

CHAPTER 8

The MAGTF in the Defense

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

—Carl von Clausewitz

“Counterattack is the soul of defense . . . We wait for the moment when the enemy shall expose himself to a counterstroke, the success of which will so far cripple him as to render us relatively strong enough to pass to the offensive ourselves.”

—Julian Corbett

The commander conducts defensive operations within the context of the single battle. The MAGTF conducts defensive operations, in combination with offensive operations, to defeat an enemy attack. During the early days of the Korean War (1950-53) the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) conducted defensive operations along the Pusan Perimeter, buying time for the 1st 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 MAGTF may not be capable of conducting offensive operations to defeat an enemy rapidly. A classic example was the defensive operations conducted by the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal in 1942. These defensive operations allowed aircraft to operate from Henderson Field. It was not until 4 months after the initial landing that the 2d Marine Division and Army units could conduct offensive operations to secure the island.

Initial MAGTF 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 MAGTF must ensure sufficient combat power is available to deter or defend successfully while the buildup continues.

As a supporting effort during offensive operations, the MAGTF 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 linkup.

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 MAGTF 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.

PURPOSE OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

The purpose of defensive operations is to defeat an enemy attack. The MAGTF 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 MAGTF to conduct defensive operations when there is a need to buy time, hold a piece of key terrain, facilitate other operations, preoccupy the enemy in one area so friendly forces can attack him in another, or 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 the following:

- 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 26th 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.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MAGTF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

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 allows the defense time to react. Security forces, intelligence units, special operations forces, and aviation elements conducting deep operations will be the MAGTF'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 contributing to his higher commander's mission.

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 linkup with a relieving force.

Reserves preserve the commander's 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; once committed, however, 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. Commanders 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 battlespace 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.

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

Preparation

The MAGTF 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 MAGTF commander organizes his defenses in depth. Depth allows the MAGTF 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.
- Provide mutually supporting defensive positions.
- Canalize enemy forces into preset engagement areas.

Security

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

The MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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.

Disruption

The MAGTF 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.

Mass and Concentration

The MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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 MAGTF must ensure fire support assets and fire support coordination are 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.

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 MAGTF 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 MAGTF. Sustainment not only promotes flexibility but aids in the ability of the MAGTF to maneuver, mass fires, and concentrate forces when required. The MAGTF coordinates sustainment issues such as availability of forces, AO, infrastructure, host-nation support, sustainment bases, and basing agreements with the Marine Corps component.

Maneuver

Maneuver allows the MAGTF to take full advantage of the battlespace and to mass and concentrate when desirable. Maneuver, through movement in combination with fire, allows the MAGTF 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.

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 MAGTF mission success.

The ability of the MAGTF to control and influence operations throughout the depth of the battlespace prevents enemy freedom of movement. Regardless of the proximity or separation of various elements, MAGTF defense is seen as a continuous whole. The MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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 achieving the commander’s desired effects, which could include 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’s 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 MAGTF may do this in several ways. Often, the MAGTF 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 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 MAGTF time and space in which to react to the enemy.

Reserves conduct operations throughout the defense and may require continual regeneration. They give the MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BATTLESPACE

During defensive operations, the commander organizes his battlespace into three areas—security, main battle, and rear—in which the defending force performs specific functions. See figure 8-1. These areas can be further divided into sectors. A defensive sector is a section assigned to a subordinate commander in which he

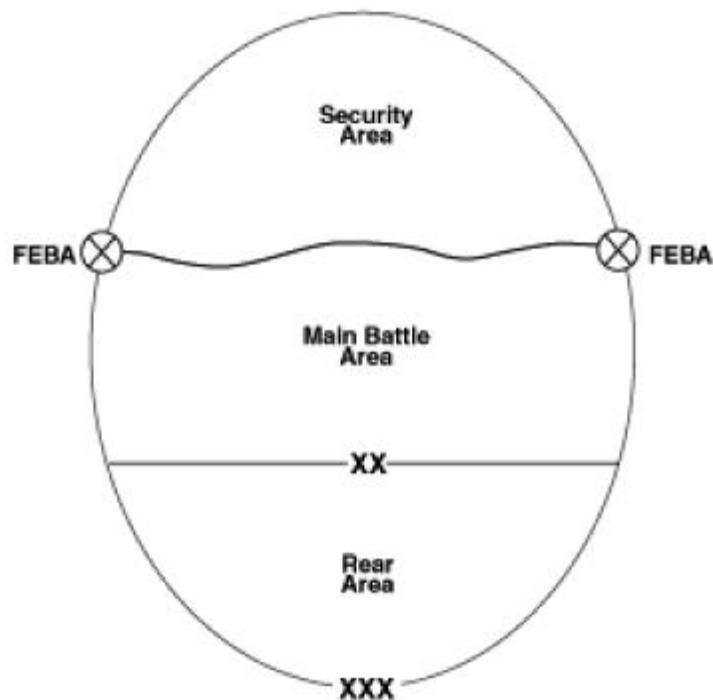


Figure 8-1. Organization of the Battlespace.

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 subordinates their own sector.

Security Area

The security area 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 chapter 11.

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

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.

Rear Area

The rear area is that area extending forward from a command's rear boundary to the rear of the area assigned to 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.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FORCE

During defensive operations, the commander organizes his force into security, main battle, and rear area forces. See figure 8-2.

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 MAGTF to conduct security operations.

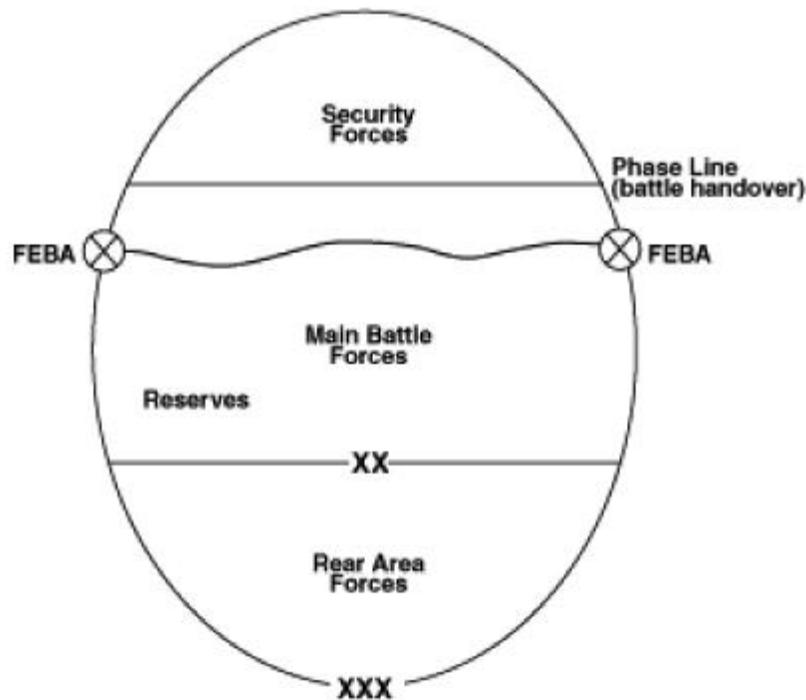


Figure 8-2. Organization of the Force.

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. They are kept under observation and covered by fires to attack him while he is halted or in the process of breaching.

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 MAGTF commander 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.

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 is 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.

TYPES OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

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 largely conditioned by a thorough METT-T analysis. Doctrine allows great freedom in formulating and conducting the defense. The MAGTF 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 MAGTF does not have to hold a specified area or position, it may draw the enemy deep into its defenses and then strike his flanks and rear. The MAGTF 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 not in 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.

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 8-3.

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 the AO to allow the enemy to move into the commander's mobile defensive area. Terrain and space are traded to draw the enemy ever deeper into the defensive area, causing him to overextend his force and expose his flanks and lines of communications to attack. The success of the mobile defense often presents the opportunity to resume the offense and must be planned.

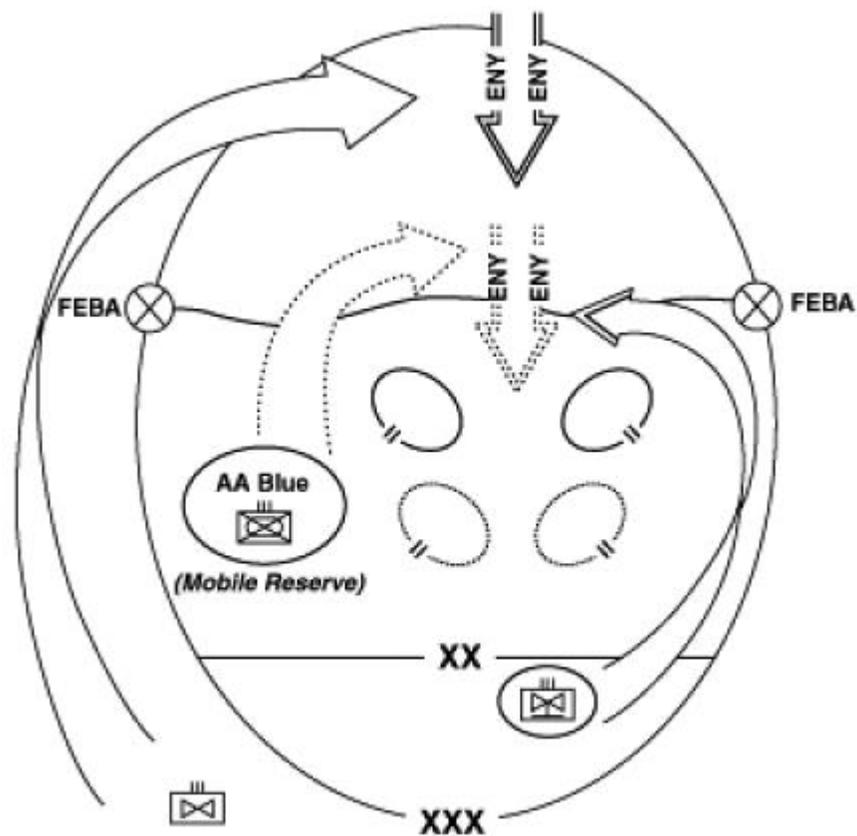


Figure 8-3. Mobile Defense.

Mobile defense orients on the destruction of the enemy force by employing a combination of fires, maneuver, offense, defense, and delay to defeat the enemy 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 mobile defense, the MAGTF commander—

- Commits minimum forces to pure defense.
- Positions maximum combat power to catch the enemy as he 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. These assets blind or deceive enemy critical reconnaissance and sensors, allowing 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 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.

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 8-4. 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 allows 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.

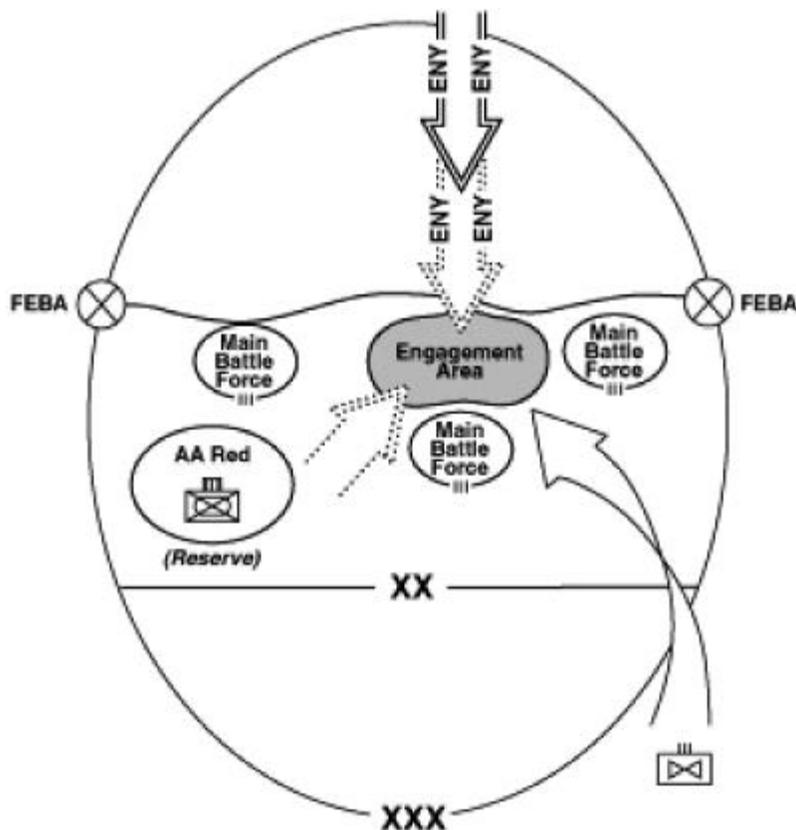


Figure 8-4. Position Defense.

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 under the following circumstances:

- 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 defense's battle positions and strongpoints 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.

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 unmanned aerial vehicles (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 innovative aircraft, will allow the commander to mass effects on the enemy instead of massing forces that become more susceptible to enemy counteractions. The importance of the MAGTF's access to, and use of information and information systems will not go unnoticed by future adversaries. To reduce its susceptibility, the MAGTF will require defensive activities to protect and defend the information and information systems that are critical to operational success. Ultimately, these innovations will allow the MAGTF to rapidly transition from the defense to the offensive—moving directly to exploitation and pursuit.

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.

Medical

Offensive operations increase the burden on medical resources. Planners can expect high casualty 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 nonmedical transportation assets, adding additional stress to an already overtaxed transportation system.

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 and aid in the identification of remains.

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.

Aviation Combat Element

The MAGTF commander uses speed, range, mobility, and agility of aviation assets to maximize concentration and flexibility in the defense. MAGTF aviation assets are integrated into MAGTF 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

MAGTF 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 MAGTF 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 MAGTF'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, and moving columns, and also to disrupt enemy centers of gravity.

The MAGTF 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. ACE assets used as the counterattack force can be employed to conduct decisive action to regain the initiative.

Rear Area

MAGTF 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 their range, speed, and mobility. Because ACE airfields often operate in rear areas, 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 MAGTF commander.

Mobile Defense

Since minimum force is placed forward to canalize, delay, disrupt, and deceive the enemy as to the actual location of the defense, MAGTF aviation assets can supplement mobile forces to fill in gaps where the MAGTF is most vulnerable. A mobile defense requires mobility greater than that of the attacker. The MAGTF generates the mobility advantage with helicopterborne forces and MAGTF 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, MAGTF 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.

Position Defense

In a position defense, the MAGTF commander can employ his aviation assets (primarily 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 MAGTF 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.

Ground Combat Element

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; provides opportunities to trap or ambush the attacker; and 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.

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.

Screening Force

The GCE may establish a screening force to gain and maintain contact with the enemy, observe enemy activity, identify the enemy main effort, and 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.

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.

Covering Force

The GCE may provide the bulk of the MAGTF'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.

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 MAGTF is coordinated throughout the MAGTF. 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.

Combat Service Support Element

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. Where possible, combat service support units locate 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.

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 the offense. Construction and barrier material and ammunition requirements, especially for mines and barrier materials, are heaviest during the preparation for defense.

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.

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.

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.

Transportation and Distribution

Transportation resources are most critical in the preparation stage of the defense. Stockpiling supplies and shifting personnel, weapon systems, and supplies require extensive transportation, 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 the intention to conduct a deliberate defense is known.

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 frontline medical units is to stabilize, prioritize, and evacuate the wounded. Priorities for evacuation will be complicated by the probable enemy main effort. Enemy activities may inhibit evacuation, increase casualties among medical personnel, and damage 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. Nonmedical transportation assets may not be available to assist in casualty evacuation.

Services

In the defense, services operate routinely where the tactical situation permits. Service facilities should locate out of the way and 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.

OTHER TACTICAL OPERATIONS

A MAGTF 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.

Aviation Combat Element

The MAGTF 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 MAGTF may be required to support the joint force commander by providing excess sorties.

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 to 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 MAGTF