

Chapter 4

Antiarmor in the Defense

The preceding chapter addressed *weapon* positioning. This chapter will discuss *unit* positioning. Certain principles apply to both unit and weapon(s) positioning and are repeated (e.g., mutual support). While the MAGTF commander is ever cognizant of weapon positioning factors, unit positioning represents the focus of planning at the higher levels of command. Unit positioning will be discussed within the framework of battlespace geometry. The defense is organized into three areas: the security area, the main battle area, and the rear area. The antiarmor defense actually begins well forward of the security area with MAGTF air assets engaging advancing enemy armor. As enemy armor continues into the security area and main battle area, it encounters ever-increasing resistance from MAGTF assets in predetermined engagement areas.

Success against large armored formations is the result of the proper focus and coherent planning beginning with the MAGTF commander down through his subordinate commanders and staffs. This MAGTF perspective helps to ensure the proper integration of assets to achieve the combined arms effect.

Section 1. Defensive Doctrine

4101. Fundamentals of the Defense

The MAGTF commander considers the following fundamentals when conducting defensive operations:

- Maneuver
- Preparation
- Mass and Concentration
- Flexibility
- Offensive Action
- Use of Terrain
- Mutual Support.
- Defense in Depth
- Surprise
- Knowledge of the Enemy

Commanders may assume the defensive at one point as an economy of force measure to permit massing at another point. Ultimately, commanders conduct the defense only until they can resume the offense. The defense may be undertaken to:

- Destroy enemy forces.
- Retain or control terrain or prevent the enemy's capture of terrain.
- Reduce the enemy's capability to conduct offensive operations.
- Economize combat power, enabling the concentration of combat power elsewhere.
- Develop more favorable conditions for offensive operations.

4102. Organization of the Battlespace

The defensive sector is organized into areas: the security area, main battle area, and rear area. (See fig. 4-1.)

a. Security Area. The security area is the forward of the three defensive areas. It is the area forward of the FEBA out to the forward positions initially assigned to the security forces. The ground combat element commander may extend the lateral boundaries of subordinate units forward of the FEBA, giving them responsibility for the security area within sector to the forward limit of their boundaries, or he may assign a security force to operate across the entire ground combat element frontage (MCRP 5-2C). The Commander adds depth to the defense by extending the security area as far forward as tactically possible. Forces in the security area furnish information on the enemy and delay, deceive and disrupt the enemy and conduct counterreconnaissance. In NATO, the security area is called the covering force area (CFA). Forces in the security area are assigned screen, guard, or covering force missions. 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 MAGTF forces particularly LAR and aviation, to strike the enemy's critical vulnerabilities (i.e. movement, resupply, fire support, and command and control). However, the establishment of security forces by a higher headquarters does not relieve any commander within the MAGTF of the responsibility for the security of his own position. Local security provides warning against immediate ground attack.

b. Main Battle Area. The main battle area is that portion of the battlespace in which the commander conducts close operations to defeat the enemy. The main battle area (MBA) is the area extending from the FEBA to the rear boundaries of its forward subordinate units. The commander positions forces throughout the MBA 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 MBA, the greater the maneuver space for fighting the main defensive battle. The commander organizes the MBA by assigning defensive sectors, battle positions, or strong points to subordinate units. Regiments normally defend in sector. Battalion task forces and company teams may be assigned defensive sectors, battle positions, or strong points. Platoons normally defend as part of a company or from positions within a company sector, battle position, or strong point. The preponderance of antiarmor weapons are normally found in the MBA.

c. Rear Area. For any particular command, the area extending forward from its rear boundary to the rear of the area of responsibility of the next lower level of command. This area is provided primarily for the performance of combat service support functions (Joint Pub 1-02). 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 entire MAGTF. The rear area may not always be contiguous with the main battle position. Based on the enemy armored threat, MAGTF antiarmor weapons may be allocated for rear area security to protect against a breakthrough by armored or mechanized forces .

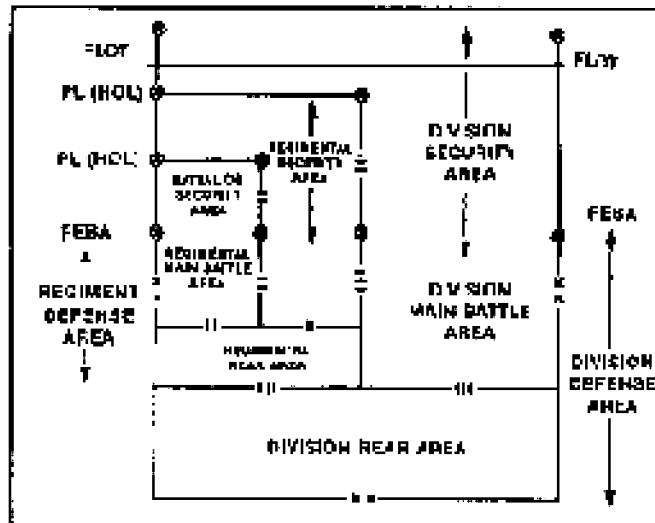


Figure 4-1. Organization of the Defense.

In addition to the three echelons of the defense, the following control measures contribute to the organization of the defense:

- (1) **Forward Edge of the Battle Area.** The FEBA is the foremost limits of a series of areas in which ground combat units are deployed, excluding the areas in which the covering or screening forces are operating, designated to coordinate fire support, the positioning of forces, or the maneuver of units (Joint Pub 1-02).
- (2) **Forward Line of Own Troops (FLOT).** The FLOT is a line which indicates the most forward positions of friendly forces in any kind of military operation at a specific time. The FLOT normally identifies the forward location of covering and screening forces (Joint Pub 1-02). However, in deep operations such as a turning movement by helicopter borne forces, the designation of the FLOT may not extend to include those forces.
- (3) **Handover Line (HL).** The HL is a control feature, preferably following easily defined terrain features, at which responsibility for the conduct of combat operations is passed from one force to another. (Joint Pub 1-02) The HL may be used by security forces delaying back toward the FEBA. At some point, the security forces do a *battle hand-off* to the stationary unit, passing control of all supporting arms and responsibility for the security area to the stationary force. The HL is designated by higher headquarters. The commanders of the security area and the MBA coordinate the exact location and may recommend changes to higher headquarters.

4103. Distribution of Forces

The commander organizes his forces into three basic echelons: security forces, main battle forces, and rear area forces.

a. Security Forces. Security forces are employed in the security area to provide early warning, to delay the enemy, and to deceive the enemy as to the true location of the MBA. Security forces may be assigned missions to screen, guard, or cover. The use of a security force does not preclude the requirement for all other elements of the force to provide their own local security. 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. Mechanized forces

are well suited for security missions because of their long-range weapons and mobility when their operations are closely integrated with aviation elements providing Offensive Air Support (DAS and CAS). The commander may assign the following security missions:

(1) **Screen.** A security element screens 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.

(2) **Guard.** A security element guards a force 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 have been previously reconnoitered.

(3) **Cover.** Covering forces compel the enemy to deploy prematurely; confirm the direction and strength of the enemy attack; conduct counter reconnaissance; destroy the enemy advance guard; canalize the enemy advance in accordance with the commander's plan; and provide the main force time to react. A covering force should be a self-sufficient combined arms force that is large enough to convince the enemy that they are a main battle force.

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

b. Main Battle Forces. Main battle forces are employed to engage the enemy and slow, stop, canalize, disorganize and defeat his attack. They occupy positions within the MBA oriented on the main avenues of approach into the sector. Positions are organized in depth and should be mutually supporting. As in offensive operations, the commander weights his main effort in the defense with enough combat power and necessary support to ensure success. They need not be positioned on the FEBA, but should be able to engage the enemy effectively at or beyond it.

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 main battle forces and all supporting arms. Obstacles and barriers are used to delay or canalize the enemy so that he is continually subjected to fires.

While the firepower of a mechanized force is an asset in any location, assignment to the FEBA may restrict mechanized forces' tactical mobility. When a mechanized force is operating independently, it may be required to establish a defense and a portion of the force would have to be assigned to the MBA. When this occurs, units task-organized with tanks are not normally assigned to the MBA. However, any mechanized units assigned to the MBA should be given large defensive sectors and freedom of maneuver within their sector.

a. **Counterattack.** A counterattack is an attack by part or ally of a defending force against an attacking enemy force, for such specific purposes as regaining ground lost or cutting off and destroying advance units, and with the general objective of denying the enemy his purpose for attacking in the first place. In many cases, the counterattack is a 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 of 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.

b. Reserve. The reserve is the commander's tool to influence the course of the battle at the critical time and place and exploit opportunities. It is the force that provides flexibility to the commander by allowing him to strike the enemy at the time and place of the commander's choosing. The commander uses his reserve at the decisive moment in the defense and refuses to dissipate it on local emergencies. It is a designated force, as robust and mobile as possible, that exploits success, conducts counterattacks, contains penetrations, and regains the initiative. The less that is known of the enemy or his intention, the greater proportion of combat power must be held in reserve. The reserve is usually located in assembly areas or forward operating bases in the MBA. Once committed, the commander establishes or reconstitutes a new reserve.

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

c. Rear Area Forces

Rear area forces protect and sustain the force's combat power. They provide for freedom of action and 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.

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 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 guerillas or small tactical units operating in the rear area. The Tactical Combat Force (TCF) is a combat unit, with appropriate combat support and combat service support assets, that is assigned the mission of defeating Level III threats such as a large enemy armored or mechanized force. The tactical combat force is usually located within or near the rear area where it can rapidly respond to the enemy threat.

4104. Defensive Positions and Sectors

Types of defensive positions are primarily defined, not by the physical organization of the ground, but the mission assigned the unit occupying the ground. While allowing for similarities, the following definitions are provided to eliminate some of the confusion that has accompanied previous doctrinal changes in the defense.

a. Battle Position. A defensive location oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach from which a unit may defend or attack. Such units can be as large as battalion task forces and as small as platoons. (MCRP

5-2A) A unit assigned to the battle position is located within the general outline of the battle position, but other forces may operate outside the battle position to provide early detection of enemy forces and all-around security . Battle positions are mutually supporting and are placed on terrain that dominates the armor avenues of approach. For attack helicopters, the battle position is an area designated in which they can fire and maneuver and fire into a designated engagement area or engage targets of opportunity.

b. Blocking Position. A defensive position so sited as to deny the enemy access to a given area or to prevent his advance in a given direction (Joint Pub 1-02).

c. Delay Position. A position taken to slow up the advance of the enemy without being decisively engaged (AR 310-25). The purpose of delaying is to trade space for time by slowing down the enemy's momentum and inflicting maximum damage without becoming decisively engaged.

d. Strongpoint. A key point in a defensive position, usually strongly fortified and heavily armed with automatic weapons, around which other positions are grouped for its protection (Joint Pub 1-02). A strongpoint is a heavily fortified, all around defensive position which cannot be overrun by tanks and which can be reduced by enemy infantry only after the expenditure of much time and overwhelming forces. It is normally occupied by a battalion or company. A strongpoint is established only after the commander determines that the position must be retained at all costs. It requires considerable engineering effort and detailed fire support planning. Restated, a strong point is a type of blocking position with an unusually high degree of preparation.

Subsequent battle or delay positions are planned with either event-oriented or on-order criteria for disengagement. Movement off a blocking position or a strongpoint position is almost always on order.

e. Sector. An area designated by boundaries within which a unit operates, and for which it is responsible (Joint Pub 1-02). Sectors may be assigned from division to squads. They may be used in conjunction with battle positions, blocking positions, delay positions, and strongpoints. Sectors may be used in the security area and MBA. Sector boundaries never split an avenue of approach. Defense in sector is the least restrictive mission.

4105. Types of Defense

There are two fundamental types of defense: the position defense and the mobile defense. In practice, Marine commanders tend to use both types simultaneously and rarely will one type or other be used exclusively.

A key characteristic of a sound defense is the ability of the commander to aggressively seek opportunities to seek offensive action and take initiative away 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 fighting holes, emplacements, and obstacles. The capability to establish a strong reconnaissance effort may be limited because the defense is assumed directly from current positions. The hasty defense normally allows for only a brief leader's reconnaissance and may entail the immediate engagement by security forces to 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, strongpoints, extensive use of barriers, and fully integrated fires. The commander normally is free to make a detailed reconnaissance of this sector, select the terrain 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.

a. Position Defense. The type of defense in which the bulk of the defending force is disposed in selected tactical localities where the decisive battle is to be fought. Principle reliance is placed on the ability of the forces in the defended localities to maintain their positions and to control the terrain between them. The reserve is used to add depth, to block, or to restore the battle position by counterattack (Joint Pub 1-02). The 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 forces in defended positions to maintain their positions and to control the terrain between them. Position defense is the DOD/NATO term for what was formerly referred to as the area 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 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.

b. Mobile Defense. Defense of an area or position in which maneuver is used with organization of fire and utilization of terrain to seize initiative from the enemy (Joint Pub 1-02). The mobile defense destroys the attacking enemy through offensive action. The mobile defense requires depth and focuses on the destruction of the enemy by permitting him to advance into a position that exposes him to counterattack by a strong mobile reserve. Terrain and space are traded to draw the enemy ever deeper into the MAGTF's defensive area, causing him to overextend his force and expose his flanks and lines of communications to attack. A mobile defense requires mobility greater than that of the attacker. The MAGTF can use its transitional capability to generate mobility through organic mechanized and armor forces, helicopterborne forces, and Marine aviation.

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.

Figure 4-2 depicts the fundamental difference in principle between the position and mobile defense regarding distribution of forces.

The position defense is normally used to retain terrain while the mobile defense is used to destroy enemy forces. Clearly, the position defense weights its forces forward while the mobile defense weights its forces toward its reserve or counterattack force. In the position defense, the reserve is normally used to reestablish the FEBA following penetration by the enemy. In the mobile defense, the reserve or counterattack force is used to destroy the enemy.

Conceptually, these two defenses define the extreme types of defense. They are traditional concepts that provide a context in which to discuss defense. However, actual defenses will normally include aspects of both position and mobile defense. Figure 4-3 depicts the spectrum of the defense and the weighting of techniques toward one extreme or the other.

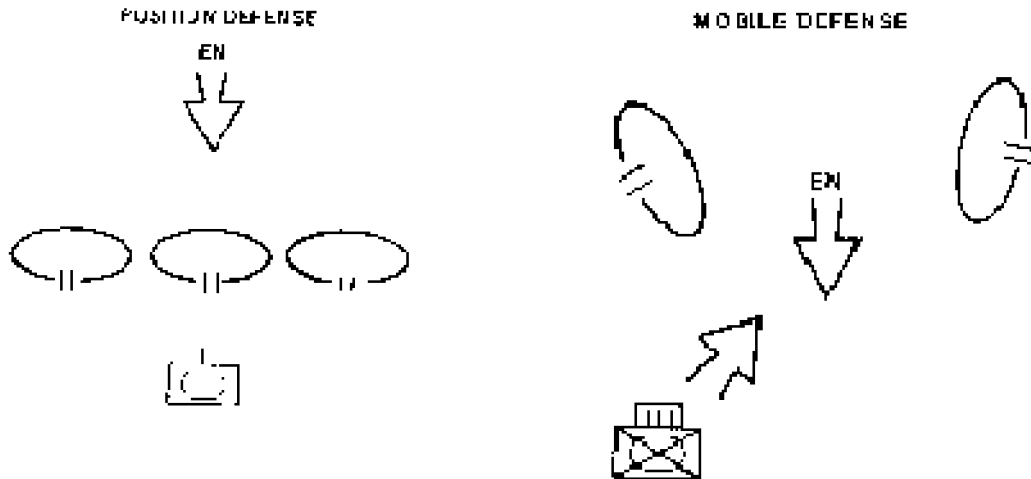


Figure 4-2. Defensive Concepts.

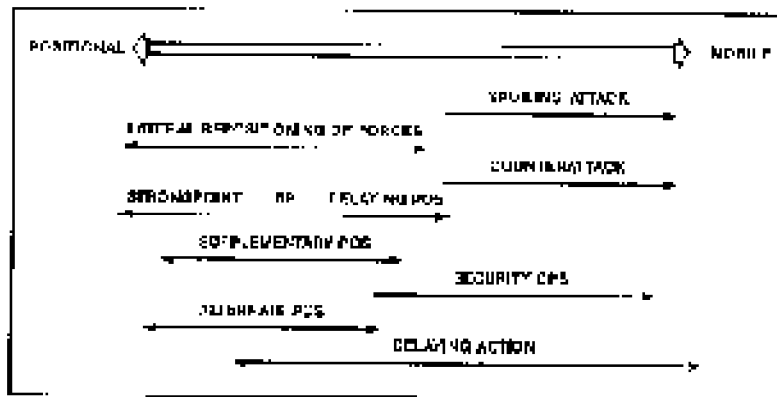


Figure 4-3. Defense Spectrum.**4106. Offensive Action in the Defense**

Offensive action in the defense allows the commander to regain the initiative and shape the battle. This may be achieved by actual physical destruction of an enemy unit or by disrupting the tempo of his operations. The turning movement, counterattack spoiling attack, and attacks made by stay behind forces are examples of the commander's offensive options in the defense.

a. Turning Movement. A turning movement is a variation of the envelopment in which the attacking force passes around or over the enemy's principal defensive positions to secure objectives deep in the enemy rear to force the enemy to abandon his position or divert major forces to meet the threat. (Joint Pub 1-02). Normally, the main effort executes the turning movement as the supporting effort fixes the enemy force. The goal of a turning movement is to force the enemy to abandon his position or reposition major forces to meet the threat. Typical objectives of the main effort in a turning movement may include: Critical logistics nodes, command and control nodes, and lines of communication. A turning movement is a form of maneuver characterized by deep battle fought by a larger sized MAGTF e.g. MEF.

b. Counterattack. A counterattack is an attack by part or all of a defending force against an enemy attacking force, for such specific purposes as regaining ground lost or cutting off or destroying enemy advance units, and with the general objective of denying to the enemy the attainment of his purpose in attacking. In sustained defensive operations, it is undertaken to restore the battle position and is directed at limited objectives. (Joint Pub 1-02) The counterattack is the decisive element of defensive action. The counterattack is the commander's primary means of breaking the enemy attack or of regaining the initiative. Once launched, the counterattack becomes the main effort. Success depends largely on surprise, speed, and boldness of execution. (See fig. 4-4.)

Counterattacks may be conducted forward of or within the MBA. Ideally, a counterattack is executed based on a plan with a designated EA or objective. However, a counterattack may be launched from a frag order. Timing and coordination with other elements of the defense is imperative. Counterattacks are conducted by the reserve or by the least engaged unit. Mechanized forces are employed in the counterattack, whenever possible, due to their firepower and tactical mobility.

There are two types of counterattacks:

1. Preplanned. Routes, timing, and fire support are predetermined and executed at the decisive point in the battle.
2. Hasty. May have little or no preparation but are executed to exploit a vulnerability revealed by the enemy.

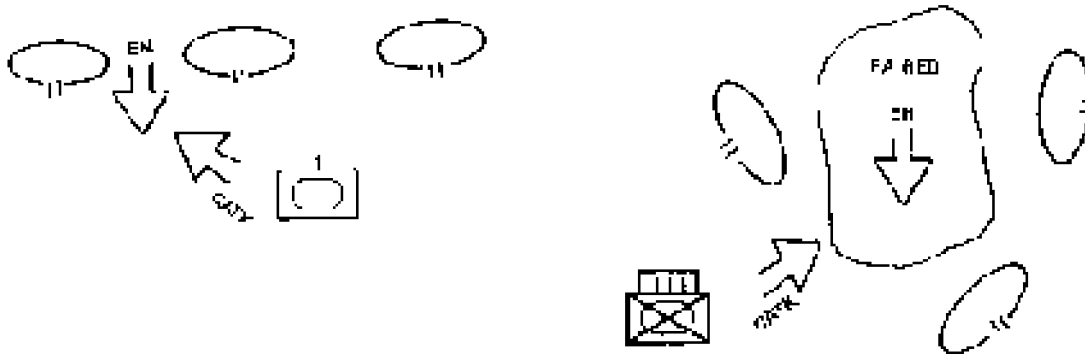


Figure 4-4. Counterattacks.

c. 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. (Joint Pub 1-02) It is a preemptive, limited objective attack aimed at preventing, disrupting, or delaying the enemy's ability to launch an attack. A spoiling attack may be either a hasty or deliberate attack, depending on the time for preparation. It may be conducted like a raid with a planned withdrawal.

Like the counterattack, the circumstances in which it is conducted normally preclude full exploitation. Like the counterattack, a spoiling attack is normally conducted by all or a part of the reserve. This may require another reserve force to be temporarily formed. Aviation and mechanized forces are ideally suited for conducting spoiling attacks due to their mobility and firepower.

d. Stay Behind Forces. Stay behind forces are mobile units that counterattack or harasses enemy combat forces from the rear, or attacks and/or ambushes enemy command and control, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSO) elements. Stay behind forces may be as large as a mechanized battalion task force or as small as an infantry tank killer team. *The concept of stay behind forces involves considerable risk.*

Regardless of the mission assigned, the success of the mission at some point will depend upon being bypassed by the enemy and eventually being able to disrupt the tempo of the enemy mechanized forces.

A stay behind unit may be initially positioned in the security area or within the MBA. A stay behind force may be required to conduct a breakout and link up or exfiltrate back through friendly positions. Sufficient CS and CSS assets are allocated as required.

Figure 4-5 depicts a tank company firing on a second echelon mechanized battalion. A return route through friendly positions is planned. A scout section is providing a screen forward.

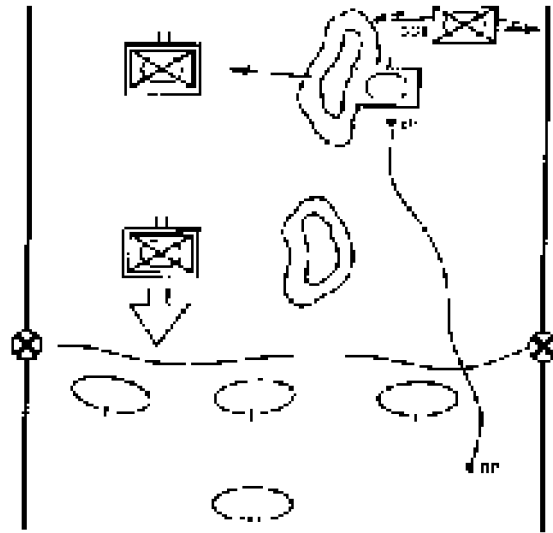


Figure 4-5. Stay Behind Forces.