



Figure 6-5. Battlespace Organization.

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 Marine commander has organized his AO. Therefore, the commander's planning and execution must be flexible enough to accommodate this difference and exploit resulting opportunities.

MAIN AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS

The main effort is a central concept of maneuver warfare. 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 MAGTF element 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 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 states 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 MAGTF. 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 operate in task forces to accomplish specific missions and then rapidly resume 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.

THE 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. 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 intended mission. 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.

SECURITY

Security is inherent in all MATGF 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 chapter 11. 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 depend on the movement of the main force. The operations of the security force must be closely coordinated with the concept of operations.