timing is critical to counterattacks. Commanders anticipate the circumstances that require committing the reserves. At that moment, they seek to wrest the initiative from the attacker. They commit their reserves with an accurate understanding of movement and deployment times. Committed too soon, reserves may not have the desired effect or may not be available later for a more dangerous contingency. Committed too late, they may be ineffective. Once commanders commit their reserves, they should immediately begin regenerating another reserve from uncommitted forces or from forces in less threatened sectors.

During battle, protection of rear areas is necessary to ensure the defender's freedom of maneuver and continuity of operations. Because fighting in the rear area can divert combat power from the main effort, commanders carefully weigh the need for such diversions against the possible consequences and prepare to take calculated risks in rear areas. To make such decisions wisely, commanders require accurate information to avoid late or inadequate responses and to guard against overreacting to exaggerated reports.

Threats to the rear area arise throughout the battle and require the repositioning of forces and facilities. When possible, defending commanders contain enemy forces in their rear areas, using a combination of passive and active defensive measures. While commanders can never lose focus on their primary objectives, they assess risks throughout their battle space and commit combat power where necessary to preserve their ability to accomplish the mission.

Commanders use force protection measures to preserve the health, readiness, and combat capabilities of their force. They achieve the effects of protection through skillful combinations of offense and defense, maneuver

and firepower, and active and passive measures. As they conduct operations, they receive protective benefits from deep and close operations as they disrupt the attacker's tempo and blind the enemy reconnaissance efforts. Defenders also employ passive measures such as camouflage, terrain masking, and operations security to frustrate the enemy's ability to find them. Commanders should remain aware that their forces are at risk. They should adjust their activities to maintain the ability to protect their forces from attack at vulnerable points.

Weapons of mass destruction present defenders with great risks. These weapons can create gaps, destroy or disable units, and obstruct the defender's maneuver. Commanders anticipate the effects of such weapons in their defensive plans. They provide for dispersed positions for forces in depth, coordinating the last-minute concentration of units on positions with multiple routes of approach and withdrawal. They also direct appropriate training and implement protective measures.

### **a. General Characteristics**

The general characteristics for MEF defensive operations are *preparation, security, disruption, mass and concentration, flexibility, maneuver, and operations in depth.*

**(1) Preparation.** The MEF commander organizes his defenses on terrain of his choosing. He capitalizes on the advantage of fighting from prepared positions by organizing his forces for movement and mutual support. He also conducts rehearsals to include use of the reserve and counterattack forces.

The MEF commander organizes his defenses in depth. Depth allows the MEF to push reconnaissance and surveillance forward of defended positions to detect enemy movements and to deny enemy reconnaissance. Depth allows the defense to—

- Absorb enemy attacks without suffering a breakthrough.
- Provides mutually supporting defensive positions.
- Allows the defender to canalize enemy forces into preset engagement areas.

**(2) Security.** Security preserves the combat power of the force, allowing future employment at a time and choosing of the MEF. MEF security is achieved through the judicious use of deception that denies the enemy knowledge of friendly strengths and weaknesses.

The MEF plans passive measures such as dispersion, camouflage, hardening of defensive sites and facilities, barrier and obstacle plans, creation of dummy installations, and the establishment of mutually supporting positions. The MEF plans active measures such as conducting antiarmor and air defense operations and coordinating plans for the emplacement and security of patrols, observation posts, and reaction forces. The MEF may also use physical means such as a covering force in the security area to delay and disrupt enemy attacks early before they can be fully coordinated.

**(3) Disruption.** The MEF seeks to disrupt the attacker's tempo and synchronization by countering his initiative and preventing him from massing overwhelming combat power. Disruption also affects the enemy's will to continue the attack by—

- Defeating or deceiving enemy reconnaissance and surveillance.
- Separating the enemy's forces, isolating his units, and breaking up his formations so that they cannot fight as part of an integrated whole.
- Interrupting the enemy's fire support, logistics support, and command and control.

**(4) Mass and Concentration.** The MEF masses the effects of overwhelming combat power at the point and time of choice. Mass and concentration, while facilitating local superiority at a decisive point, may mean accepting risk in other areas.

The MEF must consider the collective employment of fires, maneuver, security forces, and reserve forces to mitigate this risk and if necessary trade terrain for time in order to concentrate forces. The MEF must ensure fire support assets and fire support coordination is synchronized within the overall concept of defense. This includes assignment of priority of fires, coordination of the targeting process, use of target acquisition assets, and allocation of munitions.

**(5) Flexibility.** Defensive operations epitomize flexible planning and agile execution. While the attacker initially decides where and when combat will take place, agility and maneuver allow the defender to strike back effectively. Flexibility enables the MEF to rapidly shift the main effort; thereby constantly presenting the attacker with a coordinated, well-synchronized defense. Flexibility is enhanced by coordinating and ensuring continued sustainment to the MEF. Sustainment not only promotes flexibility but aids in the ability of the MEF to maneuver, mass fires, and concentrate forces when required. The MEF coordinates sustainment issues such as availability of forces, AO, infrastructure, host nation support, sustainment bases, and basing agreements with the Marine Corps component.

**(6) Maneuver.** Maneuver allows the MEF to take full advantage of the battlespace and to mass and concentrate when desirable. Maneuver, through movement in combination with fire, allows the MEF to achieve a position of advantage over the enemy to accomplish the mission. It also encompasses defensive actions such as security and rear area operations.

**(7) Operations in Depth.** Simultaneous application of combat power throughout the battlespace improves the chances for success while minimizing friendly casualties. Quick, violent, and simultaneous action throughout the depth of the defender's battlespace 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. Synchronization of close, rear, and deep operations facilitates MEF mission success.

The ability of the MEF to control and influence operations throughout the depth of the battlespace prevents enemy forces freedom of movement. Regardless of the proximity or separation of various elements, MEF defense is seen as a continuous whole. The MEF fights 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.** The MEF designs 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 combat service support. 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 counterbattery fire, 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 MEF may do this in several ways. Often, the MEF will fight a series of engagements to halt or defeat enemy forces. This requires designation of a main effort, synchronization to support it, and finally a shift 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 MEF time and space in which to react to the enemy.

Reserves conduct operations throughout the defense and may require continual regeneration. They give the MEF 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 the MEF freedom of action by preventing disruption of command and control, 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. Initially, close and rear operations overlap due to the necessity to protect the buildup of combat power. Later, 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. The MEF assesses threat capabilities, decides where risk will be accepted, and then assigns 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.

To minimize the vulnerability of rear operations, command and control and support facilities in the rear area must be redundant and dispersed. Air defense elements provide defense in depth by taking positions to cover air avenues of approach and vital assets. When rear battle response forces are insufficient, tactical combat forces prepare to respond rapidly against rear area threats and prepare to move to their objectives by multiple routes.

## **b. Organization of the Battlespace**

During defensive operations, the commander organizes his battlespace into three areas in which the defending force performs specific functions. (See

Figure 4-1.) These areas can be further divided into sectors. A defensive sector is an area assigned to a subordinate commander in which he is provided the maximum latitude to accomplish assigned tasks in order to conduct defensive operations. The size and nature of a sector depends on the situation and the factors of METT-T. Commanders of defensive sectors can assign their subordinates their own sector. The three areas are:

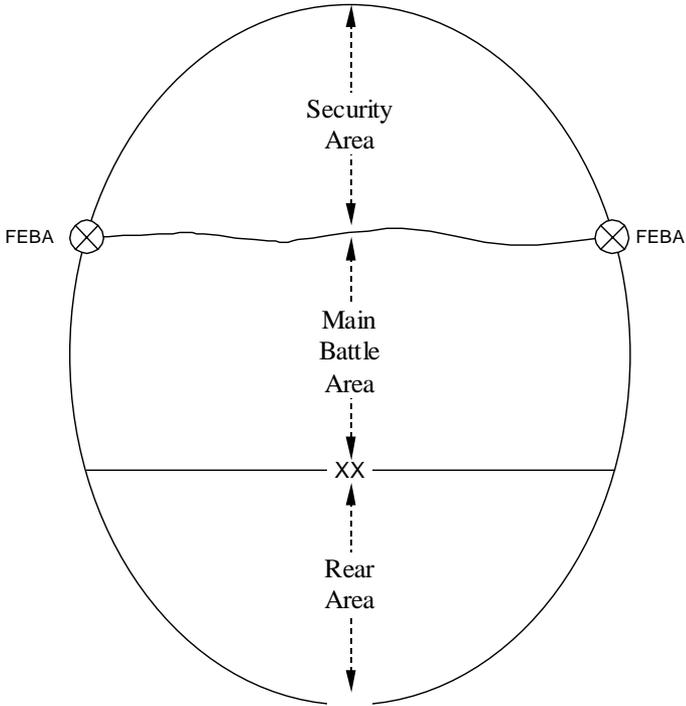


Figure 4-1. Organization of the battlespace.

**(1) Security Area.** The security area is that area that begins at the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) and extends as far to the front and flanks as security forces are deployed, normally to the forward boundary of the AO. Forces in the security area conduct reconnaissance to furnish information on the enemy and delay, deceive, and disrupt the enemy. The commander adds depth to the defense by extending the security area as far forward as is tactically feasible. For more information on security operations see Part VI, “MEF Reconnaissance and Security Operations.”

Actions in the security area are designed to cause the enemy to prematurely deploy into their attack formations and disrupt the enemy's plan of attack. Slowing the enemy's attack enables our forces, particularly Marine aviation, to strike the enemy critical vulnerabilities (i.e., movement, resupply, fire support, and command and control).

**(2) Main Battle Area.** The main battle area is that portion of the battlespace in which the commander conducts close operations to defeat the enemy. Normally, the main battle area extends rearward from the FEBA to the rear boundary of the command's subordinate units. The commander positions forces throughout the main battle area to defeat, destroy, or contain enemy assaults. Reserves may be employed in the main battle area to destroy enemy forces, reduce penetrations, or regain terrain. The greater the depth of the main battle area, the greater the maneuver space for fighting the main defensive battle.

**(3) Rear Area.** The rear area is that area extending forward from a command's rear boundary to the rear of the area of responsibility of the command's subordinate units. This area is provided primarily for the performance of combat service support functions. Rear area operations include those functions of security and sustainment required to maintain continuity of operations by the whole force. Rear area operations protect the sustainment effort as well as deny use of the rear area to the enemy. The rear area may not always be contiguous with the main battle area.

### **c. Organization of the Force**

During defensive operations, the commander organizes his force as follows (see Figure 4-2):

**(1) Security Forces.** The commander uses security forces forward of the main battle area to delay, disrupt, and provide early warning of the enemy's advance and deceive him as to the true location of the main battle area. These forces are assigned cover, guard, or screen missions. Operations of security forces must be an integral part of the overall defensive plan. To ensure optimal unity of effort during security operations, a single commander is normally assigned responsibility for the conduct of operations in the security area. The composition of the security force is dependent on the factors of METT-T. A task force may be formed from the various elements of the MEF to conduct security operations.

The commander seeks to engage the enemy as far out as possible. Suppression and obscuration fires are employed to facilitate maneuver of the security force. Maximum use may be made of all fire support assets to disrupt and destroy enemy formations as they move through the security area approaching the main battle area. Obstacles and barriers are positioned to delay or canalize the enemy and are covered by fires to destroy him while he is halted or in the process of breaching.

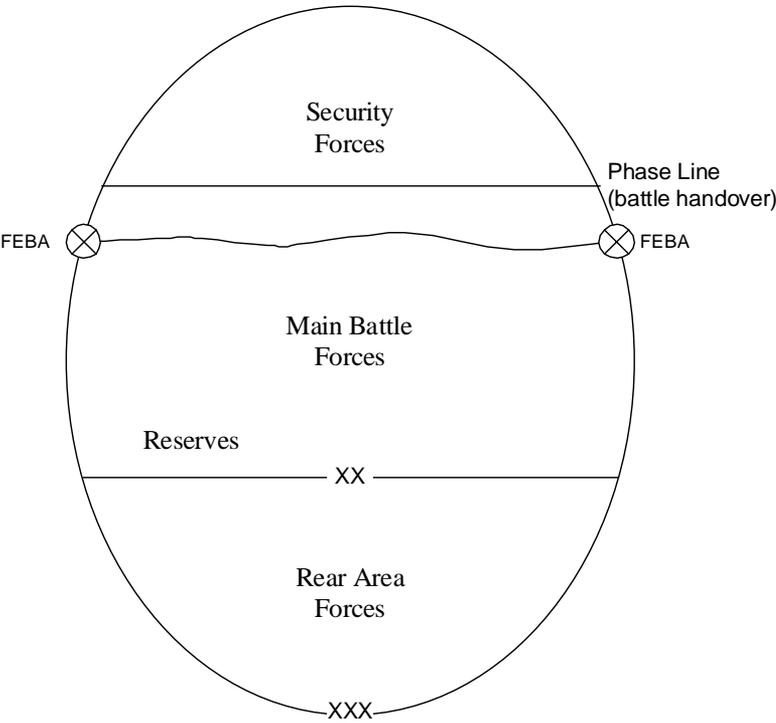


Figure 4-2. Organization of the force.

**(2) Main Battle Forces.** Main battle forces engage the enemy to slow, canalize, disorganize, or defeat his attack. The commander positions these forces to counter the enemy's attack along the most likely or most dangerous avenue of approach. As in offensive operations, the commander weights his main effort with enough combat power and the necessary support to ensure success. When the enemy attack has been broken, the commander executes his plan to exploit any opportunity to resume the offensive.

Main battle forces engage the enemy as early as possible unless fires are withheld to prevent the loss of surprise. Commanders make maximum use of fires to destroy and disrupt enemy formations as they approach the main battle area. As the enemy closes, he is subjected to an ever-increasing volume of fires from the main battle area forces and all supporting arms. Again, obstacles and barriers are used to delay or canalize the enemy so that he is continually subjected to fires.

Combat power that can be concentrated most quickly, such as fires, is brought to bear while maneuver units move into position. The defender reacts to the enemy's main effort by reinforcing the threatened sector or allowing the enemy's main effort to penetrate into engagement areas within the main battle area to cut him off and destroy him by counterattack. Main battle forces maintain an offensive spirit throughout the battle, looking to exploit any advantageous situations.

The MEF must determine the mission, composition, and size of the reserve and counterattack forces. Reserves by definition are uncommitted forces; however, reserve forces are not uncommitted if the concept of defense depends upon their employment as a counterattack force. Counterattacking, blocking, reinforcing defending units, or reacting to rear area threats are all actions a reserve may be required to perform. The primary mission of the reserve derives directly from the concept of the defense and, therefore, the commander who established the requirement to have a reserve must approve its commitment.

A counterattack is an attack by part or all of a defending force against an attacking enemy force, for such specific purposes as regaining ground lost or cutting off and destroying enemy advance units, and with the general objective of denying to the enemy the attainment of his purpose in attacking. In many cases, the counterattack is decisive action in defensive operations. It is the commander's primary means of breaking the enemy's attack or of regaining the initiative. Once commenced, the counterattack is the main effort. Its success depends largely on surprise, speed, and boldness in execution. A separate counterattack force may be established by the commander to conduct planned counterattacks and can be made up of uncommitted or lightly engaged forces and the reserve.

The reserve is the commander's tool to influence the course of the battle at the critical time and place to exploit opportunities. The commander uses his

reserve at the decisive moment in the defense and refuses to dissipate it on local emergencies. The reserve is usually located in assembly areas or forward operating bases in the main battle area. Once the reserve is committed the commander establishes or reconstitutes a new reserve.

Reserves are organized based on the factors of METT-T. The tactical mobility of mechanized and helicopterborne forces make them well suited for use as the reserve in the defense. Mechanized reserve forces are best employed offensively. In suitable terrain, a helicopterborne reserve can react quickly to reinforce the main battle area positions or block penetrations. However, helicopterborne forces often lack the shock effect desired for counterattacks. The inherent surge capability of aviation combat forces provides the commander flexibility for reserve tasking without designating the ACE as the reserve.

Timing is critical to the employment of the reserve. As the area of probable employment of the reserve becomes apparent, the commander alerts his reserve to have it more readily available for action. When he commits his reserve, the commander must make his decision promptly and with an accurate understanding of movement factors and deployment times. If committed too soon or too late, the reserve may not have a decisive effect. The commander may choose to use security forces as part or all of his reserve after completion of their security mission. He must weigh this decision against the possibility that the security forces may suffer a loss of combat power during its security mission.

**(3) Rear Area Forces.** Rear area forces protect and sustain the force's combat power. They provide for freedom of action and the continuity of logistic and command and control support. Rear area forces facilitate future operations as forces are positioned and support is marshaled to enable the transition to offensive operations. These forces should have the requisite command and control capabilities and intelligence assets to effectively employ the maneuver, fires, and combat service support forces necessary to defeat the rear area threat. Aviation forces are well suited to perform screening missions across long distances in the rear area.

The security of the rear area is provided by three levels of forces corresponding to the rear area threat level. Local security forces are employed in the rear area to repel or destroy *Level I* threats such as terrorists or saboteurs. These forces are normally organic to the unit, base, or base

cluster where they are employed. Response forces are mobile forces, with appropriate fire support designated by the area commander, employed to counter *Level II* threats such as enemy guerrillas or small tactical units operating in the rear area. The tactical combat force is a combat unit, with appropriate combat support and combat service support assets, that are assigned the mission of defeating *Level III* threats such as a large, combined arms capable enemy force. The tactical combat force is usually located within or near the rear area where it can rapidly respond to the enemy threat.

### **4003. Types**

There are two fundamental types of defense: the *mobile defense* and the *position defense*. In practice, Marine commanders tend to use both types simultaneously and rarely will one type or the other be used exclusively. Mobile defense orients 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. Position defense orients on retention of terrain by absorbing the enemy in an interlocking series of positions and destroying him largely by fires. The combination of these two types of defense can be very effective as the commander capitalizes on the advantages of each type and the strengths and capabilities of his subordinate units.

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 position 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.

The specific design and sequencing of defensive operations is an operational art and is largely conditioned by a thorough METT-T analysis.

Doctrine allows great freedom in formulating and conducting the defense. The MEF commander may elect to defend well forward with strong covering forces by striking the enemy as he approaches, or he may opt to fight the decisive battle well forward within the main battle area. If the MEF does not have to hold a specified area or position, it may draw the enemy deep into their defenses and then strike his flanks and rear. The MEF commander may even choose to preempt the enemy with spoiling attacks if conditions favor such tactics.

A key characteristic of a sound defense is the ability of the commander to aggressively seek opportunities to take offensive action and wrest the initiative from the enemy. With this in mind, the decision to conduct a hasty or deliberate defense is based on the time available or the requirement to quickly resume the offense. The enemy and the mission will determine the time available.

A hasty defense is normally organized while in contact with the enemy or when contact is imminent and time available for the organization is limited. It is characterized by the improvement of natural defensive strength of the terrain by utilization of foxholes, emplacements, and obstacles. The capability to establish a robust reconnaissance effort may be limited because the defense is assumed directly from current positions. The hasty defense normally allows for only a brief leaders' reconnaissance and may entail the immediate engagement by security forces to buy time for the establishment of the defense.

Depending on the situation, it may be necessary for a commander to initially attack to seize suitable terrain on which to organize his defense. In other situations, the commander may employ a security force while withdrawing the bulk of his force some distance rearward to prepare a defense on more suitable terrain. A hasty defense is improved continuously as the situation permits, and may eventually become a deliberate defense.

A deliberate defense is normally organized when out of contact with the enemy or when contact is not imminent and time for organization is available. A deliberate defense normally includes fortifications, strong points, extensive use of barriers, and fully integrated fires. The commander normally is free to make a detailed reconnaissance of his sector, select the terrain on which to defend, and decide the best distribution of forces.

The advantage of a deliberate defense is that it allows time to plan and prepare the defense while not in contact with the enemy. A deliberate defense is characterized by a complete reconnaissance of the area to be defended by the commander and his subordinate leaders, use of key terrain, and the establishment of mutually supporting positions. The force normally has the time to create field fortifications, barriers, and emplace obstacles.

Mobile defenses sometimes rely on reserves to strike the decisive blow. They require a large, mobile, combined arms reserve. Position defenses are more likely to use reserves to block and reinforce at lower tactical levels, leaving major counterattacks to divisions and higher echelons. Regiment and battalion-level area defenses may benefit from the use of mobile reserves when such a force is available and the enemy uncovers his flanks. The actual size and composition of the reserve depend on the concept of operations.

### **a. Mobile Defense**

A mobile defense is the defense of an area or position in which maneuver is used together with fire and terrain to seize the initiative from the enemy. The mobile defense destroys the attacking enemy through offensive action. The commander allocates the bulk of his combat power to mobile forces that strike the enemy where he is most vulnerable and when he least expects attack. Minimum force is placed forward to canalize, delay, disrupt, and deceive the enemy as to the actual location of our defenses. Retaining his mobile forces until the critical time and place are identified, the commander then focuses combat power in a single or series of violent and rapid counterattacks throughout the depth of the battlespace. (See Figure 4-3.)

A mobile defense focuses on the destruction of the enemy by permitting him to advance into position that exposes him to counterattack by a strong, mobile reserve. It is characterized by minimal combat power forward and the bulk of combat power held in reserve for the decisive counterattack.

A mobile defense requires mobility greater than that of the attacker. Marines generate the mobility advantage necessary in the mobile defense with organic mechanized and armor forces, helicopterborne forces, and Marine aviation. The commander must have sufficient depth within his AO to allow the enemy to move into his mobile defense. Terrain and space are traded to draw the enemy ever deeper into our defensive area, causing him

to overextend his force and expose his flanks and lines of communication to attack. The success of the mobile defense often presents the opportunity to resume the offense and must be planned.

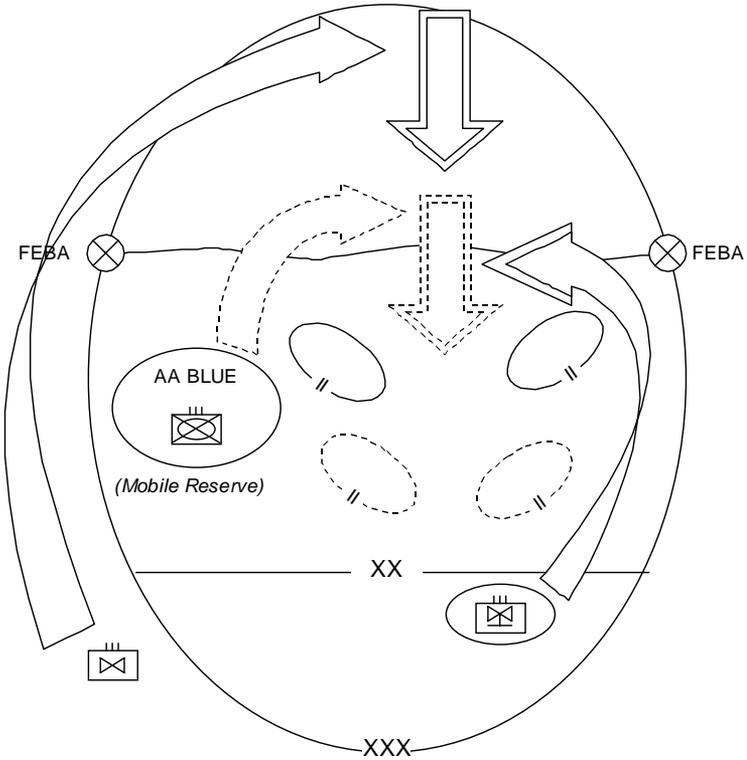


Figure 4-3. Mobile defense.

Mobile defense orients on the destruction of the enemy force by employing a combination of fires, maneuver, offense, defense, and delay to defeat his attack. Open terrain or a wide sector favors a mobile defense that orients on the enemy. The primary function of committed units in a mobile defense is to control the enemy penetration pending a counterattack by a large reserve. In a mobile defense the MEF commander—

- Commits minimum forces to pure defense.
- Positions maximum combat power to catch the enemy as it attempts to overcome that part of the force dedicated to the defense.

- Takes advantage of terrain in depth, obstacles, and mines, while employing firepower and maneuver to wrest the initiative from the attacker.
- Employs a strong counterattack force to strike the enemy at his most vulnerable time and place.
- Uses reconnaissance and surveillance assets to track the enemy, identifying critical enemy nodes, such as command and control, radars, logistics trains, and indirect fire support elements. They blind or deceive enemy critical reconnaissance and sensors; 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 assaulting him from an open flank and defeating him in detail.
- May trade terrain to divert the attention of the enemy from the main force, overextend the attacker's resources, expose his flanks, and lead him into a posture and terrain that diminishes his ability to defend against counterattack.
- Sets up large-scale counterattacks that offer opportunity to gain and retain the initiative and transition to offensive operations such as exploitation and pursuit.

Depth is required in a mobile defense in order to draw the enemy in and expose an exploitable weakness to counterattack. The following circumstances favor the conduct of a mobile defense:

- The defender possesses equal or greater mobility than the enemy.
- The frontage assigned exceeds the defender's capability to establish an effective position defense.
- The available battlespace allows the enemy to be drawn into an unfavorable position and exposed to attack.
- Time for preparing defensive positions is limited.
- Sufficient mechanized and aviation forces are available to allow rapid concentration of combat power.
- The enemy may employ weapons of mass destruction.
- The mission does not require denying the enemy specific terrain.

Using mobile defenses, commanders anticipate enemy penetration into the defended area and use obstacles and defended positions to shape and control such penetrations. They also use local counterattacks either to influence the

enemy into entering the planned penetration area or to deceive him as to the nature of the defense. As in area defenses, static elements of a mobile defense contain the enemy in a designated area. In a mobile defense, the counterattack is strong, well timed, and well supported. Preferably, counterattacking forces strike against the enemy's flanks and rear rather than the front of his forces.

## **b. Position Defense**

The position defense is a type of defense in which the bulk of the defending force is disposed in selected tactical positions where the decisive battle is to be fought. It denies the enemy critical terrain or facilities for a specified time. A position defense focuses on the retention of terrain by absorbing the enemy into a series of interlocked positions from which he can be destroyed, largely by fires, together with friendly maneuver. Principal reliance is placed on the ability of the forces in the defended positions to maintain their positions and to control the terrain between them. The position defense is sometimes referred to as an area defense. (See Figure 4-4.) This defense uses battle positions, strong points, obstacles, and barriers to slow, canalize, and defeat the enemy attack. The assignment of forces within these areas and positions allow for depth and mutual support of the force.

- **Battle Position.** A battle position is a defensive location oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach from which a unit may defend or attack. It can be used to deny or delay the enemy the use of certain terrain or an avenue of approach. The size of a battle position can vary with the size of the unit assigned. For ground combat units, battle positions are usually hastily occupied but should be continuously improved.
- **Strong Point.** A strong point is a fortified defensive position designed to deny the enemy certain terrain as well as the use of an avenue of approach. It differs from a battle position in that it is designed to be occupied for an extended period of time. It is established on critical terrain and must be held for the defense to succeed. A strong point is organized for all-around defense and should have sufficient supplies and ammunition to continue to fight even if surrounded or cut off from resupply. Strong points require considerable time and engineer resources.

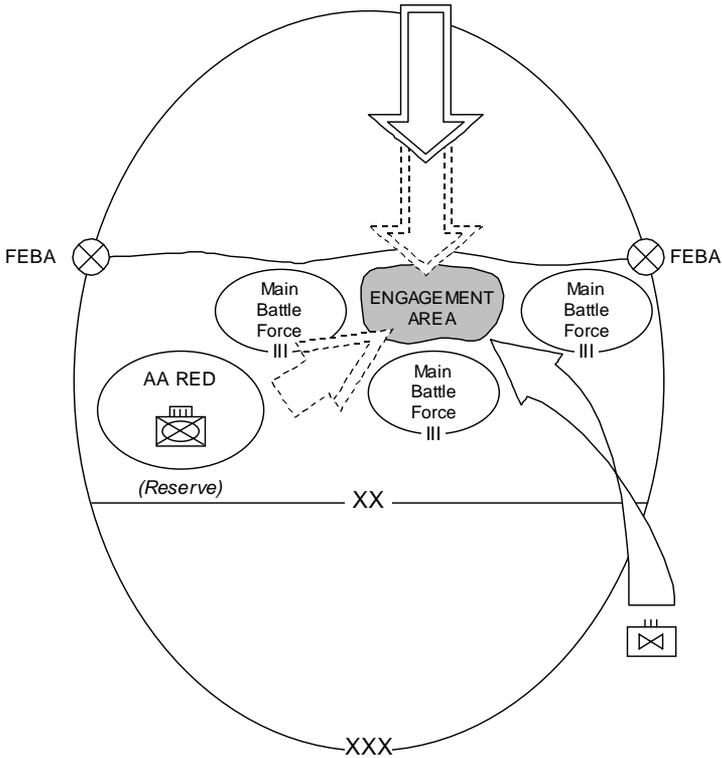


Figure 4-4. Position defense.

Preparation of a position defense is a continuing process that ends only when the defender is ordered to give up the terrain. METT-T drives the tasks to be done and their priority, making maximum use of obstacle and barrier plans, engagement areas, and fires. Mobile defenses require considerable depth, but position defenses vary in depth according to the situation. For example, a significant obstacle to the front, such as a river, built-up area, swamp, or escarpment, favors a position defense. Such an obstacle adds to the relative combat power of the defender. Obstacles support static elements of the defense and slow or canalize the enemy in vital areas.

The commander positions the bulk of his combat power in static defensive positions and small mobile reserves. He depends on his static forces to defend their positions. His reserves are used to blunt and contain

penetrations, to counterattack, and to exploit opportunities presented by the enemy. The commander also employs security forces in the position defense. The commander conducts a position defense when—

- The force must defend specific terrain that is militarily and politically essential.
- The defender possesses less mobility than the enemy.
- Maneuver space is limited or the terrain restricts the movement of the defending force.
- The terrain enables mutual support to the defending force.
- The depth of the battlespace is limited.
- The terrain restricts the movement of the defender.
- There is sufficient time to prepare positions.
- The employment of weapons of mass destruction by the enemy is unlikely.

In a position defense, committed forces counterattack whenever conditions are favorable. Commanders use their reserves in cooperation with static elements of their defenses battle positions and strong-points to break the enemy's momentum and reduce his numerical advantage. As the attack develops and the enemy reveals his dispositions, reserves and fires strike at objectives in depth to break up the coordination of the attack.

## **4004. Future Defensive Operations**

Expeditionary maneuver warfare and changes in organization, doctrine, and training will alter how the MAGTF conducts defensive operations in the future. Enhancements to information technology will provide commanders with increased flexibility in the defense. Increasingly, the MAGTF commander will receive real-time, fused information to make better-informed and more timely decisions. Highly capable precision munitions, improved UAVs, and new “sensor to shooter” technologies will increase the MAGTF commander's ability to engage an attacking force, shape the battlespace, and set conditions for decisive actions. Increased ranges of fire support systems and improved mobility of ground forces, using advanced amphibious assault vehicles and MV-22s, will allow the commander to mass effects on the enemy instead of massing forces that become more susceptible to enemy counteractions. These innovations will allow the

MAGTF to rapidly transition from the defense over to the offensive—moving directly to exploitation and pursuit.

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## Part V

# Other MEF Tactical Operations

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This section describes some of the other tactical operations that enable the MEF to execute offensive and defensive operations. These tactical operations include *retrograde*, *passage of lines*, *link up*, *relief in place*, *obstacle crossing*, and *breakout from encirclement*. These operations are planned, coordinated, synchronized, integrated, and conducted by various elements of the MEF. For example, in the conduct of a relief in place, linkup, or passage of lines, the commander ordering the operation will specify responsibilities, procedures, and resolve differences in methods of execution. The higher commander must establish measures to ensure continuous and effective fire and other support during the operation.

### 5001. Retrograde

A retrograde is any movement or maneuver to the rear or away from the enemy. It may be forced by the enemy or may be made voluntarily. There are the three types of retrograde operations—*delay*, *withdrawal*, and *retirement*. Commanders combine all three types to facilitate offensive and defensive schemes of maneuver. All retrograde operations are conducted to improve an operational or tactical situation, or prevent a worse one from developing. They accomplish the following—

- Reduce the enemy's offensive capabilities.
- Draw the enemy into an unfavorable situation.
- Enable combat under conditions favorable to friendly forces.
- Gain time.
- Disengage from contact with the enemy.
- Reposition forces for commitment elsewhere.
- Shorten lines of communication.

Retrograde operations will usually involve all elements of the MEF. While the GCE is normally the main effort in retrograde operations, the ACE and

the CSSE play major roles in setting the conditions for a successful retrograde. The ACE, operating from the sea or from bases beyond the reach of the enemy's artillery, interdicts enemy forces to disrupt and delay his advance, and provides close air support to ground forces in contact and assault support to move troops, equipment, and supplies away from the enemy. The CSSE continues to provide combat service support to the MEF during retrograde operations and as well as providing transportation to move troops, equipment and supplies away from the enemy and establish new combat service support facilities in the rear to support future operations.

### **a. Delay**

A delay is an operation in which a force under pressure trades space for time by slowing down the enemy's momentum and inflicting maximum damage on the enemy without becoming decisively engaged. Forces execute delays when they have insufficient combat power to attack or defend, or when the plan calls for drawing the enemy into an area for counterattack. (See Figure 5-1.)

The MEF commander may specify the amount of time to be gained or events to be accomplished by the delaying force to successfully accomplish the mission. Delays may be used in the security area, main battle area, or rear area. Sufficient depth of area is required for a delay. Delays are conducted:

- When the force's strength is insufficient to defend or attack.
- To reduce the enemy's offensive capability by inflicting casualties.
- To gain time by forcing the enemy to deploy.
- To determine the strength and location of the enemy's main effort.
- When the enemy intent is not clear and the commander desires intelligence.
- To protect and provide early warning for the main battle area forces.
- To allow time to reestablish the defense.

Commanders should plan maximum use of terrain, barriers, and obstacles. Delaying forces must remain in constant contact with the enemy to ensure that the enemy experiences continuous pressure and to prevent delaying units from being by-passed by the enemy. The delaying force should make every effort to ensure that it does not become decisively engaged.

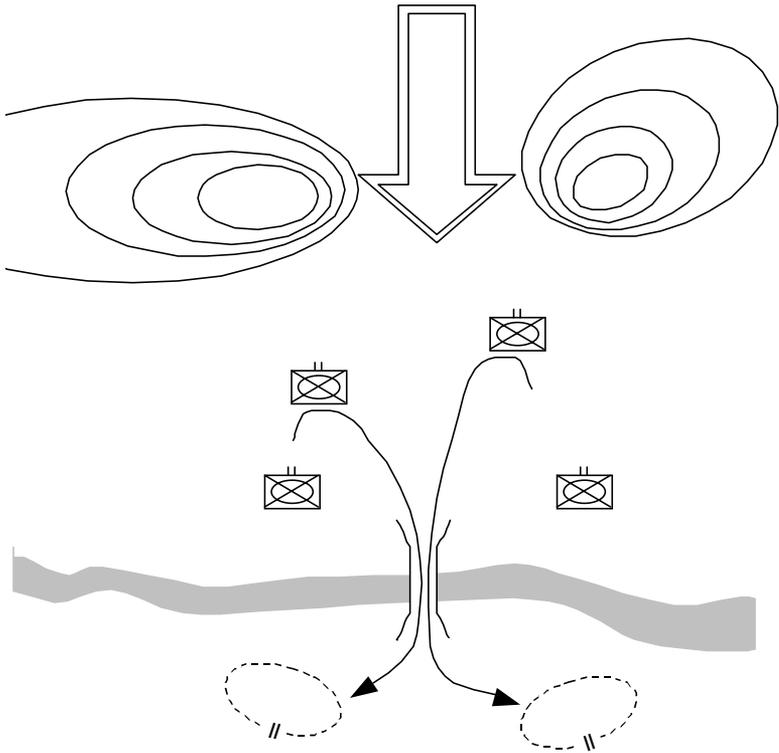


Figure 5-1. Delay.

## b. Withdrawal

A withdrawal is a planned operation in which a force in contact disengages from an enemy force. The commander's intention in a withdrawal is to put distance between his force and the enemy. Ideally, a withdrawal is done without the enemy's knowledge, or before he is able to prevent or disrupt it. A withdrawal is conducted—

- If the force is in danger of being defeated.
- To avoid battle under unfavorable conditions.
- To draw the enemy into terrain or a position that facilitates our offensive action.
- To allow for the reposition or redeployment of the force for employment elsewhere.

There are two types of withdrawal operations that are distinguished by the enemy's reaction to the withdrawal:

- Withdrawal *under enemy pressure*, in which the enemy tries to prevent the disengagement by attacking.
- Withdrawal *not under enemy pressure*, in which the enemy does not or cannot try to prevent the withdrawal.

Regardless of the type of withdrawal, the planning considerations are the same. A prudent commander always plans to execute the withdrawal under enemy pressure. He should anticipate enemy interference by fires, direct pressure, and envelopment. If the enemy interferes, security forces will have to fight a delaying action as they move to the rear. If the enemy does not interfere, security forces disengage and withdraw upon order. The more closely a unit is engaged with the enemy, the more difficult it will be to withdraw. Withdrawal will be easiest after success in combat. If a unit cannot disengage from the enemy on its own, the commander may employ other units elsewhere to reduce enemy pressure on the withdrawing unit or he may employ additional combat power at the point of withdrawal to facilitate disengagement.

In any withdrawal, the commander should attempt to deceive the enemy about his intention to withdraw. Emphasis is placed on speed and surprise. This facilitates disengaging from the enemy but makes control more difficult. Withdrawals are best executed during periods of reduced visibility. Withdrawing during periods of reduced visibility facilitates disengagement from the enemy and conceals movement to a degree but also may make control more difficult.

Due to the inherent difficulties of conducting a withdrawal and the likely adverse situation, the commander must have the flexibility to switch to any other type of operation such as delay, defend, or attack as the situation demands.

### **c. Retirement**

A retirement is an operation in which a force out of contact moves away from the enemy. Commanders retire units to accomplish one or more of the following:

- Position forces for other missions.
- Adjust the defensive scheme.
- Prepare to assist the delays and withdrawals of other units.
- Deceive the enemy.

A retirement may immediately follow a withdrawal. A retiring unit is normally protected by another unit between it and the enemy. However, this does not preclude the commander from having to establish adequate security during the movement. A retirement is largely an administrative movement. Speed, control, and security are the most important considerations.

## **5002. Passage of Lines**

A passage of lines is an operation in which a force moves forward or rearward through another force's combat positions with the intention of moving into or out of contact with the enemy. It is always conducted in conjunction with another mission, such as to begin an attack, conduct an exploitation, or a security force mission. *A passage of lines, forward or rearward, is a complex and often dangerous operation, requiring thorough coordination.* Inherent in the conduct of security operations, especially in the defense, is the requirement to execute a passage of lines. In an advance, security forces may be required to fix enemy forces in place and allow the main force to pass through in the attack. Faced with a superior enemy force or in the conduct of security operations in the defense, security forces must fall back and execute a rearward passage of lines, conducting battle handover with forces in the main battle area.

The conduct of a passage of lines involves two forces; the stationary force and the moving force. In the offense, the moving force is normally the attacking force and is organized to assume its assigned mission after the passage. The stationary force facilitates the passage and provides maximum support to the moving force. Normally, the plans and requirements of the moving force have priority. The time or circumstances at which responsibility for the zone of action transfers from the stationary force to the moving force must be agreed upon by the two commanders or specified by higher authority. Normally, the attacking commander assumes responsibility at or before the time of attack. Responsibility may be

transferred before the time of attack to allow the attacking commander to control any preparation fires. In this latter case, elements of the stationary force that are in contact at the time of the transfer must be placed under the operational control of the attacking commander. Liaison between the forces involved should be established as early as possible.

In the defense, a rearward passage of lines is normally executed when withdrawing a security force. The withdrawing force is the moving force and may pass through the stationary force en route to performing another mission, or it may be integrated into the stationary unit. The common commander must specify any special command relationships and retains control of the passage. The actual transfer of responsibility for the sector normally is agreed upon by the executing commanders. This is carried out more effectively if the commanders are collocated. The withdrawing commander is responsible for identifying the last element of his command as it passes through the stationary unit. A detailed plan for mutual recognition must be prepared and carefully disseminated throughout both forces. The stationary commander reports to his senior commander when he has assumed responsibility for the sector. The withdrawing commander reports to the senior commander when his unit has completed the passage.

Due to the risks associated with a passage of lines, they are, if possible, conducted at night or during periods of reduced visibility. The risks include fratricide, exposure to enemy counteractions, and loss of control as responsibility for the sector is handed over from one force to another, and the potential of unintegrated movement of forces. The stationary and moving force commanders normally collocate their command posts in order to facilitate command and control of this demanding tactical operation.

### **5003. Linkup**

A linkup is an operation wherein two friendly forces join together in a hostile area. The purpose of the linkup is to establish contact between two forces. A linkup may occur between a helicopterborne force and a force on the ground, between two converging forces, or in the relief of an encircled force. The commander directing the linkup establishes the command relationships and responsibilities of the two units, during and after the linkup, to include responsibility for fire support coordination.

A linkup involves a stationary force and a moving force. If both units are moving, one is designated the stationary force and should occupy the linkup point at least temporarily to effect linkup. The commanders involved must coordinate their schemes of maneuver. They agree on primary and alternate linkup points where physical contact between the advance elements of the two units will occur. Linkup points must be easily recognizable to both units and are located where the routes of the moving force intersect the security elements of the stationary force. Commanders must carefully coordinate fire support to ensure the safety of both units.

## **5004. Relief in Place**

A relief in place is an operation in which, by direction of higher authority, all or part of a unit is replaced in an area by the incoming unit. The responsibilities of the replaced elements for the mission and the assigned zone of operations are transferred to the incoming unit. The incoming unit continues the operation as ordered. The relief must be executed in an expeditious and orderly manner. Every effort must be made to effect the relief without weakening the tactical integrity and security of the assigned area.

The outgoing commander is responsible for the defense of his sector until command is passed. The moment when command is to pass is determined by mutual agreement between the commanders involved, within the direction of higher headquarters. Both commanders should be collocated throughout the operation to facilitate the transfer of command and control. Following this transfer, the incoming commander will assume operational control of all elements of the outgoing force that have not yet been relieved. The incoming commander will report to higher headquarters when he has assumed command.

The relief can take place simultaneously over the entire width of the sector, or it can be staggered over time. If forces are relieved simultaneously across the sector, less time is required, but greater congestion may be created, the readiness of the defense is reduced, and the enemy is more likely to detect the greater level of movement. By contrast, a relief staggered over time takes longer, but a larger portion of the force is prepared to conduct operations.

## 5005. Obstacle Crossing

An obstacle is a natural or manmade impediment to movement that usually requires specific techniques and equipment to overcome. A series of such obstacles is called a barrier. Crossing obstacles is most often required as part of the offense, although it may take place during the defense. Any obstacle can be crossed given sufficient time and resources. Crossings covered by the enemy, however, require extensive control and preparation to minimize losses from enemy action. A critical requirement in any obstacle crossing is the reduction or elimination of the effects of enemy fire covering the obstacle through the employment of maneuver and neutralizing, suppressing or obscuration fires. The goal is to cross the obstacle with minimum delay, loss of momentum, and disruption to concept of operations, and casualties.

Upon encountering an obstacle, the commander can either bypass the obstacle or execute a breach. Detailed intelligence is required to reveal the enemy's capability to oppose the crossing, the characteristics of the obstacle and crossing points, and the terrain on the far side. When possible, the attacker bypasses the enemy obstacles, saving time, labor, and risk to personnel and equipment. However, the commander must exercise caution since obstacles are often employed to canalize forces, and a bypass route that at first appears desirable may lead into a killing zone.

Planning an obstacle crossing should include provisions for a hasty, and, failing or precluding that, a deliberate attempt. The commander's options may be limited because of restrictions on maneuver, the ability to deliver supporting fires, and the time required to move forces across or around the obstacle. The commander may conduct demonstrations and feints at locations away from the main crossing or breaching point to draw the enemy's defenses from that point.

The attacker advances to the obstacle quickly and on a broad front to increase the possibility of effecting a hasty crossing. The inherent capabilities of the ACE provide the MEF commander multiple options for moving on a broad front and rapidly crossing obstacles to establish security on the enemy side. The ACE can either provide combat assault transport for MEF units attacking directly across the obstacle, or carry MEF units far beyond the obstacle in order to bypass the enemy or conduct a turning movement.

Once forces and equipment are committed to crossing, withdrawal or deviation from the initial plan is extremely difficult. During a crossing, a force is most vulnerable while astride the obstacle. After establishing units on the far side of the obstacle, the commander pushes his combat power across or through as quickly as possible.

## **a. Breach**

When he cannot bypass an obstacle, the attacker attempts to breach. Breaching, the most common means of crossing an obstacle, is the employment of any available means to break through or secure a passage through or secure an enemy defense, obstacle, minefield, or fortification. The plan for breaching is based on the concept of operation on the far side, which the breaching must support. There are two types of breaching which generally correspond to hasty and deliberate attacks, with many of the same considerations, advantages, and disadvantages:

**(1) Hasty Breaching.** A hasty breaching is the rapid creation of a route through a minefield, barrier, or fortification by any expedient method. It is conducted as a continuation of the operation underway with a minimum loss of momentum. A hasty breaching is characterized by speed and surprise, minimal concentration of forces, and decentralization of control and execution. Leading elements try to cross or breach using their own resources. Minimal engineer support, if any, is involved. Breaching equipment should be readily available to avoid the loss of momentum.

**(2) Deliberate Breaching.** A deliberate breaching is the creation of a lane through a minefield or a clear route through a barrier or fortification, which is systematically planned and carried out. It requires a concentration of the force to overcome the obstacle and enemy defenses on the far side. This requires extensive planning, detailed preparation, sustained supporting arms and engineer support. Control is centralized throughout. When forced to conduct a deliberate breaching, the attacker may lose momentum and the initiative. A deliberate breaching should only be implemented if the tactical situation does not permit a hasty breaching.

## **b. River Crossing**

Wide, unfordable rivers exercise considerable influence on military operations because they impose restrictions on movement and maneuver.

They constitute obstacles to attack and form natural lines of resistance for defense. The strength of a river as an obstacle increases with width, depth, and velocity of the current. A river crossing is an operation required before ground combat power can be projected and sustained across a water obstacle. Like an amphibious operation, it is a centrally planned offensive operation that requires the thoughtful allocation of resources and control measures. The primary concern is the rapid buildup of combat power on the far side to continue offensive operations. As with breaching, there are two basic types of river crossing:

- **Hasty Crossing.** A crossing of an inland water obstacle using crossing means at hand or those readily available, and made without pausing for elaborate preparations. Preferably, a hasty crossing is conducted by seizing an intact crossing site.
- **Deliberate Crossing.** A crossing of an inland water obstacle that requires extensive planning and detailed preparations.

## 5006. Breakout from Encirclement

A breakout is both an offensive and a defensive operation. An encircled force normally attempts a breakout when—

- The breakout is ordered or is within a senior commander's intent.
- The encircled force does not have sufficient relative combat power to defend itself against the enemy.
- The encircled force does not have adequate terrain to conduct its defense.
- The encircled force cannot sustain itself for any length of time or until relieved by friendly forces.

The commander must execute the breakout as soon as possible. The sooner the breakout is executed, the less time the enemy has to strengthen his position, and the more organic resources and support the encircled force has available. In addition to support from organic units and assets, the encircled force may receive support—fire support and diversions—from forces outside the encirclement. Most importantly, the encircled force must maintain the momentum of the attack. If the breakout fails, the force will be more vulnerable to defeat or destruction than it was before the breakout attempt.

The encircled force normally conducts a breakout by task organizing with *a force that conducts the rupture*, a *main body*, and a *rear guard*. If the commander has enough forces, he may organize separate reserve, diversionary, and supporting elements. Any of the forces may consist of aviation or ground combat units (one or both as individual elements or as task-organized combined arms teams) and appropriate combat service support organizations, based on METT-T.

The force conducting the rupture, which may consist of two-thirds of the total encircled force, is assigned the mission to penetrate the enemy's encircling position, widen the gap, and hold the shoulders of the gap until all the other encircled forces have moved through. The main body follows the force conducting the rupture to maintain the momentum of the attack and secure objectives past the rupture. The main body includes the main command post and the bulk of the combat service support. The rear guard provides protection for the force conducting the rupture and the main body as they pass beyond the rupture.

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## Part VI

# MEF Reconnaissance and Security Operations

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The fog and friction of war will never allow the commander to have a perfect picture of the battlespace. However, reconnaissance operations can reduce uncertainties about an unfamiliar area and a hostile enemy who is actively trying to conceal information about his forces and intentions. Reconnaissance is an essential and continuous operation conducted to collect information and to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. Reconnaissance of some type should always precede a commitment of forces. Failure to conduct a thorough reconnaissance may cause the loss of initiative or failure to exploit fleeting opportunities. Lack of reconnaissance can result in the enemy's achieving surprise, inflicting unacceptable losses on friendly forces, and causing the failure of the mission. As part of the overall MEF intelligence effort, reconnaissance operations support the commander's decisionmaking process by collecting information necessary to develop situation awareness and satisfy CCIRs.

Security operations are an important component of all MEF operations as they can reduce risk by providing the MEF with maneuver space and reaction time. They protect the force from surprise and attempt to eliminate the unknowns in any tactical situation. Security operations prevent the enemy from collecting information on friendly forces, deceive him as to friendly capabilities and intentions, and prevent enemy forces from interfering with friendly operations. Reconnaissance operations support security operations by providing information on enemy forces, capabilities and intentions, and by denying the enemy information of friendly activities through counterreconnaissance. In order to be successful, a MEF's security operations should be integrated with its reconnaissance operations. Security operations are required during offensive, defensive, and other tactical operations.

## 6001. Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance is a necessary precursor to any military operation. It attempts to answer questions the commander has about the enemy that the MEF will fight and the battlespace in which the MEF will operate. The term reconnaissance describes any mission—airial, ground, or amphibious—undertaken to obtain, by visual or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of the enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. More simply, reconnaissance obtains information about the characteristics of a particular area and any known or potential enemy within it.

The commander uses reconnaissance to collect information and to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. Reconnaissance activities may range from passive surveillance—systematically watching an enemy force or named area of interest, or listening to an area and the activities in it in order to help develop intelligence needed to confirm or deny estimated threat course of action or to identify threat critical vulnerabilities and limitations—to aggressive measures designed to stimulate a revealing enemy response, such as reconnaissance by fire.

### a. MEF Reconnaissance Assets

All elements of the MEF possess reconnaissance capabilities. Each element brings its own unique capabilities; together they collect the information necessary for the planning and conduct of MEF operations.

The command element centralizes the planning and direction of the entire reconnaissance effort for the MEF. The command element can task any element of the MEF to conduct reconnaissance to satisfy the commander's information requirements. It also directly controls MEF-level reconnaissance assets including—

- **Radio Battalion.** The radio battalion provides ground-based signals intelligence, electronic warfare, communications security monitoring, and special intelligence communications capability to support MEF operations. It plans and coordinates the employment of its subordinate elements, to include radio reconnaissance elements beyond the FEBA and mobile electronic warfare support system in

light armored vehicles, and is the focal point for MEF ground-based signals intelligence operations.

- **Remote Sensors/Imagery Interpretation.** The intelligence battalion provides remote sensor, imagery interpretation, and topographic intelligence support to MEF operations. In addition to the sensor control and management platoon, the force imagery interpretation unit, and the topographic platoon, the intelligence company establishes and mans the MEF's surveillance and reconnaissance center which plans, executes, and monitors MEF reconnaissance operations.
- **Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence.** The intelligence battalion provides counterintelligence (CI), human intelligence (HUMINT), and interrogator-translator support to MEF operations. This support can include screening and interrogation/debriefing of prisoners of war and persons of intelligence interest, conduct of CI force protection source operations, conduct of CI surveys and investigations, preparation of CI estimates and plans, translation of documents, and limited exploitation of captured material. In addition to the specialized CI and interrogator-translator platoons, the company employs task-organized HUMINT exploitation teams in direct support of MEF subordinate elements. HUMINT exploitation teams combine CI specialists and interrogator-translators in one element, thereby providing a unique and comprehensive range of CI/HUMINT services.
- **Force Reconnaissance.** Force reconnaissance conducts distant and deep reconnaissance and surveillance in support of MEF operations. Force reconnaissance uses specialized insertion, patrolling, reporting, and extraction techniques to carry out amphibious distant and deep reconnaissance and surveillance tasks in support of the MEF. In addition, force reconnaissance has the capability to perform special operational capable tasks.

The GCE has substantial organic reconnaissance assets. Those units in contact with the enemy, especially patrols, are among the most reliable sources of information. Combat engineers are also good sources of information. These engineer units often conduct engineer reconnaissance of an area and can provide detailed reporting on lines of communication, (i.e., roads, rivers, railroad lines, etc.), bridges, and obstacles to maneuver.

The mission of ground reconnaissance is to provide immediate tactical ground reconnaissance and surveillance to the GCE. Like force reconnaissance, ground reconnaissance is employed to observe and report on enemy activity and other information of military significance. Their capabilities are similar to those of force reconnaissance; however, ground reconnaissance does not insert units by parachute. The division reconnaissance battalion provides the ground reconnaissance assets for the GCE. The division also has the following reconnaissance assets—

- **Light Armored Reconnaissance.** Light armored reconnaissance units usually operate in forward areas or along flanks and can be relied upon to report early warning of contact with an enemy force. The Marines in each light armored vehicle are trained in intelligence collection and reporting. These units are capable of a wide variety of missions due to their inherent mobility and organic firepower. The division light armored reconnaissance battalion provides the GCE with its light armored reconnaissance capability.
- **Counterbattery Radar.** The counterbattery radar platoon is located within the artillery regiment's headquarters batteries. It is equipped with mobile radars that detect and accurately locate enemy mortars, artillery, and rockets permitting rapid engagement with counterfire. Information concerning enemy order of battle and locations derived from counterbattery radar detections are reported via the GCE to the MEF command element.
- **Scout-Snipers.** The scout-sniper platoon is an organic collection asset of each infantry battalion. Although the platoon can be employed in support of a myriad of tactical missions in both defensive and offensive operations, they are primarily employed to provide timely surveillance and tactical data and coordinate supporting arms and close air support. The Scout-Sniper Platoon provides the infantry battalion with extended area observation.

The capability of the ACE to observe the battlefield and report in near-real time gives the MEF commander a multidimensional capability that should be used at every opportunity. Aviation combat units can view the entire AO in depth, providing early indications and warning and reconnaissance information that can be essential to the success of the MEF. Each ACE aircraft, rotary- or fixed-wing, is capable of conducting visual observation of terrain and enemy forces that it may fly over. Given the combined arms

capability of the MEF, these aircraft can engage enemy targets immediately or direct other supporting arms against the enemy forces. The ACE manages the following reconnaissance systems on behalf of the MEF—

- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles.** UAVs provide day-night, real-time imagery reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition in support of the MEF. The unique capabilities of the UAV can also be used to support real-time target engagement, assisting in the control of fires/supporting arms and maneuver. The UAV provides high quality video imagery for artillery or naval gunfire adjustment, battle damage assessment, and reconnaissance over land or sea. It is capable of both day and night operations using television or forward looking infrared cameras. The squadrons are under the administrative control of the ACE; however, because of the limited number of UAV assets and the critical reconnaissance capabilities that they provide to the entire force, the MEF commander retains operational control of the UAV squadrons. Mission tasking of the UAV squadrons is exercised through the surveillance and reconnaissance center.
- **Advanced Tactical Airborne Reconnaissance System.** The F/A-18D can be equipped with the advanced tactical airborne reconnaissance system and the Radar Upgrade Phase II with synthetic aperture radar. The advanced tactical airborne reconnaissance system is a real-time digital package providing day/night, all-weather imagery capability. The imagery collected provides sufficient detail and accuracy to permit delivery of appropriate air and ground weapons, assist with battle damage assessment and provide tactical commanders with detailed information about the enemy's weapons, units, and disposition. Imagery resulting from collection can be digitally disseminated to the force imagery interpretation unit tactical exploitation group for exploitation, printing, and dissemination.
- **Electronic Reconnaissance/Warfare.** Aerial electronic reconnaissance and electronic warfare is conducted by the ACE using the EA-6B aircraft. The EA-6B aircraft also process and disseminate information from digital tape recordings obtained during electronic warfare missions to update and maintain enemy electronic order of battle. The sensors are passive systems that require threat emitters to be active in order to collect.

The CSSE is limited in its reconnaissance capabilities, having no dedicated reconnaissance capabilities. However, it can conduct road and route reconnaissance with its engineer units, convoys, and military police. As the CSSE is often in more direct contact with the indigenous population, it can collect HUMINT unavailable to the other MEF elements. For example, medical battalion personnel can often provide information on health conditions and their potential impact on operations.

## **b. National and Theater Assets**

The MEF has the ability to draw on the full range of national, theater, joint, other Service, and allied reconnaissance assets. When made available, these capabilities will be fully integrated into MEF reconnaissance operations (for example, Joint Surveillance Attack Radar System, Navy SEALs, or Army signals intelligence aircraft). During forcible entry operations, the MEF integrates its amphibious reconnaissance capabilities with national, theater, and special operating forces.

The Marine Corps component will support the MEF by monitoring the status of MEF reconnaissance requests to national and theater entities. The component coordinates the provision of Marine intelligence liaison to the joint task force and other component intelligence elements to ensure the MEF's requirements are satisfied. Some MEF reconnaissance assets, such as the radio battalion and the CI/HUMINT company will usually have direct connectivity with appropriate external agencies to coordinate tasking or support.

## **c. Reconnaissance Planning Considerations**

Basic considerations for employing reconnaissance forces include—

- Reconnaissance supports the MEF commander's intent and his CCIRs. While contributing to the commander's broad situational awareness and development, reconnaissance assets tailor their efforts to support the specific CCIRs indicated by the commander's intent and subsequent unit intelligence and operations planning. Simultaneously, reconnaissance forces must remain alert to any developments that may cause the commander to reassess that intent.
- MEF reconnaissance assets are best employed early to support the CCIRs and friendly course of action development and selection. When reconnaissance is initiated early in the planning cycle,

planning and execution are driven by the flow of solid, timely information and intelligence. If reconnaissance is delayed, situation development will generally be more uncertain. In this case, planning and execution can either take place in an information vacuum or be driven by the search for such information.

- Reconnaissance assets are best employed in general support. Because of the nature of warfare, MEF reconnaissance units will most likely be employed in rapidly developing and fluid situations. The main effort may shift quickly from one subordinate element to another. Such situations often require modifications or complete changes in reconnaissance elements' missions. The MEF commander and his staff are usually the most capable of determining the best use of MEF reconnaissance assets at any given time, to provide the necessary support, and to integrate the results of reconnaissance information with other intelligence sources. Although placing reconnaissance assets in direct support of some subordinate element or even attaching them to specific units is occasionally appropriate, in general, such support relationships make for inefficient use of specialized reconnaissance forces. Proper planning; the institution of flexible, responsive command and control and intelligence reporting procedures and networks; and clear intelligence reporting and dissemination priorities will ensure that the products of reconnaissance are shared to the maximum benefit of all potential users.
- Reconnaissance requires adequate time for detailed planning and preparation. Most reconnaissance focuses on the enemy's activities and intentions to satisfy the commander's need to exploit the enemy's vulnerabilities or to attack his COG. This frequently necessitates operating in and around the enemy's most critical and best defended areas. This normally requires that reconnaissance be conducted over long distances and well in advance of commencement of the operations it will support. These conditions usually dictate specialized methods of transportation, communications and information systems support, combat service support, equipment, and coordination.

There are four basic types of reconnaissance: route, area, zone, and force-oriented. Each type is used to provide specific details required for mission planning and for maintaining situational awareness.

- **Route Reconnaissance.** Route reconnaissance is a directed effort to obtain detailed information of a specified route and all terrain from which the enemy could influence movement along that route. Route reconnaissance is focused along a specific line of communication, such as a road, railway, or waterway, to provide new or updated information on route conditions and activities along the route. Route reconnaissance normally precedes the movement of friendly forces. It provides detailed information about a specific route and the surrounding terrain that could be used to influence movement along that route.
- **Area Reconnaissance.** Area reconnaissance is a directed effort to obtain detailed information concerning the terrain or enemy activity within a prescribed area, such as a town, ridge line, woods, or other features critical to operations. An area reconnaissance can be made of a single point, such as a bridge or installation, and could include hostile headquarters, key terrain, objective areas, or critical installations. Emphasis is placed on reaching the area without being detected. Hostile situations encountered en route are developed only enough to allow the reconnoitering units to report and bypass.
- **Zone Reconnaissance.** Zone reconnaissance is a directed effort to obtain detailed information concerning all routes, obstacles (to include chemical or radiological contamination), terrain, and enemy forces within a zone defined by boundaries. A zone reconnaissance normally is assigned when the enemy situation is vague or when information concerning cross-country trafficability is desired. Zone reconnaissance concerns itself with the total integrated intelligence picture of a space defined by length and breadth. The size of the area depends on the potential for information on hostile forces, terrain, and weather in the zone; the requirements levied by the commander; and the reconnaissance forces available to exploit the intelligence value of the zone.
- **Force-Oriented Reconnaissance.** Force-oriented reconnaissance is focused not on a geographic area but on a specific enemy organization, wherever it may be or go. Force-oriented reconnaissance concerns itself with intelligence information required about a specific enemy or target unit. Reconnaissance assets orient on that specific force, moving when necessary to observe that unit and reporting all required information (both requested and other pertinent observed and collected information).

An important factor in characterizing reconnaissance missions is the depth of penetration they require, which has important implications in terms of time, risk, coordination, and support requirements. The depth of penetration can be close, distant, or deep.

- Close reconnaissance is conducted in the area extending forward of the forward edge of the battle area to the FSCL. It is directed toward determining the location, composition, disposition, capabilities, and activities of enemy committed forces. Close reconnaissance is primarily conducted by combat units manning the FEBA.
- Distant reconnaissance is conducted in the far portion of the commander's area of influence. It is usually directed toward determining the location, composition, disposition and movement of supporting arms, and the reserve elements of the enemy committed forces. Distant reconnaissance is conducted beyond the FSCL to the limits of the commander's area of influence.
- Deep reconnaissance is conducted beyond the commander's area of influence to the limits of the commander's area of interest (i.e., the geographic area from which information and intelligence are required to execute successful tactical operations and to plan for future operations). It is usually directed toward determining the location, composition, disposition, and movement of enemy reinforcements.

A MEF can conduct reconnaissance using one of two basic methods—reconnaissance pull and reconnaissance push. In operations based on reconnaissance pull, information derived from reconnaissance forces is used to guide friendly force activities. Reconnaissance elements identify the surfaces and gaps in overall enemy dispositions and permit the commander to shape the battlespace. Making rapid decisions based on the flow of information, friendly combat forces are drawn to and through the weak spots in the enemy defense and seek to quickly exploit the advantages gained. Reconnaissance pull requires early commitment of reconnaissance elements, allowance for the time necessary to fully develop the reconnaissance picture, and a smooth flow of information from reconnaissance elements directly to both higher and supported commanders and staffs in immediate need of reconnaissance data.

The landing at Tinian during World War II is an example of reconnaissance pull. Aerial and amphibious reconnaissance determined that the Japanese defenders had largely ignored the northern beaches, while focusing most of

their defensive effort on most likely beaches in the southwest. The landing was changed to the northern beaches, and when coupled with a deception operation off the southern beach, resulted in a complete surprise. As Marines have done in the past, current concepts for MEF operations, such as operational maneuver from the sea and ship-to-objective maneuver, are dependent on the ability of the MEF to use reconnaissance pull to determine enemy dispositions, and find or create exploitable gaps through which the MEF can pass while avoiding obstacles and strong points.

Reconnaissance pull requires a high tempo of intelligence operations to collect and report timely information. To sustain such operations, a reserve must be carefully maintained so that fresh reconnaissance elements are always available to support developing situations. Maintenance of a reconnaissance reserve requires adequate consideration of the time required for reconnaissance unit preparation, insertion, mission execution, extraction, and recovery. Reconnaissance pull is easiest to execute early in an operation. It is difficult to support over a lengthy period of high-tempo operations.

Operations based on reconnaissance push use reconnaissance elements more conservatively. They are often utilized as a tactical resource, and generally with a shorter timeline. Reconnaissance push uses reconnaissance forces as the lead element of pre-planned tactical operations, detecting enemy dispositions during the movement of the entire friendly force. The operations by I MEF during Operation DESERT STORM in 1991 were characterized by reconnaissance push. Reconnaissance forces, assisted by aggressive patrolling by combat forces, located Iraqi forces (to include the counterattack by the Iraqi 5<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division from the Burqan oil field) forward of advancing friendly forces in sufficient time to prevent them from interfering with I MEF operations.

Reconnaissance pull is preferred when the MEF is able to maneuver freely, and can exploit the enemy weaknesses located by reconnaissance forces. It is the preferred method during offensive operations, as it takes advantage of the MEF's inherent flexibility and reconnaissance capabilities. Reconnaissance push is more often used when the MEF is following a predetermined course of action, when targeting and destruction of enemy forces is a priority, freedom of maneuver is limited, and usually when on the defense.

Reconnaissance, although naturally oriented towards the battlespace beyond the FEBA, should not ignore the threat to the rear area, attacking friendly command and control nodes, lines of communications, and logistics facilities. To prevent the enemy in the rear area from interfering with friendly combat operations, sufficient MEF reconnaissance capabilities should be devoted to the rear area.

Reconnaissance efforts must be coordinated between different echelons of command within the MEF as well as within the joint force to avoid duplication of effort by scarce reconnaissance assets and to facilitate turnover of reconnaissance responsibilities as units maneuver throughout the battlespace.

Reconnaissance assets may be given the additional mission of engaging enemy forces with combined arms in order to disrupt and delay their advance. With advances in technology, there is now an emerging capability to directly communicate between a specific MEF reconnaissance asset via automated data link and a fire support unit (sensor to shooter). Automatically transmitting target data from the sensor directly to the aircraft or firing unit brings combat power to bear against the enemy before the situation can change.

In MOOTW reconnaissance forces provide a broad range of capabilities from direct-action combat missions to support for disaster relief and humanitarian operations. MOOTW calls for pinpoint intelligence collection accuracy and timely reporting to support MEF delivery of services, fires or other support, and also usually for great restraint in the use of force. Reconnaissance operations may emphasize objectives such as the location and identification of lines of communications, services, and infrastructure to support threatened civilian populations. The CI/HUMINT capabilities of the MEF are exceptionally useful in the surveillance of indigenous peoples and identification and targeting of the hostile segments of the population.

#### **d. Counterreconnaissance**

At the same time that the MEF is conducting its reconnaissance operations the enemy will be conducting similar operations to determine the disposition of friendly forces. For example, when the enemy comes under indirect fire, they will increase their counterreconnaissance operations to locate and destroy the friendly reconnaissance elements controlling the fire.

Counterreconnaissance prevents the enemy from collecting sufficient information about friendly activities to interfere with them. Counterreconnaissance consists of all measures taken to prevent hostile observation of a force, area, or place. It focuses on denying the enemy access to essential elements of friendly information, information about the MEF in the security area, the flanks, and the rear that would further enemy objectives.

Counterreconnaissance consists of active and passive measures. Active measures detect, fix, and destroy enemy reconnaissance elements. Passive measures conceal friendly units and capabilities and deceive and confuse the enemy. There are two components of counterreconnaissance—the detection of enemy reconnaissance forces and the targeting, destruction, or suppression of those reconnaissance forces so they cannot report friendly unit positions or activities. Counterreconnaissance consists of the following:

- Develop named areas of interest and targeted areas of interest for likely enemy reconnaissance forces.
- Conduct continuous surveillance of designated named areas of interest and targeted areas of interest.
- Execute targeting plan against enemy reconnaissance forces.
- Recover forward security elements.

Reconnaissance operations support counterreconnaissance through the collection of information on enemy reconnaissance forces, assets, and activities. Counterreconnaissance in turn supports security operations by protecting the MEF from enemy collection.

## **6002. Security**

Security is inherent in all MEF operations. MEF security forces aggressively and continuously seek the enemy and reconnoiter key terrain. They conduct active reconnaissance to detect enemy movement or preparations for action and to learn as much as possible about the terrain. The ultimate goal is to determine the enemy's course of action and assist the main body in countering it. The security force uses a combination of ground patrols, observation posts, electronic warfare, and aviation assets to perform security.

Security in offensive operations is achieved by employing security elements to protect the MEF from unexpected attack, long range fires, and observation by the enemy. The MEF commander can employ a wide range of forces and capabilities to conduct security operations. This can include using—

- Aviation forces to screen the main force from enemy interference during fast moving offensive operations.
- Ground forces to control, seize, or retain terrain to prevent enemy observation.
- Sensors (UAVs, radar and seismic sensors) to detect the enemy or his long range fires.

Planning of security operations must take into consideration the possibility of security forces making contact with the enemy and, if the situation dictates, include provisions for handing over the battle to the main force.

In the defense, the security force engages the enemy in the security area, screening, guarding, and covering as ordered. (See Figure 6-1.)

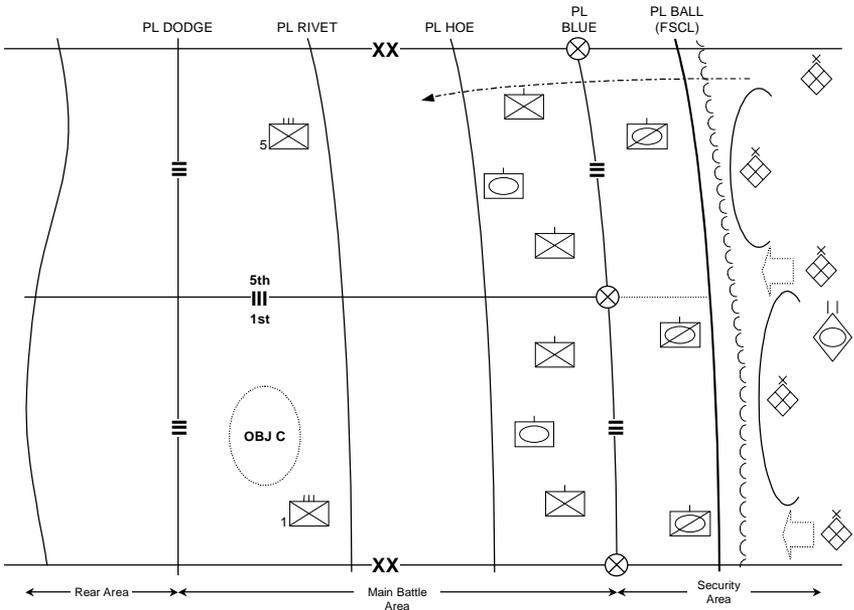


Figure 6-1. Security area.

Normally, the commander designates the security force as his initial main effort. This force maintains contact with the enemy while falling back under pressure. At a predetermined location, normally a phase line designated as a handover line, control of the battle is transferred to the main battle force. A handover line is a control measure, preferably following easily defined terrain features, at which the responsibility for the conduct of combat operations is passed from one force to another. The transfer of control must be carefully coordinated. The main battle force supports the disengagement of the security force as it withdraws in preparation for its subsequent mission. The commander may shift the main effort to the appropriate element of the main battle force. As the enemy's advance force approaches the main battle area, execution of the defensive battle becomes increasingly decentralized.

At some point, the defending commander must plan for the enemy force breaking through the friendly security forces and approaching the main battle force. This requires transitioning friendly forces and control of the battle from security forces to the main battle force. Whenever the battle is transitioned, it requires coordination from the highest common commander.

There are three types of security missions. They vary in the degree of security provided, the forces and capabilities required, and the degree of engagement with the enemy that the commander desires. From the least degree of protection to the greatest, they are: *screen*, *guard*, and *cover*. The forces that conduct these security missions are called: a screen, a guard, or a covering force. These forces may be further identified by the establishing headquarters and the location of the security force. For example: MEF covering force, division advance guard, or regimental flank screen. Security forces may consist of existing units, reinforced units, or task organized forces.

### **a. Screen**

A screen observes, identifies, and reports information; it only fights in self-protection. A screen—

- Provides early warning of enemy approach.
- Gains and maintains enemy contact and reports enemy activity.
- Within capabilities, conducts counterreconnaissance.
- Within capabilities, impedes and harasses the enemy.

A screen only provides surveillance and early warning of enemy action—not physical protection. It can be employed as an economy of force measure in a low risk area because it provides security on a broad frontage with limited assets. The screen provides the least amount of protection of any security mission; it does not have the combat power to develop the situation. Aviation combat forces may be used to screen large, open areas during rapid and deep offensive operations. Terrain, weather, and the duration of the screen are critical considerations when assigning screening missions to aviation forces. The screen may operate within range of friendly artillery positioned with the ground forces because of its immediate availability. The ACE can also provide this fire support capability, but the cost in resources versus time is a factor (e.g., one section of F/A-18s may require an entire squadron to ensure 24 hour coverage.)

**(1) Offensive Screen.** The screening force primarily engages and destroys enemy reconnaissance elements within its capability but otherwise fights only in self-defense. It primarily uses indirect fires or close air support to destroy enemy reconnaissance elements and slow the movement of other enemy forces. The screen has the minimum combat power necessary to provide the desired early warning while allowing the commander to retain the bulk of his combat power to execute the decisive action.

**(2) Defensive Screen.** During defensive operations, security elements screen a stationary force by establishing a series of positions along a designated screen line. The positions are located to provide overlapping observation. Areas that cannot be observed from these positions are normally patrolled. Screening forces report any sightings of enemy activity and engage enemy forces with fires. Maintaining contact, the screen falls back along previously reconnoitered routes to subsequent positions. Screening forces should avoid becoming decisively engaged.

## **b. Guard**

A guard protects the main force from attack, direct fire, and ground observation by fighting to gain time, while also observing and reporting information. A guard—

- Provides early warning of enemy approach.
- Provides maneuver space to the front, flanks, or rear of the force.

- Screens, attacks, defends, or delays, within its capabilities, to protect the force.

A guard force protects the main body by fighting to gain time while also observing and reporting information and preventing enemy ground observation of and direct fire against the main body. A guard differs from a screen in that a guard force contains sufficient combat power to defeat, repel, or fix the lead elements of an enemy ground force before they can engage the main body with direct fire.

The commander may assign guard missions to reinforced light armor units or task organized maneuver elements, including ACE assets. A guard normally operates within range of friendly artillery positioned with the ground forces. It normally operates on a narrower front than a screen because it is expected to fight. In extreme cases, a guard may have to conduct sustained and prolonged fighting against the enemy to fulfill its primary mission to protect the force. The commander may order the guard to hold for a specified period of time.

**(1) Offensive Guard.** An offensive guard may be established to the front, flanks, or rear to provide protection of the main body during the advance. Guard forces orient on the movement of the main body of the MEF. They provide security along specific routes of movement of the main body. They operate within the range of the main body's fire support weapons, deploying over a narrower front than a comparable-size screening force to permit concentration of combat power.

**(2) Defensive Guard.** A security element guards the MEF in the defense by establishing a series of mutually supporting positions. The guard may establish a screen line forward of these positions. These positions immediately report any enemy contact and engage with fires at maximum range. The guard defends in place, attacks, or delays to rearward positions. Routes and subsequent positions should have been previously reconnoitered.

The three types of guard forces are—

- **Advance Guard.** The advance guard operates within supporting range of the main body and protects it from ground observation and direct fire.

- **Flank Guard.** A flank guard operates to the flank of a moving or stationary force to protect it from enemy ground observation, direct fire, and surprise attack. A flank guard must protect the entire depth of the main force's flank.
- **Rear Guard.** A rear guard protects the rear of the column from hostile forces. It attacks, defends, and delays as necessary, but it does not develop the situation to the point that it loses contact with the main force.

### c. Cover

A cover operates apart from the main force to intercept, engage, delay, disorganize, and deceive the enemy before he can attack the main body. It prevents surprise during the advance. A cover—

- Gains and maintains contact with the enemy.
- Denies the enemy information about the size, strength, composition, and intention of the main force.
- Conducts counterreconnaissance and destroys enemy security forces.
- Develops the situation to determine enemy dispositions, strengths, and weaknesses.

A cover screens, guards, attacks, defends, and delays as necessary to accomplish its mission. It is a self-contained maneuver force that operates beyond the range of friendly artillery positioned with the main force. A cover may be task organized, including aviation, artillery, tank, reconnaissance, and combat service support, to operate independently. The cover mission may be expressed in terms of time or friendly and enemy disposition (e.g., “Engage enemy forces until our main body deploys for attack.”)

A covering force protects the main body by fighting to gain time while also observing and reporting information and preventing enemy ground observation of and direct fire against the main body. A covering force operates outside supporting range of the main body to develop the situation. It deceives the enemy about the location of the main body while disrupting and destroying his forces. This provides the main body with the maximum early warning and reaction time. The distance forward of the main body depends on the intentions and instructions of the main body commander, the terrain, the location and strength of the enemy, and the rates of march of

both the main body and the covering force. The width of the covering force area is the same as that of the main body.

Unlike a screening or guard force, a covering force is self-contained and capable of operating independently of the main body. A covering force, or portions of it, often becomes decisively engaged with enemy forces. Therefore, the covering force must have substantial combat power to engage the enemy and accomplish its mission. A covering force develops the situation earlier than a screen or a guard. It fights longer and more often and defeats larger enemy forces.

While a covering force provides more security than a screen or guard, it also requires more resources. Before assigning a cover mission, the commander must ensure that he has sufficient combat power to resource a covering force and the decisive operation. When the commander lacks the resources to support both, he must assign his security force a less resource-intensive security mission, either a screen or a guard.

**(1) Offensive Covering Force.** In the offense, a covering force is normally expected to penetrate the enemy's security forces and main defensive positions sufficiently to facilitate MEF main body units attacking the enemy's main defenses in depth; to identify the location and deployment of enemy forces in the main defensive positions; and to limit the ability of the enemy security forces to collect intelligence and disrupt the deployment and commitment of forces from the main body.

**(2) Defensive Covering Force.** In the defense, a covering force conducts operations to either defend against or delay an attacking enemy force. A defensive covering force may be tasked to force the enemy to prematurely deploy and commence his attack; to identify the enemy effort; and to reduce the enemy's strength by destroying specific maneuver units and stripping away essential assets such as artillery. The defensive covering force must have mobility equal to or greater than that of the enemy.

#### **d. Security Operations During Other Tactical Operations**

Inherent in the conduct of security operations, especially in the defense, is the requirement to execute a passage of lines. In an advance, security forces may be required to fix enemy forces in place and allow the main body to

pass through in the attack. Faced with a superior enemy force or in the conduct of security operations in the defense, security forces must fall back and execute a rearward passage of lines, handing the battle over to elements of the main body. During retrograde operations, the covering force may be used to facilitate and protect the withdrawal of the main body. At the appropriate time, the security must break contact with the enemy. In order to avoid decisive engagement, the security forces must have the mobility and firepower to disengage. During obstacle crossings, the security force is required to protect the breaching force and prevent the enemy from interfering.

#### **e. Reconnaissance and Security Operations During Military Operations Other Than War**

Security operations in MOOTW are complicated by the requirement to extend the protection of the force to include civilians and other non-governmental organizations, the desire for minimal casualties, and the effect of media coverage. The MEF commander must be ready to counter any activity that could endanger friendly units or jeopardize the operation. Even in a non-hostile operation with little or no perceived risk, all MEF personnel should be prepared to quickly transition to combat operations should circumstances dictate. In these situations, the mission of military forces commonly has aspects that are *preventive* in nature. That is, the MEF can accomplish its mission by preventing individuals or groups from carrying on undesirable activities such as rioting and looting or attacking, harassing, and otherwise threatening opponents. Sometimes, hostile elements blend in with the local population of uninvolved citizens. Other times, sectors of the local population may rise against MEF forces and become active participants in acts of violence. Factional alignments, the level of violence, and the threat to mission accomplishment may change frequently and with little or no warning. Under such circumstances, the identity of opponents is uncertain, and the use of deadly force for purposes other than self-defense may be constrained by rules of engagement or by the judgment of the commander on the scene.

Non-lethal weapons expand the number of options available to commanders confronting situations in which the use of deadly force poses problems. They provide flexibility by allowing the MEF to apply measured military force with reduced risk of serious noncombatant casualties, but still in such a manner as to provide force protection and effect compliance. Because

non-lethal weapons can be employed at a lower threshold of danger, the MEF can respond to an evolving threat situation more rapidly. This will allow the MEF to retain the initiative and reduce its vulnerability. Thus, a robust non-lethal capability will assist in bringing into balance the conflicting requirements of mission accomplishment, force protection, and safety of noncombatants. It will therefore enhance the utility and relevance of military force as an option while simultaneously enhancing the security of the MEF. The capabilities of reconnaissance forces can take on an unusual importance in MOOTW. Missions can range from direct-action combat missions to disaster relief and humanitarian operations. Such operations call for pinpoint intelligence collection accuracy and timely reporting to support MEF delivery of services, fires or other support, and also usually for great restraint in the use of force. Reconnaissance operations may emphasize objectives such as the location and identification of lines of communications, services, and infrastructure to support threatened civilian populations.

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## Appendix A

# Warfighting Functions

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Warfighting functions are conceptual planning and execution tools used by planners and subject matter experts in each of the functional areas to produce comprehensive plans. They should not be viewed independently of one another but as inseparable parts of a whole. The warfighting functions help the commander to achieve unity of effort and build and sustain combat power. Their effective application, in concert with one another, will facilitate the planning and conduct of expeditionary operations.

### A-1. Command and Control

Command and control is the exercise of authority and direction over assigned or attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission. Command and control involves arranging personnel, equipment, and facilities to allow the commander to extend his influence over the force during the planning and conducting of military operations. Command and control is the overarching warfighting function that enables all of the other warfighting functions.

Command has two vital components—decisionmaking and leadership. Decisionmaking is choosing *if* to decide, then *when* and *what* to decide. It also includes recognizing the consequences of the act of deciding, and anticipating the outcomes that can be expected from the implementation of the decision. Leadership is taking responsibility for decisions; being loyal to subordinates, inspiring and directing Marines toward a purposeful end, and demonstrating physical and moral courage in the face of adversity. Command remains a very personal function. Professional competence, personality, and the will of strong commanders represent a significant part of any unit's combat power. The commander goes where he can best influence the action, where his moral and physical presence can be felt, and where his will to achieve a decision can best be expressed, understood, and acted upon. The focus of command and control is on the commander—his

intent, guidance, and decisions and how he receives feedback on the results of his actions. Commander's command while staffs coordinate, making necessary control adjustments consistent with the commander's intent.

Control is inherent in command. Control allows the staff to monitor the status of the command, assess the gap between what was planned and what has been accomplished, and to direct action to exploit new opportunities or to correct deficiencies. Control serves its purpose if it allows the commander freedom to operate, delegate authority, lead from any critical point on the battlefield, and synchronize actions across his AO.

## **A-2. Maneuver**

Maneuver is the movement of forces for the purpose of gaining an advantage over the enemy in order to accomplish an objective. That advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial. Maneuver is movement relative to the enemy to put him at a disadvantage. It normally includes the movement of forces on the battlefield in combination with fire. Maneuver is the dynamic element of combat, the means of concentrating forces for decisive action to achieve the surprise, psychological shock, physical momentum, and moral dominance that enables smaller forces to defeat larger ones. Commanders maneuver their forces to create the conditions for tactical and operational success. Forces may maneuver in other dimensions as well. For instance, a force may also maneuver in time by increasing relative speed and operating at a faster tempo than the enemy.

Maneuver is rarely effective without firepower and force protection. Maneuver and firepower are complimentary dynamics of combat. Although one might dominate a phase of the battle, the synchronized effects of both characterize all operations. Mobility operations such as breaching, route improvement, and bridging preserve the freedom of maneuver of friendly force. Countermobility operations such as building obstacles in conjunction with fires hinder enemy maneuver and deny mobility to enemy forces. Deception can also enhance the effectiveness of maneuver through psychological shock and surprise.

### **A-3. Fires**

Fires are the employment of firepower against air, ground, and sea targets. Fires delay, disrupt, degrade, or destroy enemy capabilities, forces, or facilities, as well as affect the enemy's will to fight. It includes the collective and coordinated use of target acquisition systems, direct and indirect fire weapons, armed aircraft of all types, and other lethal and nonlethal means, such as electronic warfare and physical destruction. Fires are normally used in concert with maneuver and help to shape the battlespace, setting conditions for decisive action.

Synchronizing fires with maneuver is critical to the successful prosecution of combat operations. Commanders synchronize organic and supporting joint fire assets with their scheme of maneuver to get maximum effects of fires. Generating effective firepower against an enemy requires that organic and supporting fires be coordinated with other warfighting functions such as intelligence, maneuver, and logistics. Subordinate fire support systems and processes for determining priorities, identifying and locating targets, allocating fires assets, attacking targets, and assessing battle damage must be fully integrated. The employment of all available fires throughout the depth of the battlespace as an integrated and synchronized whole is done through the process of fire support planning, coordination, and execution.

### **A-4. Logistics**

Logistics encompasses all activities required to move and sustain military forces. At the tactical level, logistics is referred to as combat service support and involves arming, fueling, fixing equipment, moving, supplying, manning, and by providing personnel health and services. A dependable uninterrupted logistics system helps the commander seize and maintain the initiative. Conversely, attacking the enemy's support system can often threaten or weaken his COG.

Commanders should anticipate requirements in order to push the right support forward. Tactical and operational success depends on fully integrating concepts of logistics and operations. Commanders should develop a logistics system that can react rapidly in crises or can sustain efforts to exploit tactical success. Logistics must also be prepared to support

other operations, such as civil affairs. Logistics arrangements cannot be so meager that they do not meet the needs of commanders as they execute their operations, nor can they be so excessive that they overwhelm the ability of commanders to conduct operations effectively.

## **A-5. Force Protection**

Force protection is those measures taken to protect the force's fighting potential so that it can be applied at the appropriate time and place. It includes those measures the force takes to remain viable by protecting itself from the effects from enemy activities and natural occurrences. Force protection is essential to the preservation of combat power across the spectrum of operations, even in benign environments. However, since risk is an inherent condition of war, force protection does not imply over-cautiousness or the avoidance of calculated risk.

Force protection safeguards friendly COGs and protects, conceals, reduces, or eliminates friendly critical vulnerabilities. Survivability operations protect friendly forces from the effects of enemy weapon systems and from natural occurrences. Hardening of facilities and fortifications of battle positions are active survivability measures. Deception, operational security, computer network defense, and dispersion, in conjunction with security operations can increase survivability. Public affairs and civil affairs can also provide force protection by establishing a positive perception of U.S. forces and actions among the local population. Air defense operations provide the force with protection from enemy air and missile attack.

## **A-6. Intelligence**

Intelligence provides the commander with an understanding of the enemy and the battlespace as well as identifying the enemy's COGs and critical vulnerabilities. It assists the commander in understanding the situation, alerting him to new opportunities, and helps to assess the effects of actions upon the enemy. Intelligence drives operations and is always focused on the enemy. Intelligence supports the formulation and subsequent modification of the commander's estimate of the situation by providing as accurate an image of the battlespace and the threat as possible. It is a dynamic process

that is used to assess the current situation and confirm or deny the adoption of specific courses of action by the enemy and helps refine the commander's understanding of the battlespace and reduces un-certainty and risk.

Intelligence provides indications and warnings of potential hostile action, which prevents surprise and reduces risk from enemy actions. Intelligence supports force protection by identifying, locating, and countering an enemy's intelligence collection, sabotage, subversion, and terrorism capabilities. It also supports targeting by identifying target systems, critical nodes, and high-value targets and locating high-payoff targets. Intelligence support is critical to the planning, execution, and assessment of information operations. Finally, intelligence supports combat assessment by providing battle damage assessment, which is the timely and accurate estimate of the damage resulting from the application of military force.

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## Appendix B

# Planning and Employment Considerations

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## B-1. Offensive Operations

Decisive victory rarely is the result of success gained in an initial attack; rather, it is the result of quickly and relentlessly exploiting that initial success. As specific opportunities for exploitation cannot be anticipated with certainty, the commander plans thoroughly and develops sequels based on potential outcomes of the battle. He prepares mentally for any contingency, identifying tentative concepts of operation and missions and objectives for each element of the MEF.

### a. Aviation Combat Element Considerations

The ACE may conduct offensive operations to defeat; destroy; or neutralize the enemy. The MEF must ensure that adequate battlespace is assigned to employ all the capabilities of available ACE assets. The MEF commander takes advantage of the ACE's capabilities—range, speed, mobility, and agility—to shape the battlespace and set conditions for decisive action. MEF aviation assets will be integrated into MEF offensive operations either as the main effort or in a supporting role.

The “Policy for Command and Control of USMC Tactical Air in Sustained Operations Ashore,” found in Joint Pub 0-2, directs the MEF commander to provide sorties to the joint force commander for air defense, long-range interdiction, and long range reconnaissance. He must also provide sorties in excess of MEF direct support requirements. The MEF commander may task-organize aviation, ground, and combat service support units under a single commander to execute the form of offensive maneuver selected. When considering the employment of MEF aviation assets in the offense, planners must look at weather considerations and the duration of employment.

Three closely related activities occur within the MEF's single battle: *deep*, *close*, and *rear* operations. As a result, the ACE will be integral in each operation in depth to support the MEF's single battle.

- **Deep Operations.** The ACE conducts deep operations by providing fires through offensive air support (deep and close air support); force protection through antiair warfare, air reconnaissance, and electronic warfare; and support of maneuver, insertion, movement, and resupply of forces in the deep area through assault support. Security missions such as screening may be conducted in the deep area by the ACE.
- **Close Operations.** The ACE can be the decisive action for lasting effects on the battlefield. MEF commanders shape the course of the battle and can pick from a combination of the types of offensive operations and forms of maneuver to use at the critical time and place to close with and destroy the enemy. For example, commanders may fix a part of the enemy forces with aviation forces through offensive air support and then envelop using the GCE to defeat the enemy. The ACE can augment the combat power of the reserve, when committed by the MEF commander at the decisive time and place.
- **Rear Operations.** MEF commanders should allocate adequate resources to maintain freedom of action and continuity of operations. Aviation assets can support the force in the rear because of the range, speed, mobility, and agility. Assault support assets increase the mobility of the tactical combat force that operates in the rear area. To decrease reaction time, ACE assets may be employed as direct support assets to the rear area commander by the MEF commander.

**(1) Types of Offensive Operations.** The ACE can conduct or support all types of offensive operations.

- **Movement to Contact.** The initial task of the ACE is to locate the enemy by reconnoitering forward or by screening the flanks of the force. Rotary-wing aircraft are well-suited to gain, regain, or maintain continuous contact with the enemy during movement to contact. Once the ACE locates the enemy it may use offensive air support to fix him. The MEF commander can then use the ACE to attack, to support an attack by the GCE, or bypass the enemy force. During a movement to contact, aviation assets may perform a number of tasks to include:

- Reconnoiter and determine the trafficability of all high-speed routes, bridges, culverts, overpasses, underpasses, bypasses, and fords within the zone.
  - Find and report all enemy forces within the zone and help determine their size, composition, and activity. The ACE is capable of establishing visual and electromagnetic contact with the enemy at extended ranges.
  - Provide aviation assets for advance force, flank security, or rear security missions associated with the MEF's movement to conduct.
  - Conduct screening missions.
  - Provide fires and assault support for the force.
- **Attack.** MEF aviation assets will be integrated into MEF attack operations either as the main effort or in a supporting role. During attack operations, MEF aviation assets may be employed in the close fight or they can be employed deep against second echelon forces, enemy artillery, enemy helicopter forces, and enemy reaction forces which could disrupt the momentum of the MEF attack. Operations beyond the depth of the close fight, especially when conducted in synchronization with other combined arms and joint service contributions, can break the cohesion of enemy defenses and lead to exploitation and pursuit. During attack operations, the ACE may perform a number of tasks to include:
- Disrupt, degrade, or destroy specific enemy units.
  - Envelop (along a specific axis) enemy forces.
  - Block enemy forces.
  - Conduct raids against enemy units.
  - Fix enemy units.
  - Screen or guard.
  - Conduct counterattacks.
  - Conduct feints or demonstrations.

While MEF aviation forces are capable of performing the tasks and/or missions listed above, they will seldom execute them alone. The MEF will employ forces with a variety of integrated, mutually supporting forces. An example might be the ACE attacking a second echelon enemy unit under the direction of a force reconnaissance

team. To allow the aircraft to reach the target area, the GCE suppresses an enemy air defense site along the ingress route.

- **Exploitation.** During exploitation operations, MEF aviation assets may be used to maintain pressure on the collapsing enemy forces. MEF aviation operations may be tasked to prevent the enemy from reconstituting a defense, to prevent the withdrawal of enemy forces to other defensible terrain, and to destroy the enemy command and control during exploitation operations. They may also be used to strike enemy attempting to reform or to provide reconnaissance in front of friendly advancing ground exploitation forces. MEF aerial reconnaissance gives the MEF commander the capability to exploit by using the greatest advantage that MEF aviation has to offer: range and speed.

During exploitation, the MEF commander assumes risk on the flanks and in the rear. He can employ aviation assets to minimize the risk by assigning the ACE to protect the flanks and can also assign direct support aviation assets to the rear area.

- **Pursuit.** During a pursuit, the inherent speed and mobility of aviation forces are ideally suited to maintain enemy contact, develop the situation, and deliver aerial fires upon positions of enemy resistance. Since pursuit is a difficult phase of an operation to predict, ground forces may not be positioned to properly exploit the situation. Aviation forces may be moved quickly and may be tasked to find, fix, and attack fleeing enemy units; locate the enemy strike forces; and guide the GCE into attack positions or around enemy exposed flanks. The maneuverability and firepower of MEF aviation assets make it the optimum force to conduct pursuit operations.

**(2) Forms of Offensive Maneuver.** The MEF commander chooses the form of maneuver that fully exploits all the dimensions of the battlespace, and that fully utilizes the capabilities of the MAGTF that best accomplishes the mission. The MEF commander organizes and employs the ACE to best support the chosen form of maneuver

- **Envelopment.** In an envelopment, the enemy's defensive positions may be bypassed using vertical envelopment from assault support

assets. The commander may choose to conduct a double envelopment, and helicopterborne forces can be effectively used on a different route to attack than those of the GCE. This allows forces to converge with minimal risk of fratricide caused by two opposing friendly ground forces coming from different attack routes in a double envelopment. The ACE can screen the flanks of an enveloping force reducing its vulnerability to enemy counteraction.

- **Turning Movement.** A turning movement may use aviation forces to pass around the enemy's principal defensive positions to secure by helicopterborne forces or fires objectives deep in the enemy's rear using the ACE's advantages in speed, range, and mobility. The turning force usually operates at such distances from the fixing forces that mutual support is unlikely, except in the case of aviation units that can mutually support ground forces because of speed, range, mobility, agility, and line-of-sight communications. The ACE can screen the flanks of a turning force reducing its vulnerability to enemy counteraction.
- **Infiltration.** During infiltration, the ACE can:
  - Achieve surprise.
  - Occupy a position from which to support the main attack by fire, especially rotary-wing close air support assets that can hover or land.
  - Conduct ambushes and raids in the enemy's rear area to harass and disrupt his command and control and support activities.
  - Cut off enemy forward units.

However, without augmentation by the GCE, the ACE would have difficulty securing key terrain.

- **Penetration.** A penetration is a form of offensive maneuver that seeks to breach the enemy's main defenses creating an assailable flank where none existed before. Aviation forces can create and support the penetration or they can attack the flanks once the break has been made through the enemy's main defenses.
- **Flanking Attack.** Aviation forces work well when conducting a flanking attack because the enemy's strength is normally oriented to the front and aviation forces can use of all of the battlespace to attack from the flanks to minimize the enemy's strengths.

- **Frontal Attack.** Aviation forces are often used to create gaps with fires in the enemy's front or to prevent or delay enemy reinforcements reaching the front lines. Normally, the ACE will support the GCE in a MEF frontal attack.

## **b. Ground Combat Element Considerations**

The GCE is a task-organized, combined arms force that closes with and defeats the enemy through the use of fires and maneuver. The MEF greatly enhances the combined arms capabilities resident in the GCE by extending the battlespace through application of firepower, information operations, target acquisition, and mobility. The GCE is particularly effective in battlespace with restricted mobility, such as urban, wooded, mountainous or jungle. It is also highly effective in limited visibility and in missions to attack, defeat, and clear enemy in prepared defenses.

To increase tactical tempo and flexibility, mobility, survivability, seize initiative, and provide shock effect to the enemy, the assault forces of the GCE can be transported by helicopter or organic assault amphibian vehicles. GCE mobility is often provided by a combination of these means.

- **Distribution of Forces.** One of the primary ways the commander can influence the course of the attack is through the distribution of force into a main attack, one or more supporting attacks, and a reserve. By properly distributing his assets, the commander achieves superiority at the decisive time and place while maintaining the minimum necessary forces elsewhere to accomplish supporting tasks. The GCE, because of their flexibility and capabilities are ideally suited for assignment to any of these missions.
- **Main Effort.** The GCE commander provides the bulk of his combat power to the main effort to maintain momentum and ensure accomplishment of the mission. The commander personally allocates resources or shifts his main effort as needed. The GCE, together with other elements of the MEF, reconnoiters extensively to locate enemy strengths and weaknesses. Once a weakness is identified, the GCE commander rapidly maneuvers his main effort to exploit it.

The main effort is provided with the greatest mobility and the preponderance of combat support and combat service support. Consideration is made to the mobility, survivability, shock effect,

sustainability, and lasting effect of the GCE when determining of which force is designated as the main effort. The commander normally gives the main effort priority of fire support.

Reserves are echeloned in depth to support exploitation of the main effort's success. The commander can further concentrate the main effort by assigning it a narrower zone of action. All other actions are designed to support the main effort.

- **Supporting Effort.** The commander assigns the minimum combat power necessary to accomplish the purpose of each supporting effort. A supporting effort in the offense is carried out in conjunction with the main effort to achieve one or more of the following:
  - Deceive the enemy as to the location of the main effort.
  - Destroy or fix enemy forces that could shift to oppose the main effort.
  - Control terrain that if occupied by the enemy will hinder the main effort.
  - Force the enemy to commit reserves prematurely.

In support of the MEF single battle, the GCE can be an ideal supporting effort for the ACE when the ACE is assigned as the main effort. In logistic-oriented missions, such as humanitarian assistance operations, the GCE can be an ideal supporting effort for the combat service support detachment if that element is assigned as the main effort.

- **Reserves.** The primary purpose of the reserve is to attack at the critical time and place to ensure the victory or exploit success. Its strength and location will vary with its contemplated mission, the form of maneuver, the terrain, the possible enemy reaction, and the clarity of the situation. The reserve should be:
  - Positioned to readily reinforce the main effort.
  - Employed to exploit success, not to reinforce failure.
  - Committed in strength, not piecemeal.
  - Reconstituted immediately.

**(1) Types of Offensive Operations.** An attack by the GCE rarely develops exactly as planned. The commander must be prepared to take advantage of fleeting opportunities that present themselves during offensive operations. To exploit these opportunities and generate tempo, command and control must be decentralized. Subordinate commanders must make decisions using their initiative and understanding of their senior's intent. In the attack, the GCE must minimize his exposure to enemy fire by using rapid maneuver and counterfire, exploiting cover offered by the terrain, avoiding obstacles, and maintaining security.

The GCE commander employs his organic fires and supporting arms in coordination with maneuver to enable him to close with the enemy. The commander prepares for the attack by successively delivering fires on enemy fire support assets, command and control assets and support facilities, and frontline units. These fires protect the force and restrict the enemy's ability to counter the attack. Artillery and other supporting arms ensure continuity of support and the ability to mass fires by timely displacement. During the final stages of the attack, the attacker must rely primarily on organic fires to overcome remaining enemy resistance.

The attack culminates in a powerful and violent assault. The assaulting units overrun the enemy using fire and movement. The attacker exploits success immediately by continuing to attack into the depth of the enemy to further disrupt his defense. Deep operations, augmented with ACE or other MEF fires and information operations, attack enemy command and control and critical logistic nodes or second echelon maneuver forces, helping to break down the enemy's cohesion. As the defense begins to disintegrate, the attacker pursues the enemy to defeat him completely.

- **Movement to Contact.** Using its internal reconnaissance and security assets, in coordination with MEF and ACE capabilities, the GCE finds and maintains contact while developing the situation with ground combat enemy forces in order to achieve the commander's decisive action. The GCE will initiate contact with as minimal force as necessary so as to maintain freedom of maneuver with the bulk of his force. Once contact is gained, it is not normally broken without authority from the MEF commander. The GCE commander must exercise careful judgment to ensure that by maintaining contact, his force is not bending to the will of the enemy or being drawn into an ambush or other consequential action.

- **Attack.** In the MEF single battle, the ACE and GCE, when supported in depth by the CSSE, have complimentary capabilities. When integrated for the purpose of the attack, these capabilities can significantly increase their combined effects on the enemy for greater tactical decisiveness. In an attack, the GCE commander prevents effective enemy maneuver or counteraction by seizing the initiative through the use of his organic intelligence and security elements while masking his true intentions. The GCE commander makes every effort to achieve surprise by such methods as attacking under cover of darkness or using terrain and/or weather to conceal his force as it closes with the enemy. Once the GCE has gained the advantage, the commander will focus his combat power against the enemy's COG through his critical vulnerabilities in order to destroy him and exploit all advantages gained.
- **Exploitation.** The GCE normally conducts an exploitation by continuing the attack with committed units or by launching an uncommitted unit into the attack through a passage of lines. The commander may commit his reserve as the exploitation force depending on the factors of METT-T. He will constitute a new reserve as soon as possible to defeat enemy counterattacks and to restore momentum to a stalled attack.
- **Pursuit.** Success in the pursuit is particularly enhanced through extensive use of the ACE to support the GCE's rapid movement and to provide flank security. Combat service support planning by the GCE in advance of the initial attack must take into account success and ensure that the combat trains have the mobility to support an aggressive pursuit.

**(2) Forms of Maneuver.** The GCE commander selects the best form of maneuver to support the MEF commander's concept of operation:

- **Envelopment.** The most successful envelopments by the GCE require MEF resources and support from the ACE and CSSE. By nature, envelopments require surprise, superior mobility (ground and/or air) on the part of the enveloping force, the main effort, and success by the supporting efforts to fix the enemy in place.
- **Turning Movement.** During a turning movement the main effort usually operates at such a distance from supporting efforts that its units are beyond mutual supporting distance. Therefore, the GCE's

main effort must be self-sufficient or integrated with highly mobile combat service support elements in order to reach the objective before becoming decisively engaged. A turning movement is rarely executed by a GCE of less than division strength. Consideration should be made to use the ACE as a supporting effort to capitalize on its inherent mobility, speed, and range.

- **Flanking Attack.** The GCE commander will use fires and terrain, and exploit weaknesses in enemy dispositions to create a flank. To the GCE, a flanking attack is similar to envelopment but is conducted on a shallower axis and is usually less decisive and less risky than a deeper attack. A flanking attack is usually conducted by battalions or below. This attack usually requires a supporting attack to occupy the enemy to the GCE's front.
- **Frontal Attack.** The GCE goal in the frontal attack is to fix or defeat the enemy. The GCE commander may conduct feints or demonstrations in other areas to weaken the enemy effort at the breach by causing him to shift his reserves to the GCE's advantage.
- **Infiltration.** The GCE commander must ensure that operational security is a top priority during planning and preparation for an infiltration as the forces conducting the infiltration are particularly vulnerable to surprise and ambush. Prearranged helicopter delivered combat service support resupply is critical to support forces beyond the FEBA.
- **Penetration.** The GCE must closely coordinate its operations with the ACE to take advantage of the ACE's ability to create gaps in the enemy's defense.

### **c. Combat Service Support Element Considerations**

Combat service support planners should keep continuously informed of operation plans. They anticipate offensive operations even while supporting other types of operations. The objective of combat service support conducted in support of offensive operations is to extend operational reach and increase the endurance of the force by supporting as far forward as possible with a logistics system that is optimized for throughput.

To prepare for an attack, combat service support elements ensure that all support equipment is ready and that supplies are best located for support. They ensure that enough transportation is available to support the tactical

and support plans. Commanders ensure that all support elements understand their responsibilities.

The forward deployment of CSSEs must take into account the vulnerability of the unit to enemy counterattack and maneuver element requirements for space and roads. CSSEs, especially mobile combat service support detachments, require security assistance. They need to be written into the fire support plan, have their own list of on-call targets, and have assets to call for fire from artillery and aviation platforms, as well as have established procedures for actions upon enemy contact.

The fundamental principle of supply support in the offense is responsiveness—to the supported unit. Supply support is typically more difficult in the offense than in the defense because of the ever-changing locations of units and their support areas. The concept of support becomes even more important and increasingly difficult to execute. Combat service support planners must coordinate preparations and unit positioning with deception plans to avoid giving away the element of surprise. Consequently, most combat service support operations will be conducted under the cover of darkness.

**(1) Ammunition.** Responsive ammunition support for offensive operations is critical. This support is more difficult in offensive operations due to the lengthening of supply lines and the need for user resupply vehicles to stay close to firing elements. In preparing for the attack, logistics planners consider the following:

- Placing ammunition close to the user.
- Preparing ammunition supply points and ammunition transfer points to rapidly move forward as the attack advances.
- Stockpiling artillery ammunition at designated firing positions (possibly forward of current positions).
- Moving ammunition forward with advancing elements to ensure that basic loads can be replenished quickly.

**(2) Fuel.** Offensive operations use large quantities of fuel. As a result, logisticians prepare for the attack by building up stocks in forward sites—while avoiding signaling intentions to the enemy. They also ensure that fuel supply elements can move forward as the attack develops. Control of bulk

transporter assets must be closely maintained throughout the AO. This is particularly true if the attack is highly successful and results in exploitation or pursuit.

**(3) Maintenance.** Planners ensure maintenance operations support momentum and massing at critical points. Maintenance personnel maximize momentum by repairing at the point of malfunction or damage. They enhance momentum by keeping the maximum number of weapon systems operable and mobile. Emphasis is on battle damage assessment and rapid return of equipment to the supported unit. Repair and recovery personnel perform their mission in forward areas.

**(4) Supply.** While Classes III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants) and V (ammunition) are the most important supplies in the offense, planners consider all classes of supply. While the need for barrier and fortification material decreases, for example, the requirement for obstacle, breaching, and bridging material may increase. Weapons system requirements may also be higher since weapon systems exposure to enemy fire during offensive operations is usually greater.

**(5) Transportation and Distribution.** Movement requirements heavily tax transportation resources. There may be a wide dispersion of units and lengthening lines of communication. There may also be an increased requirement for personnel replacements and some classes of supply, for example, fuel, and weapon systems. These factors demand close coordination and planning for the use of transportation assets. Techniques such as supply push (unit distribution) or mobile forward tactical resupply and refueling points may be incorporated into the concept of support. Resources such as transportation and supply infrastructure that may be secure in the more stable environment of defense may not be as reliable in the offense. The opening and securing of main supply routes and available logistics facilities to sustain the MEF's offensive operations must be included in the operational and combat service support planning.

The mobility of offensive operations requires reliance on motor and air transport. When considering the air transport mode, the planner also considers aerial delivery. Movement control personnel set priorities in accordance with the combatant commander's or joint force commander's priorities to ensure that transportation assets meet the most critical needs. Aerial delivery or external helicopter delivery may be in greater demand.

**(6) Medical.** Offensive operations increase the burden on medical resources. Planners can expect high casualties rates. High casualties and long evacuation lines will stress medical treatment and evacuation resources to their limits and may dictate augmentation for medical detachments. Fleet hospitals move forward in preparation for offensive operations to provide maximum treatment and holding facilities. When organic medical resources are insufficient, evacuation may require use of non-medical transportation assets, adding additional stress to an already overtaxed transportation system.

**(7) Services.** The main combat service support effort in the offense is to provide only the most critically needed support to the attacking force. Most service functions play a minor role. Commanders suspend some services until the situation stabilizes. Laundry, clothing exchange, and field showers may be temporarily suspended. Mortuary affairs/graves registration is a major exception. It continues and may intensify. Adequate mortuary affairs/graves registration supplies must be on hand. Mortuary affairs detachments maintain close communications with personnel elements to verify and report casualty information. They also aid in the identification of remains.

## **B-2. Defensive Operations**

An effective defense is never passive. The defender cannot prepare his positions and simply wait for the enemy to attack. Commanders at every level must seek every opportunity to wrest the initiative from the attacker and shift to the offense. Subordinate commanders take the necessary steps to maintain their positions and cover gaps in their dispositions by the use of observation, obstacles, fires, or reserves. The defense demands resolute will on the part of all commanders.

### **a. Aviation Combat Element Considerations**

The MEF commander uses speed, range, mobility, and agility of aviation assets to maximize concentration and flexibility in the defense. MEF aviation assets are integrated into MEF defensive operations either as the main effort or in a supporting role. During preparation for defensive operations, the ACE may support the covering force with aerial reconnaissance and fires. The MEF commander may task-organize aviation,

ground, and combat service support units under a single aviation combat commander to execute the form of defensive maneuver selected.

During defensive operations, the MEF commander organizes his battlespace into three areas: security area, main battle area, and rear area. The ACE will operate throughout all of these areas and is integral to the MEF's single battle in the defense.

- **Security Area.** Typically, operations in the security area include interdiction by air maneuver and fires. During the defense, aviation can be used to attack deep against high-payoff targets, enemy concentrations, moving columns, and to disrupt enemy COGs.

The MEF commander seeks to engage the enemy as far out as possible. Because of the mobility and range of aviation assets, the ACE has excellent capabilities to conduct these operations. ACE assets can be employed in depth to attack follow-on echelons before they can move forward to the main battle area. Aviation forces can be employed to conduct screening operations; in conjunction with ground forces, they conduct guard operations on an open flank. Normally, ACE forces are not given guard missions.

- **Main Battle Area.** The greater the depth of the main battle area, the greater the maneuver space for maximizing the capabilities of the ACE. A counterattack is an attack by part or all of a defending force against an attacking enemy force, for such specific purposes as regaining ground lost or cutting off and destroying enemy advance units. By using ACE assets as the counterattack force, they can be employed to conduct decisive action to regain the initiative.
- **Rear Area.** MEF commanders should allocate adequate resources to protect the rear area to maintain freedom of action and continuity of operations. Aviation assets can support the force in the rear because of the range, speed, and mobility. Often, ACE airfields operate in rear areas, and aviation assets must depend on those functions of security and sustainment required to maintain continuity of operations. Assault support assets increase the mobility of the tactical combat force that operates in the rear area. To increase reaction time, ACE assets may be employed as direct support assets to the rear area commander by the MEF commander.

**(1) Mobile Defense.** Since minimum force is placed forward to canalize, delay, disrupt, and deceive the enemy as to the actual location of the defense, MEF aviation assets can supplement mobile forces to fill in gaps where the MEF is most vulnerable. A mobile defense requires mobility greater than that of the attacker. The MEF generates the mobility advantage with helicopterborne forces and MEF aviation assets. The ACE can support through fires the displacement of GCE units to alternate and supplementary positions used in the mobile defense. Terrain and space are traded to draw the enemy deeper into the defensive area, causing him to overextend his force and expose his flanks to ACE assets. Together, MEF aviation assets and ground combat forces provide a much more effective strike force that can bring simultaneous fires to bear upon the enemy from unexpected directions.

**(2) Position Defense.** In a position defense, the MEF commander can employ his aviation assets (primarily his assault support aircraft) to help contain tactical emergencies, by disengaging them from an area and quickly concentrating them in another. Because of the ACE's mobility and agility, the MEF commander can risk reducing the size of the ground maneuver force placed in reserve. In a position defense, aviation assets can be used to blunt and contain enemy penetrations, to counterattack, and to exploit opportunities presented by the enemy.

## **b. Ground Combat Element Considerations**

The GCE conducts the defense through the assignment of sectors, battle or blocking positions, and strong points. These assignments are made in a manner that enhances depth and mutual support; that provides opportunities to trap or ambush the attacker; and that affords observation, surprise, and deception. The GCE commander maintains an awareness of concurrent delaying actions to take advantage of opportunities created by adjacent units. The GCE receives substantial heavy engineering and logistical support from the combat service support detachment to enhance the survivability, sustainability, and countermobility of its defensive positions. The ACE provides support to the GCE through assault support, close air support, and reconnaissance.

**(1) Security Forces.** GCE security forces are employed in the security area to delay, disrupt, and provide early warning of the enemy's advance and to deceive him as to the true location of the main battle area. These forces are assigned cover, guard, or screen missions.

**(2) Screening Force.** The GCE may establish a screening force to gain and maintain contact with the enemy, to observe enemy activity, to identify the enemy main effort, and to report information. In most situations, the minimum security force organized by the GCE is a screening force. Normally, the screening force only fights in self-defense, but may be tasked to—

- Repel enemy reconnaissance units as part of the GCE's counterreconnaissance effort.
- Prevent enemy artillery from acquiring terrain that enables frontline units to be engaged.
- Provide early warning.
- Attack the enemy with supporting arms.

**(3) Guard Force.** The GCE may designate a guard force for protection from enemy ground observation, direct fire, and surprise attack for a given period of time. A guard force allows the commander to extend the defense in time and space to prevent interruption of the organization of the main battle area. Observation of the enemy and reporting of information by the guard force is an inherent task of the guard force, but secondary to its primary function of protection.

The GCE commander determines the orientation of the guard force and the duration the guard must be provided. Normally, guard forces are oriented to the flanks for the minimum amount of time necessary to develop an integrated defense.

**(4) Covering Force.** The GCE may provide the bulk of the MEF's covering force. The covering force operates apart from the main force to engage, delay, disrupt, and deceive the enemy before he can attack the main force. A GCE covering force can be augmented or supported by rotary-wing attack assets in order to strengthen its capabilities and further disrupt enemy attack formations.

**(5) Security Measures.** Security measures are employed by the GCE and coordinated at all levels. These security measures include combat patrolling, sensors, target acquisition radars, surveillance, and employment of false visual and electronic signatures. In addition, skills of certain units within the GCE enhance the security posture of the organization. For example, engineers within the GCE contribute to survivability, mobility, and countermobility, all of which contribute to security. Any active measure

that may impact on other elements of the MEF is coordinated throughout the MEF. All units of the GCE provide local security. The degree of local security is dictated by terrain, communications, target acquisition capabilities, and the enemy threat.

### **c. Combat Service Support Element Considerations**

The role of the CSSE in the defense is to support defensive battles while maintaining the capability to shift to the offense with little notice. Facilities and combat service support areas should be far enough in the rear to be out of the flow of battle and relatively secure. They should not be so far back that they make the support effort less effective. Combat service support units locate, where possible, out of the reach of potential penetrations in protected and concealed locations without sacrificing support and out of the movement routes for retrograding units. Dispersion should be consistent with support requirements, control, and local security. Air defense coverage should be planned and emplaced.

**(1) Ammunition.** Logisticians position ammunition supply and transfer points to facilitate rapid and responsive support. Using units may stockpile ammunition in excess of their basic loads. Ammunition may also be placed at successive defensive positions. This provides easy access and lessens transportation problems during the withdrawal to those positions. The defense usually requires a greater volume of ammunition than does the offense. Construction and barrier material and ammunition requirements, especially for mines and barrier materials, are heaviest during the preparation for defense.

**(2) Fuel.** The form of defensive operation influences fuel requirements. A position defense typically requires less fuel than an offensive operation. Mobile defenses, on the other hand, generally involve greater fuel consumption than the more static-oriented area defense. In either case, forward stockpiles of fuel may be appropriate.

**(3) Maintenance.** The primary thrust of the maintenance effort in the defense is to maximize the number of weapon systems available at the start of the operation. Once the defensive battle begins, the thrust is to fix the maximum number of inoperable systems and return them to battle in the least amount of time. This requires forward support at, or as near as possible to, the intended AO of the systems.

**(4) Supply.** Supply activity will be the most intensive during the preparation stage. Stockpiles should be far forward and at successive defensive positions, especially critical supplies (fuel, ammunition, barrier materiel). While many supplies—especially munitions and barrier material—must be far forward, they must also be as mobile as possible. This allows continuous support as combat power shifts in response to enemy attacks. The CSSE must position the ammunition supply points or transfer points to maximize responsiveness.

**(5) Transportation and Distribution.** Transportation resources are most critical in the preparation stage of the defense. Stockpiling supplies requires extensive transportation. So does shifting personnel, weapon systems, and supplies laterally or in depth to meet the probable points of enemy attack. Transportation assets move barrier supplies and ammunition (e.g., mines, demolitions) as close to the barrier sites as possible. Logisticians take action to increase the flow of these materials as soon as they know of the intention to conduct a deliberate defense.

**(6) Medical.** Medical support of defensive operations is more difficult than in the offense. Casualty rates are lower, but forward acquisition is complicated by enemy action and the initial direction of maneuver to the rear. The task of front-line medical units is to stabilize the wounded, sort them, and evacuate patients. Priorities for evacuation depend on the location of, and will be complicated by, the probable enemy main effort. Enemy activities may inhibit evacuation as well as increase the casualties among medical personnel and damage to medical and evacuation equipment. Heaviest casualties, including those caused by enemy artillery and weapons of mass destruction, may be expected during the initial enemy attack and in the counterattack.

The enemy attack may disrupt ground and air communications routes and delay evacuation of patients to and from aid stations. Clearing facilities should be located away from points of possible penetration and must not interfere with reserve force positioning. The depth and dispersion of the mobile defense create significant time and distance problems in evacuation support to security and fixing forces. Security forces may be forced to withdraw while simultaneously carrying their patients to the rear. Peak loads may require additional helicopter evacuation capability. Non-medical transportation assets may not be available to assist in casualty evacuation.

**(7) Services.** In the defense services operate routinely where the tactical situation permits. Service facilities should locate out of the way and should not interfere with tactical operations. Mortuary affairs detachments evacuate the dead as rapidly as possible especially in deliberate defensive position to maintain morale. The use of hot rations tends to increase in the defense. Aerial delivery of rations and other services may be employed for cut-off, screening, or guarding units.

## **B-3. Other Tactical Operations**

A MEF may be required to conduct other tactical operations in combination, sequentially, or as part of the offense or defense. Such operations are difficult, complex, often involve risk, and require detailed planning. Methods for conducting other tactical operations vary according to METT-T factors as they apply to each situation.

### **a. Aviation Combat Element Considerations**

The MEF commander uses the ACE's inherent capabilities of range, speed, mobility, and agility when conducting these tactical operations. He should ensure that adequate battlespace is assigned to employ all the capabilities of available aviation assets. Marine aviation is capable of operating in any environment; however, weather can adversely affect its effectiveness in performing some functions such as assault support and reconnaissance. Longer periods of employment will require increased maintenance efforts and the MEF may be required to support the joint force commander by providing excess sorties.

**(1) Retrograde.** Aviation plays a major role in setting the conditions for a successful retrograde. The ACE can provide security for friendly ground forces and interdict enemy forces to disrupt and delay his advance. Air delivered mines can be used to supplement obstacles emplaced by engineers to impede or canalize enemy movements throughout the battlespace. Assault support may be used to move ground forces rapidly between delaying positions and move troops, equipment, and supplies away from the enemy. When a retirement occurs over extended distances, the security mission may be given the aviation commander and appropriate ground units may be placed under his command authority. Retrograde operations are conducted primarily during limited visibility; therefore, aviation's all-

weather abilities should be exploited. Should the retrograde operation require the displacement of aviation assets, the MEF should plan for the movement by echelon of airfield equipment and personnel while maintaining continuous aviation support for the duration of the operation.

**(2) Passage of Lines.** MEF aviation assets can support a forward passage of lines by providing or supporting the security force to fix enemy forces in place and permit the MEF to complete the passage of lines. Aviation could then be used to exploit success of the moving force. In a rearward passage, in addition to a security force role, aviation can serve as the MEF counterattack force.

**(3) Linkup.** Tactical aviation assets can be used to establish initial electronic connectivity between two units conducting a linkup while physical contact between ground forces comes at a later point in time. A helicopterborne force acting as the moving force can usually accomplish physical linkup rapidly.

**(4) Relief in Place.** Assault support assets are ideal to transport infantry units to conduct a rapid relief in place especially where there is no enemy pressure or a replacement of like type units is required. In certain instances, a relief in place of a ground unit with an aviation force such as attack helicopters can keep the enemy off balance and rest a ground unit.

**(5) Obstacle Crossing.** Aviation assets give the MEF allow the ability to cross obstacles with minimum delay, loss of momentum, and with minimal casualties. Helicopterborne forces can by-pass most obstacles completely; if necessary, these forces can reduce or eliminate the obstacle from the far side of the impediment. Aviation assets can suppress and disrupt the enemy when the force is most vulnerable while astride the obstacle.

**(6) Breakout from Encirclement.** Normally, when encircled by the enemy, a MEF commander will attempt to breakout as soon as possible. Aviation forces provide an immediately responsive and effective asset to aid in the breakout. The encircled force may receive fire support from aviation assets outside the encirclement. Attack helicopters can conduct a breakout by rupturing and penetrating the enemy's encircling position, widening the gap until all the other encircled forces have moved through. In addition, aviation forces can be used as a diversion or may augment the reserve when

committed. Any of the encircled forces (rupture force, main body, or rear guard) may consist of aviation and ground task-organized combined arms teams.

## **b. Ground Combat Element Considerations**

The GCE conducts other tactical operations to support the MEF's offensive and defensive operations. These operations may require augmentation of specialized equipment and personnel with special skills. The type of augmentation will depend on the characteristics of the AO, conditions under which they are conducted, the nature of the operations, or any combination of these factors. The GCE is dependent upon the rest of the MEF for the additional fires, logistics, and other support necessary to execute these operations with speed and security.

**(1) Retrograde.** In any form of retrograde, the GCE will normally conduct disengagement by echelon. Security forces (such as the guard and covering force) and the reserve usually are highly mobile units, composed of tanks, light armored reconnaissance, and infantry mounted on assault amphibious vehicles, augmented by attack helicopter assets. The GCE's organic combat engineering assets or those from the CSSE are employed to prepare initial and subsequent delaying positions and support other countermobility requirements. Indirect fires are used to attack enemy formations, force their early deployment, slow their advance, and limit contact with friendly forces. Tactical deception is used to confuse the enemy as to the true location and intent of ground forces; the retrograde itself may be a deception measure to make the enemy susceptible to a counterattack. The MEF commander should consider the use of a mobile reserve to support the counterattack during a retrograde. The GCE will employ appropriate force protection measures, and normal movement-to-contact methods, including security measures, in a retrograde.

**(2) Passage of Lines.** The GCE can control link-up operations between its subordinate commands or conduct them with the ACE and CSSE, and with other joint or combined forces. When the GCE conducts a link-up, the force designated as the stationary unit should at least temporarily occupy the designated link-up point. The moving ground force commander will normally locate his forward command post in the vicinity of the stationary ground force combat operations center to facilitate integration and coordination of tactical plans, fire support, security, command and control,

combat service support, communications, and maneuver control and fire support coordinating measures. The GCE commander should ensure that appropriate command relationships are established and understood by both elements. Fire support coordinating measures, such as restricted fire lines are established or modified as required to balance freedom of action and positive control.

**(3) Linkup.** When the linkup is between two subordinate ground units, the GCE establishes maneuver control measures such as linkup points and boundaries between converging forces, and fire support coordinating measures such as restricted fire lines and coordinated fire lines. Control measures are adjusted during the operation to provide for freedom of action and maximum control. The GCE commander may designate linkup points, usually located where the moving force's routes arrive at the location of the stationary force's security elements. Alternate linkup points are also designated since enemy action may interfere with linkup at primary points. To assist in the linkup, stationary forces help open lanes in minefields, breach or remove selected obstacles, furnish guides, and designate assembly areas. Leading elements of each force should be on a common radio net.

**(4) Relief in Place.** Control of all ground units normally remains under the control of the outgoing commander. This requires close coordination with the supported units. Units may need to exchange certain weapons, supplies, equipment and, occasionally, vehicle to facilitate a rapid relief. To ensure coordination and maintain security, the outgoing unit's radio nets, command frequencies, and operators should be used, and the outgoing unit remains in charge of communications throughout the entire relief. Artillery is normally relieved last to ensure continuous fire support; if possible, the outgoing unit artillery remains in position until all units are relieved.

**(5) Obstacle Crossing.** The GCE normally bypasses obstacles whenever possible, often using helicopterborne forces conducting an envelopment. It has the capability to conduct hasty and deliberate breaches. When conditions permit, assault amphibious vehicles are ideal to move assault elements across a river. For large-scale river crossing operations, the GCE may require additional bridging assets provided by the MEF or the joint force. The GCE maximizes the use of combined arms during crossing operations. Use of supporting arms, combat engineers, reconnaissance, rotary wing ACE assets, and armor reduces vulnerability, increases tempo

and supports initiative in breaching operations. Deception is maximized to deceive the enemy and draw away enemy attention from the crossing site.

**(6) Breakout from Encirclement.** The GCE will attempt to deceive the enemy on the time and place of the breakout. He will make best use of limited visibility but not necessarily at the expense of time. The GCE will use his organic reconnaissance as well as other reconnaissance assets to locate gaps and weaknesses in the enemy force. Initially, the rupture force will be the main GCE's main effort and may be provided additional combat power such as engineer support necessary to achieve the rupture. During the breakout, massed continuous fires are used to open the rupture point, suppress enemy direct fire systems, and isolate the breakout from the enemy. Once the rupture is achieved, priority of fires may shift to the rear guard action if sufficient fires are available to support the momentum of the breakout. Artillery will provide continuous fire support during the breakout and subsequent movement to link up with friendly forces.

### **c. Combat Service Support Element Considerations**

The principles of logistics—responsiveness, simplicity, flexibility, economy, attainability, sustainability, and survivability—are universal constants that apply equally to the functional areas of logistics during other tactical operations. These considerations will not dictate a specific course of action, but will help maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of logistics operations.

**(1) Retrograde.** Priority of support during retrograde operations is determined by the commander but is usually given to units that have completed the move and are preparing new positions. Combat service support elements must be continue to support the delaying force with critical supplies at the old defensive positions while establishing support to withdrawing elements moving rearward. Combat service support personnel and equipment not essential to supporting forward combat forces should be moved as soon as feasible. Retrograde operations will strain the transportation system as all essential supplies, materiel, and personnel are moved rearward. Movement control personnel and agencies should maximize the use of all available transportations assets—watercraft, railroads, air assets, and line haul. All movements throughout the entire retrograde will be regulated, controlled, and prioritized to eliminate unnecessary surge periods and to avoid congestion. Helicopter and aerial

delivery should be used whenever possible, as well as mobile loading of fuel and ammunition. If sufficient rolling stock is not available for mobile supply points, supplies can be placed along the retrograde route so that forces can fall back on a continuous supply. Heavy equipment transportation should be coordinated by the senior movement control organization. Supplies that cannot be moved should be destroyed. Maintenance efforts should concentrate on use of controlled exchange and cannibalization to facilitate rapid turnaround of weapon systems. Repair to transportation assets is critical to retrograde operations.

**(2) Passage of Lines.** The CSSE should establish liaison and coordinate movement control during the passage with the other force involved. Every action should be taken to avoid any interruption in logistics operations that would diminish the combat power of either force. All units should completely understand which unit will provide supply, maintenance, nuclear, biological, and chemical decontamination, medical, and movement priorities and control for the stationary and passing forces.

**(3) Linkup.** Before the link up has been initiated, combat service support is the responsibility of each unit involved in the link up operation (whether it be converging forces, a force closing on a previous secured objective, forces encircling an enemy force, or during a counterattack). Converging forces should coordinate combat service support that can be mutually provided to facilitate the link up operation and any subsequent mission.

**(4) Relief in Place.** A CSSE involved in a relief in place should develop and coordinate a common concept of support, and exchange standing operating procedures, and combat support and combat service support status. The concept of support should clearly establish identify the specific elements of combat service support to be provided by each force involved in the relief. When possible, existing supplies, end items, and maintenance facilities should be left in place for the relieving force or prepositioned to support the movement of the forces involved in the relief.

**(5) Obstacle Crossing.** Combat service support for obstacle crossing operations is little different from sustainment operations during the offense or defense. Transportation support for engineer units and bridging materiel is the primary concern, with maintenance of bridging equipment and fuel requirements a secondary consideration. All essential combat support and

combat service support units should be moved across the obstacle early and dispersed in locations that can support the operation. Whenever possible, bridging equipment should be recovered early and replaced with assault float bridging and unit assets that can be recovered quickly. CSSEs may also have unique intelligence collection requirements such as obstacle surveys or soil and trafficability studies that must be satisfied in order to provide the desired support.

**(6) Breakout from Encirclement.** The commander of an encircled force may have to reorganize his logistic support, centralize all supplies and establish strict rationing and supply economy procedures to conserve his sustainment ability. If possible, resupply and casualty evacuation should be done by air. Centralized medical and graves registration operations should be established. The CSSEs should be integrated into the main body. In the event that some forces must be left behind, sufficient medical personnel and supplies will be left to attend the wounded, and personnel will be detailed to destroy abandoned equipment.

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## Appendix C

# Glossary

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**Note:** Acronyms change over time in response to new operational concepts, capabilities, doctrinal changes, and other similar developments. The following publications are the sole authoritative sources for official military acronyms:

1. Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.
  2. MCRP 5-12C, *Marine Corps Supplement to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.
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ACE	aviation combat element
AO	area of operations
CBAE	commander's battlespace area evaluation
CCIR	commander's critical information requirement
CI	counterintelligence
COG	center of gravity
CSSE	combat service support element
FEBA	forward edge of the battle area
FSCL	fire support coordination line
GCE	ground combat element
HUMINT	human intelligence
MCDP	Marine Corps doctrinal publication
MCWP	Marine Corps warfighting publication
MCPP	Marine Corps Planning Process
MEF	Marine expeditionary force

METT-T	mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available - time available
MOOTW	military operations other than war
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle

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## Appendix D

# References

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Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*

Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*

Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*

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