CHAPTER 3

OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

The offensive is the decisive form of war. AirLand Battle doctrine seeks to quickly seize the initiative. The commander selects the time and place to concentrate and synchronize task force combat elements to overcome the enemy's defense; to destroy his command, control, and communications system; and to defeat him in detail.

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Section I. FUNDAMENTALS OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

3-1. PURPOSE OF THE OFFENSIVE

The task force conducts offensive operations to achieve one or more specific purposes:

- Defeat enemy forces.
- Secure key or decisive terrain.
- Deprive the enemy of resources.
- Gain information.
- Deceive and divert the enemy.
- Hold the enemy in position.
- Disrupt an enemy attack.

3-2. CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Battalion task force offensive operations are characterized by surprise, concentration, speed, flexibility, and audacity.

a. **Surprise.** Surprise is achieved when the enemy cannot react effectively to the task force commander's scheme of maneuver. Surprise may be achieved by —

- Conducting thorough reconnaissance and surveillance.
- Striking the enemy from an unexpected direction at an unexpected time.
- Employing deception efforts.

b. **Concentration.** Concentration is the massing and synchronization of overwhelming combat power against an enemy weakness. Concentration is achieved by —

- Planning on the basis of information generated by aggressive reconnaissance.
- Fixing the enemy to prevent his reaction to maneuver.
- Rapidly massing forces and fires to overwhelm the enemy defense.
- Synchronizing maneuver with combat support.

c. **Speed.** The task force moves quickly to take advantage of enemy weaknesses. Speed in execution is key to denying the enemy time to reposition or reorient to meet an attack. Speed is achieved by —

- Planning and rehearsing battle drills.
- Conducting route reconnaissance.
- Wargaming contingencies with subordinate leaders.
- Exercising responsive command and control.
- Issuing mission-type orders.
- Using routes, movement techniques, and formations that allow the force to move rapidly and with security.
- Isolating enemy forces through fixing and suppressing fires.
- Providing rapid resupply with logistics packages (LOGPACs) to sustain the task force's offensive capability.
- Maintaining momentum to keep the enemy from reestablishing his defense.

d. **Flexibility.** Flexibility is the ability to divert from the plan and exploit success by maintaining freedom of maneuver. Flexibility in planning results from wargaming. Flexibility is achieved by —

- Aggressive reconnaissance that continues to seek enemy weaknesses and ways to attack him from his flanks and rear.
- A reserve that can assume the mission of the main attack or exploit an enemy weakness. A reserve is the commander's primary means of maintaining flexibility.
- A command and control system that allows the commander to rapidly transmit decisions during the battle.
- The use of FRAGOs, checkpoints, and reserve graphic control measures.
- Contingency planning that permits shifting the main effort.

e. **Audacity.** Audacity is the willingness to risk bold action to win. The audacious commander is quick and decisive, and willing to take prudent risks. He bases his decisions on sound tactical judgment, personal observation of the terrain, and first-hand knowledge of the battle. He constantly seeks to attack the enemy on the flanks or rear and to rapidly exploit success. He shares the hazards of the battlefield with his troops, moving to the critical places to lead by example.

3-3. TYPES OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

a. There are five major types of offensive operations in which the task force participates:

- Movement to contact.
- Hasty attack.
- Deliberate attack.
- Exploitation.
- Pursuit.

b. The task force normally participates in these operations as part of a larger force. Commanders at each level —

- Find or create a weak point.
- Suppress enemy fires.
- Isolate the enemy and maneuver against weak points.
- Exploit success.

3-4. SEQUENCE OF AN ATTACK

Generally, the following sequence is followed in task force attacks:

a. **Reconnaissance.** Reconnaissance begins as soon as possible after the task force receives its mission. Information on the avenues of approach, obstacles, and the enemy positions is critical to planning the attack. Reconnaissance continues throughout the attack.

b. **Movement to a Line of Departure.** When attacking from positions not in contact, task forces often stage in rear assembly areas, road march to attack positions behind friendly units in contact with the enemy, conduct a passage of lines, and begin the attack.

c. **Maneuver.** The task force maneuvers to a position of advantage.

d. **Deployment.** The task force deploys to attack or to fix the enemy if bypassing.

e. **Attack.** The enemy position is attacked by fire, assaulted, or bypassed.

f. **Consolidation and Reorganization or Continuation.** The task force eliminates resistance and prepares for or conducts further operations

3-5. FORMS OF MANEUVER

Task force attacks are of two basic types: hasty and deliberate. The two are distinguished primarily by the time available for planning and the extent of preparation. In either case, the attack is violent, resolute, and synchronized.

a. The basic forms of maneuver used in the attack are envelopment, turning movement, infiltration, penetration, and frontal attack. Frequently, attacks will use more than one form of maneuver such as an initial penetration that leads to an envelopment.

b. The higher commander seldom directs the form of maneuver to be used by the battalion task force.

(1) **Envelopment.** An envelopment is the preferred form of maneuver. In an envelopment, the attacker strikes the enemy's flank or rear (see Figure 3-1, page 3-6). The envelopment causes the enemy to fight in a direction from which he is less prepared. Envelopment requires an assailable flank, found primarily by aggressive reconnaissance. Enemy weapons orientations and obstacles determine assailable flanks — not the attacker's direction of movement.

(a) When the task force conducts an envelopment, one or more companies or teams normally make supporting attacks to fix the enemy while other companies of the task force maneuver against the enemy's flank or rear. The supporting attack must have sufficient combat power to keep the enemy fully engaged while the enveloping force closes. When part of a larger unit's envelopment, the task force may be either the enveloping force or the fixing force.

(b) The enveloping force may be mounted or dismounted, but it must have the mobility and combat power to achieve its purpose.

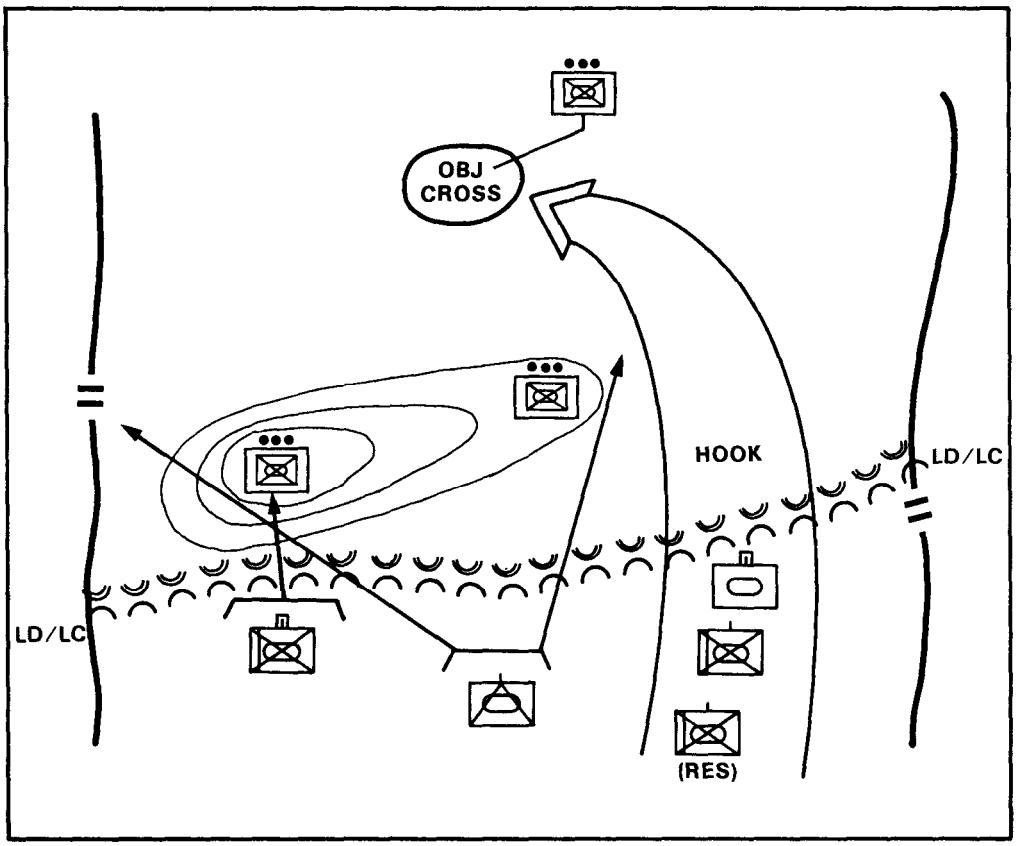

Figure 3-1. Battalion task force conducting an envelopment.

(c) Variations of the envelopment include double envelopment and encirclement.

- In the *double envelopment,* the attacker seeks to pass simultaneously around both flanks of the enemy. This requires two assailable flanks. Precise coordination, sufficient combat power, and detailed timing are required. The double envelopment is seldom attempted at task force level.
- An *encirclement* occurs when the defender has lost all ground routes of evacuation and reinforcement. Task forces normally participate in encirclements as part of a larger force. Encirclements are likely to be made during an exploitation or pursuit.

(2) **Turning movement.** The turning movement is a variant of the envelopment in which the attacker seeks to pass around the enemy, avoiding his main forces, to secure an objective

deep in the rear. The task force normally conducts a turning movement as part of a larger unit's operation.

(3) **Penetration.** In the penetration, the battalion concentrates its force to rupture the defense on a narrow front, normally a platoon. The gap created is then widened and used to pass forces through to defeat the enemy in detail and to seize objectives in depth. A successful penetration depends on surprise and the attacker's ability to suppress enemy weapons, to concentrate forces at the point of attack, and to quickly pass sufficient force through the gap to destroy the enemy's defense. A penetration is normally attempted when enemy flanks are unassailable, or when the enemy has a weak or unguarded gap in his defense. The penetration of a well-organized position requires a quick rupture and a rapid destruction of the continuity of the defense to deny the enemy time to react. Without rapid penetration, the enemy can reposition forces to block or counter the manuever. A penetration is planned in three phases:

(a) Isolation of the site selected for penetration (see Figure 3-2).

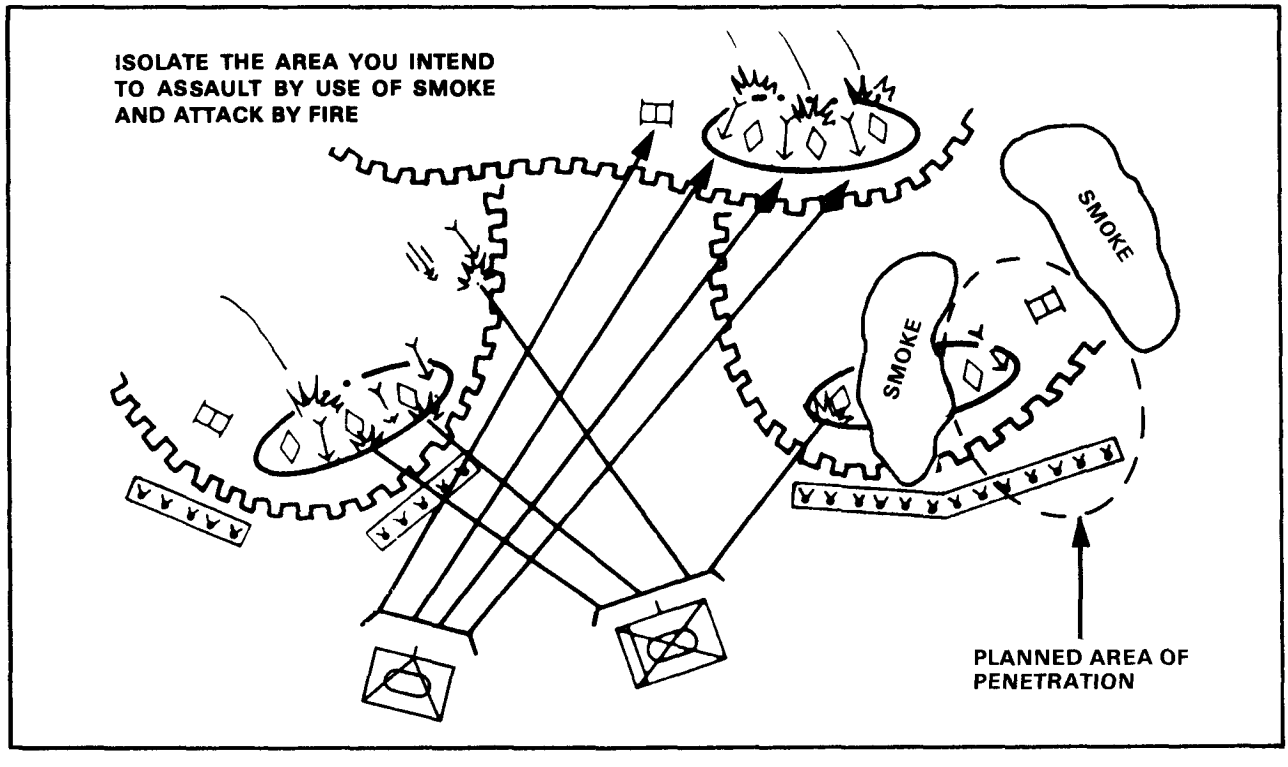

Figure 3-2. Penetration (Step 1).

(b) Initial penetration of the enemy position (see Figure 3-3). Dismounted infantry company teams breach the close-in obstacles and seize enemy positions behind these obstacles. These teams widen and hold the shoulders of the initial penetration. This penetration is overmatched and supported by other elements of the task force.

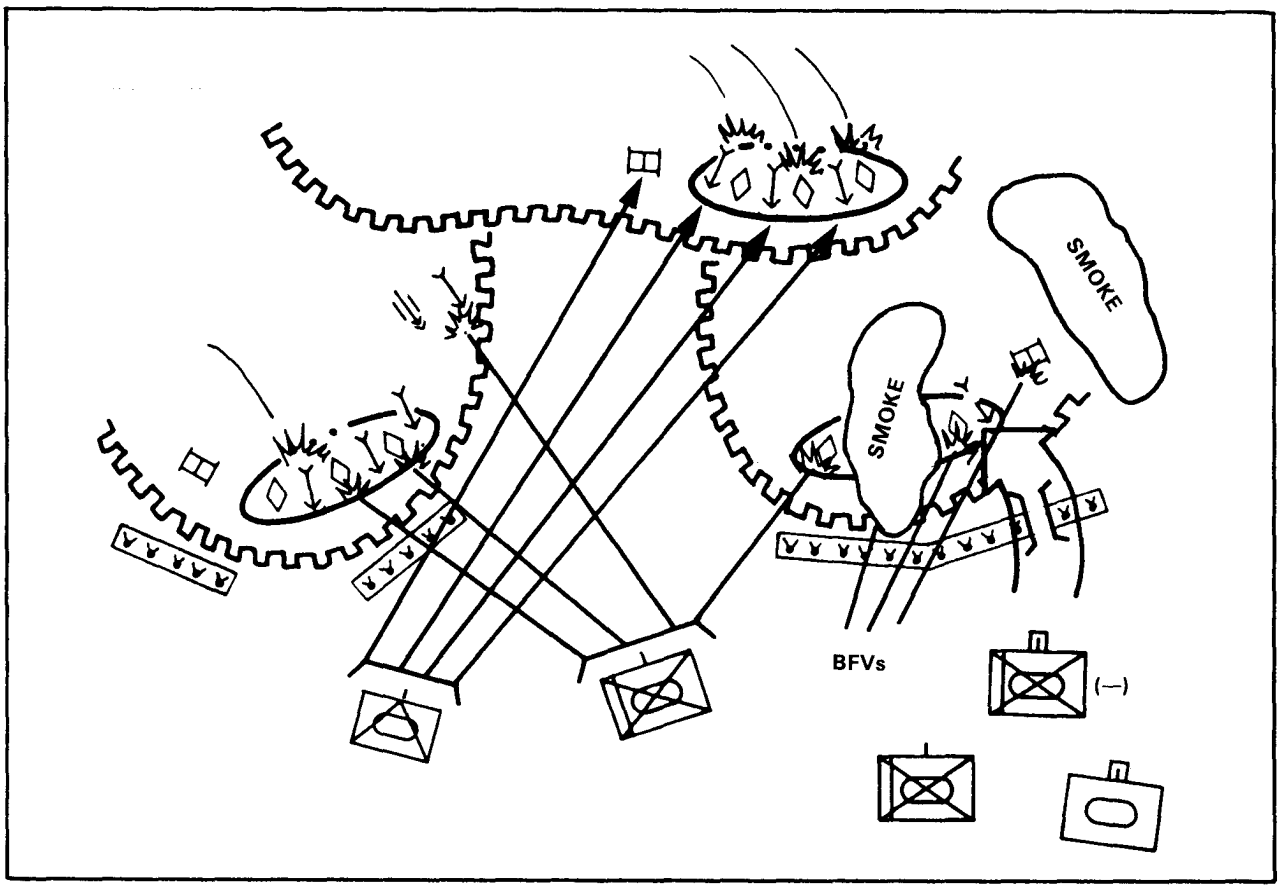

Figure 3-3. Penetration (Step 2).

(c) Exploitation of the penetration (see Figure 3-4). Other companies complete the destruction of the enemy position and move to deeper objectives. Objectives for the exploitation force are at least deep enough to allow an envelopment of the rest of the enemy company position. These objectives allow attack by fire to be made against second echelon enemy positions and enemy counterattack routes.

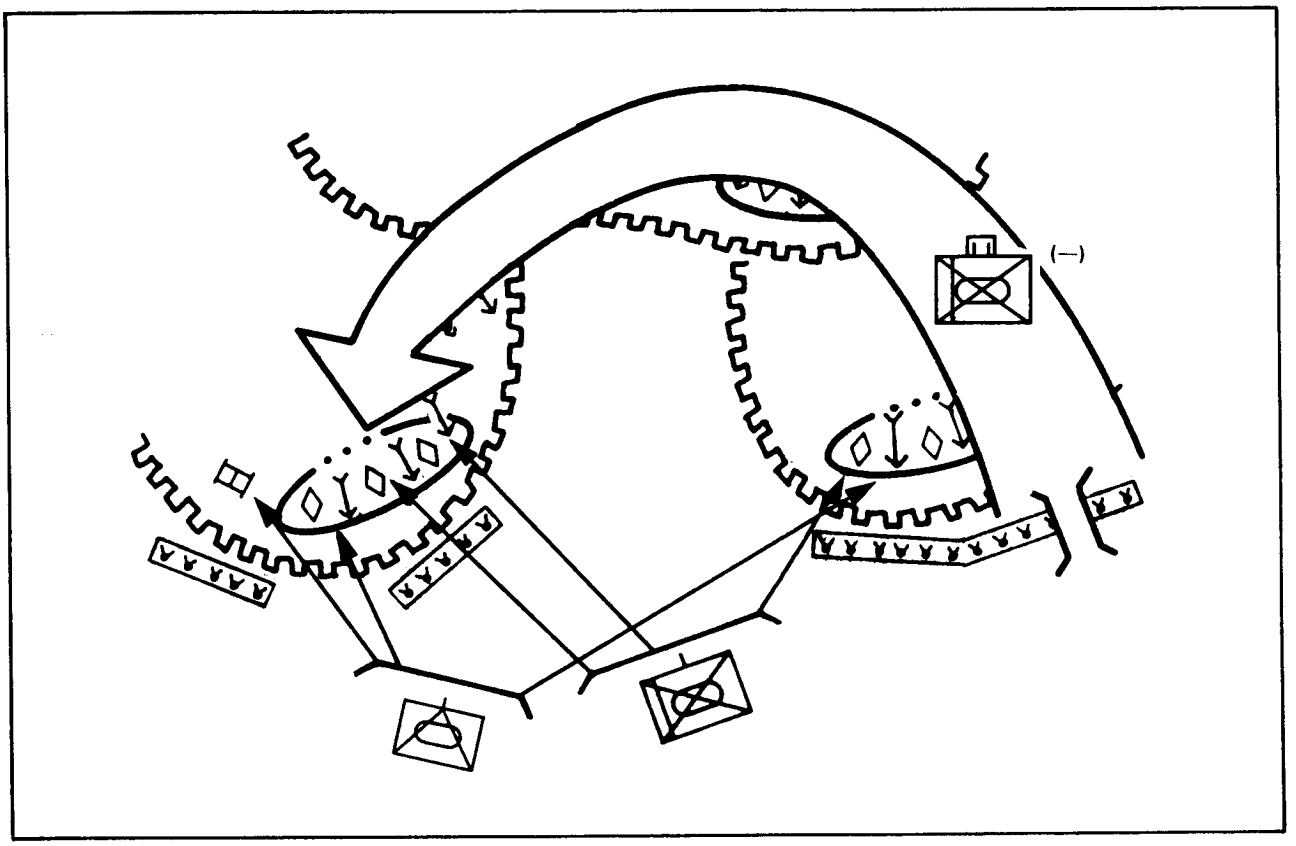

Figure 3-4. Penetration (Step 3).

(4) **Frontal attack.** The frontal attack is the least preferred form of maneuver. In the frontal attack, the task force uses the most direct routes to strike the enemy along his front. This attack is normally employed when the mission is to fix the enemy in position or deceive him. Although the frontal attack strikes the enemy's front within the zone of the attacking force, it does not require that the attacker do so on line or that all subordinate unit attacks be frontal. Frontal attacks, unless in overwhelming strength, are seldom decisive.

(5) **Infiltration.** Infiltration is a form of maneuver where combat elements move by stealth to objectives to the rear of the enemy's position without fighting through prepared defenses. All or part of the task force may move by infiltration. Infiltrations are slow and are often conducted during reduced visibility. Successful infiltration requires effective reconnaissance to discover and secure undefended

routes. Such routes are normally found in rough terrain or in areas difficult to cover with observation and fire. The infiltrating elements avoid detection, but if detected they avoid decisive engagement.

3-6. MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES AND FORMATIONS

The selection of movement techniques and attack formations for the task force is dependent on terrain, the mission, and the overmatching capability of the force's weapons systems.

a. **Movement Techniques.** The three movement techniques are traveling, traveling overwatch, and bounding overwatch. Usually, the task force does not move as a unit using one movement technique. Rather, the task force commander designates the movement technique to be used by the lead unit(s). Movement techniques end upon enemy contact. The unit begins its actions on contact and the overmatching force begins its suppressive fire.

b. **Formations.** The task force may move in any one of six basic formations: column, wedge, V, echelon, line, and box or diamond. The task force may use more than one formation in a given movement; this is especially true when the terrain changes during the movement. For example, the task force commander may elect to use the column formation until the task force clears a defile, at which time the task force would change to another formation, such as a wedge. Other factors, such as the distance of the move or the enemy disposition, may also prompt the commander to use more than one formation. Distances between units are METT-T dependent.

(1) **Column formation.** The task force moves in column formation when early contact is not expected, and the objective is far away. Normally the battalion's lead element uses traveling overwatch while the following units are traveling (see Figure 3-5). Considerations are as follows:

- Facilitates speed of movement, easy to control, and useful in defiles or dense woods.
- Provides for quick transition to other formations.
- Requires flank security.
- Provides majority of firepower to the flanks.

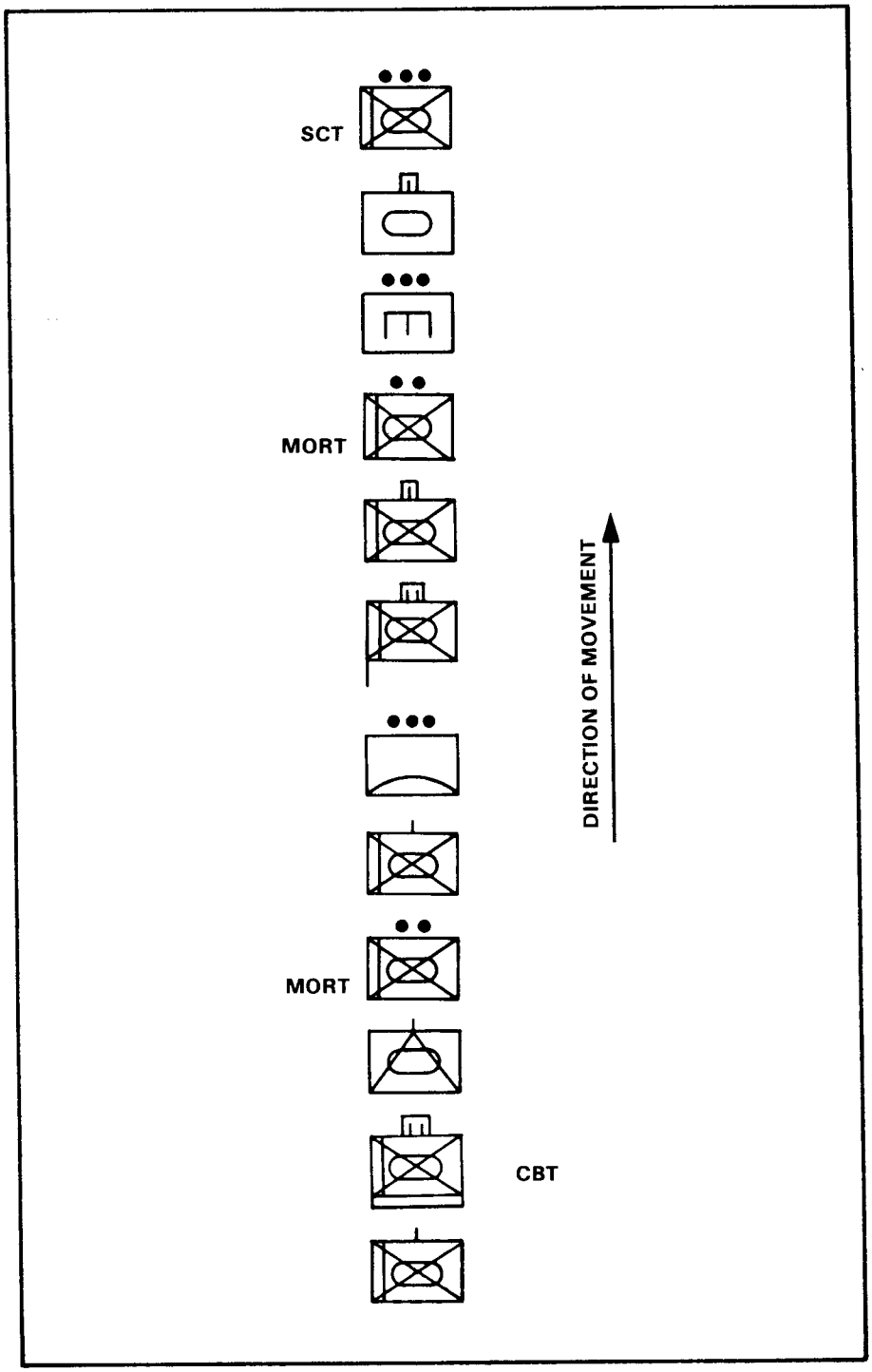

Figure 3-5. Task force in column formation.

(2) **Wedge formation.** The wedge formation best positions the battalion to attack an enemy appearing to the front and flanks. The wedge is used when enemy contact is possible or expected, but the location and disposition of the enemy is vague. When enemy contact is not expected, it may be used to rapidly cross open terrain (see Figure 3-6). Considerations are as follows:

- Facilitates control and transition to the assault.
- Provides for maximum firepower forward and good firepower to the flanks.
- In forested areas or during poor visibility, is difficult to control.
- Requires sufficient space to disperse companies laterally and in depth.

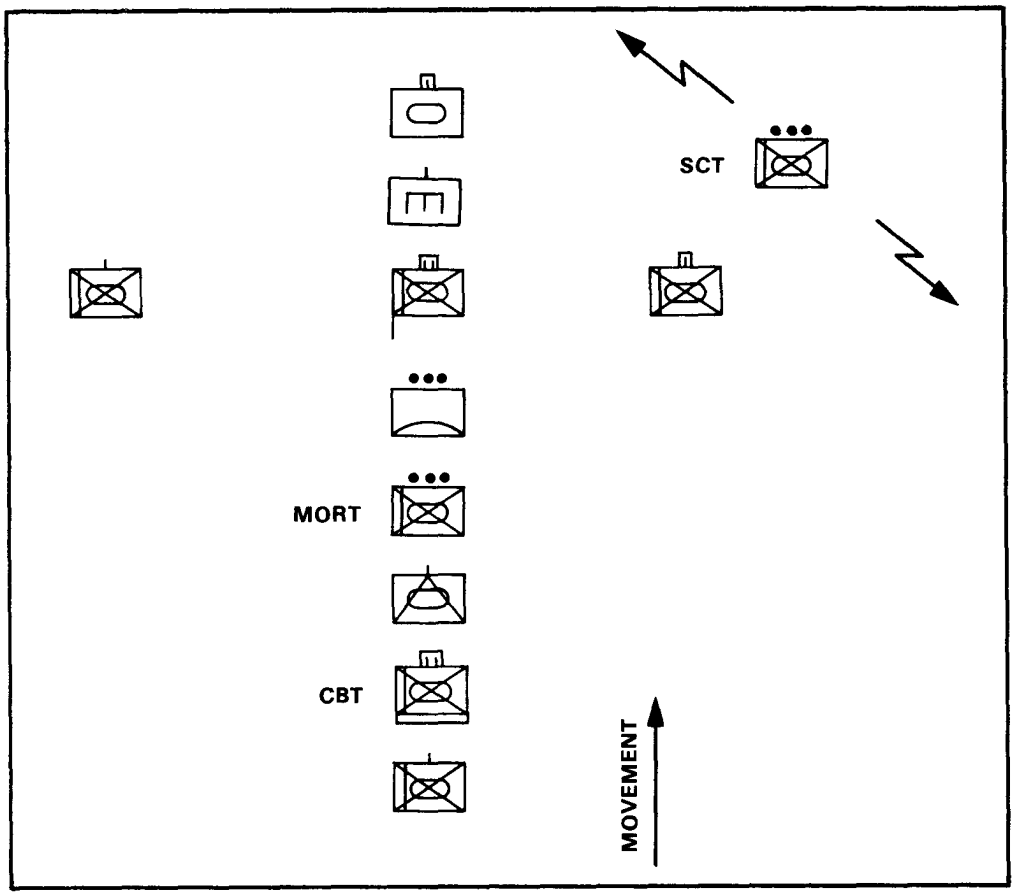

Figure 3-6. Task force in wedge formation.

(3) **V formation.** The V formation disposes the task force with two companies abreast and one trailing. This arrangement is most suitable to advance against a threat known to be to the front of the task force. It may be used when enemy contact is expected and the location and disposition of the enemy is known (see Figure 3-7). Considerations are as follows:

- Hard to reorient control is difficult in heavily wooded areas.
- Provides for good firepower forward and to the flanks.

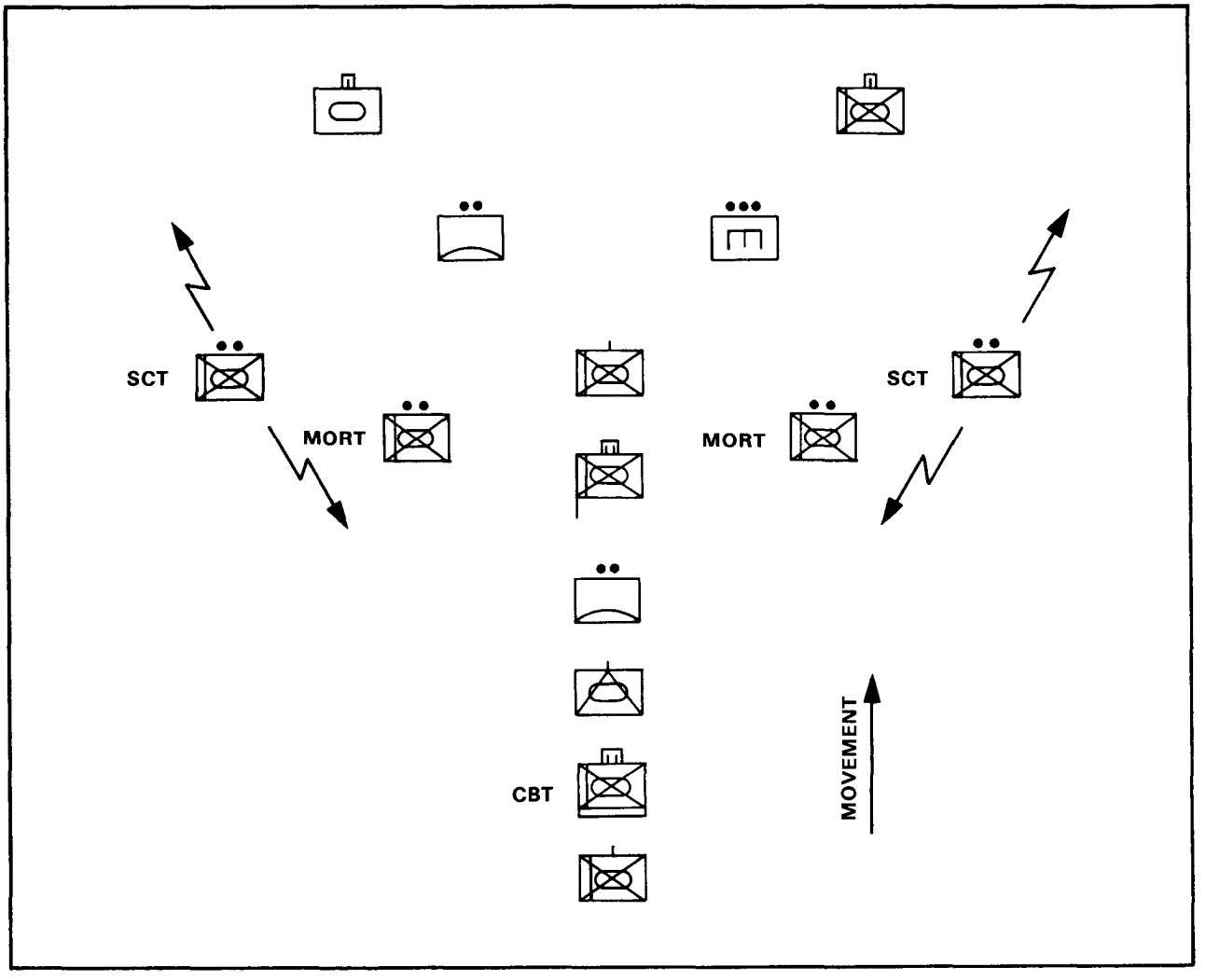

Figure 3-7. Task force in V formation.

(4) **Echelon formation.** The echelon formation arranges the task force with the company teams in column formation in the direction of the echelon (right or left). It is commonly used when the task force provides security to a larger moving force (see Figure 3-8). Considerations are as follows:

- Provides for firepower forward and in the direction of echelon.
- Facilitates control in open areas; more difficult in heavily wooded areas.

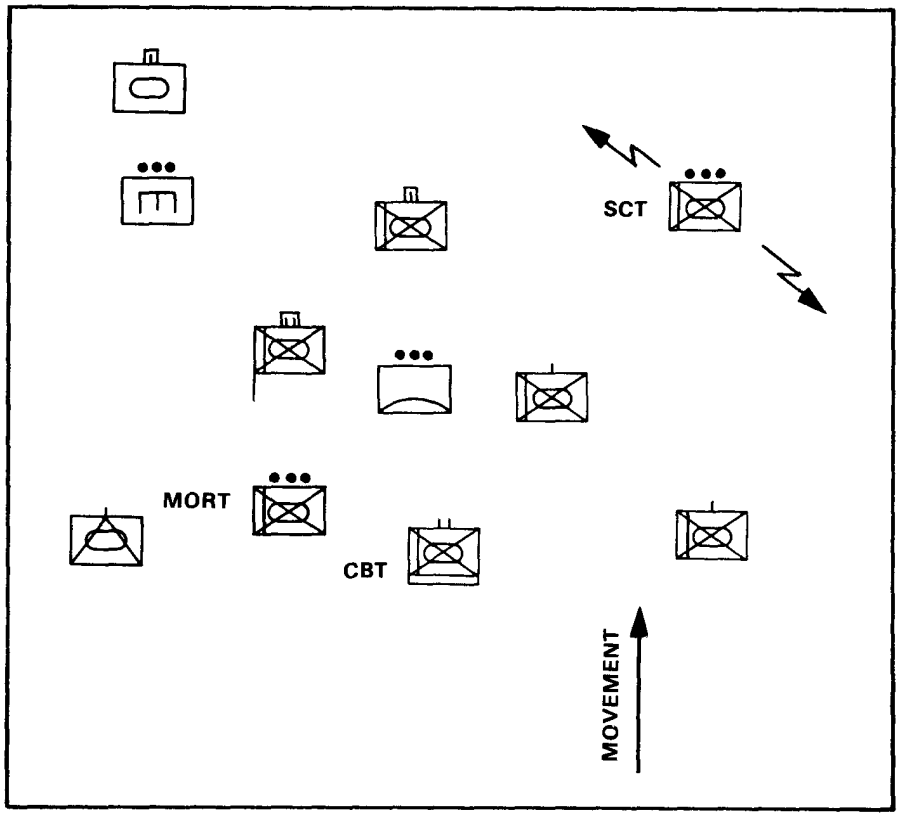

Figure 3-8. Task force in echelon (right) formation.

(5) **Line formation.** The line formation arranges the task force with company teams abreast. Since it does not dispose company teams in depth, the line provides less flexibility of maneuver than other formations. It is used when continuous movement with maximum firepower to the front is required (see Figure 3-9). Considerations are as follows:

- Permits maximum firepower to the front.

- Difficult to control.
- Facilitates the use of speed and shock in closing with the enemy.

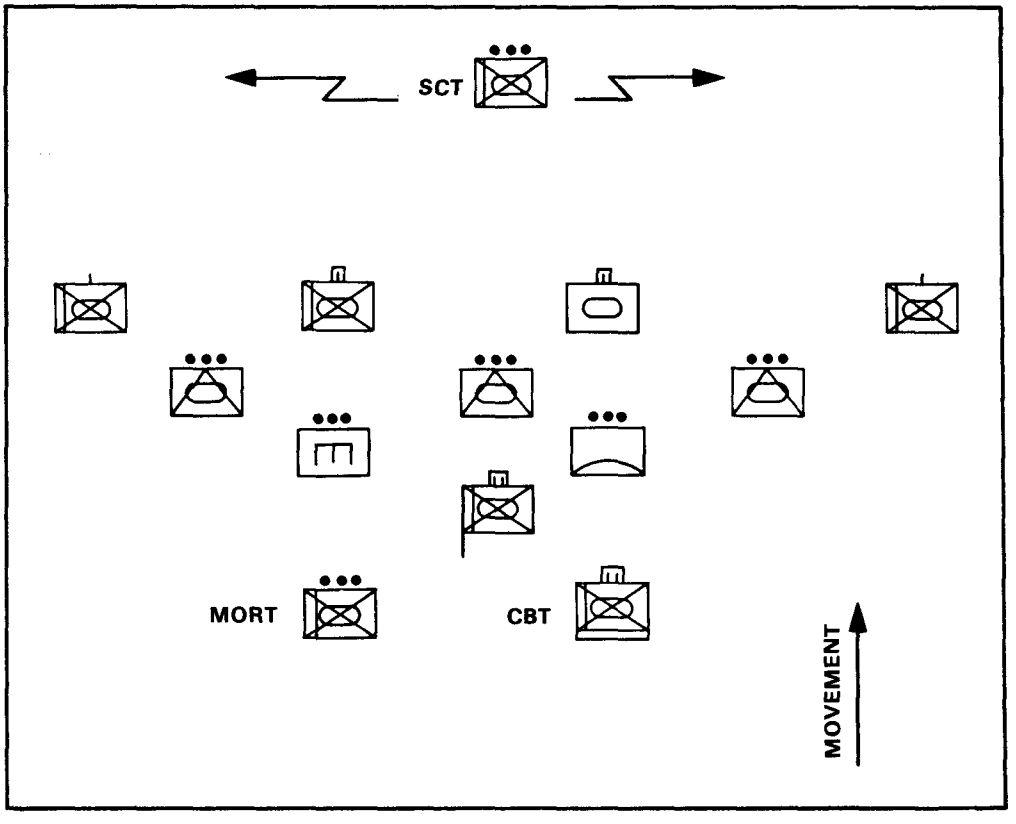

Figure 3-9. Task force in line formation.

(6) **Box formation.** The box formation arranges the battalion with two company teams forward and two company teams trailing. It is the most flexible of all formations because it can easily be changed to any other formation (see Figure 3-10, page 3-16). Considerations are as follows:

- Provides firepower to the front and flanks.
- Facilitates speed of movement because it is easy to control.

(7) **Diamond formation.** The diamond formation is a variation of the box formation. In the diamond formation, one company team leads, one company team is positioned on each flank, and the remaining company team is to the rear.

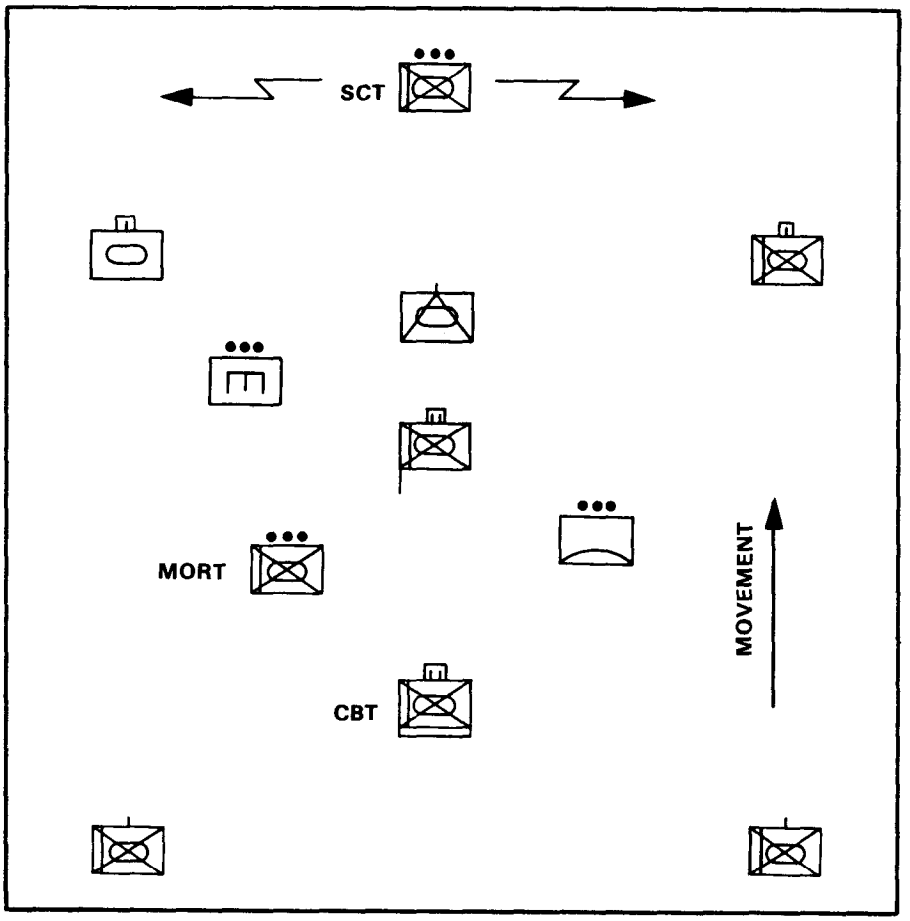

Figure 3-10. Task force in box formation.

Section II. THREAT DEFENSIVE DOCTRINE

3-7. WHY THE THREAT DEFENDS

Threat doctrine prescribes offense as the principal combat operation and views the defense as necessary at times, but always temporary in nature. Threat commanders resort to defense to economize forces, gain time, concentrate forces for further offensive operations, repel a stronger force, consolidate an objective, or cover a withdrawal.

a. While he defends, the threat commander will focus on containment of an attack, and violent counterattacks to defeat committed

troops and regain the initiative. The threat integration of electronic warfare and smoke into his defensive plan is routine.

b. Tactically, threat defensive operations seek surprise, employ large concentrations of troops and fires, integrate combined arms, and provide defense in depth. The threat defense is designed to hold an occupied area and repulse attacks by exhausting attacking forces, methodically depleting their strength, and then counterattacking.

3-8. HOW THE THREAT DEFENDS

The threat normally uses motorized rifle units to defend and uses tank forces in the counterattack (see Figure 3-11, page 3-18).

a. The threat perceives the hasty defense as the most probable form of defense, as it allows for a rapid transition to offensive operations. It is during the hasty defense that he is most vulnerable to an attack. When the threat advance is halted for more than a few hours, he makes the transition from a hasty defense to a prepared defense organized in successive belts and echelons to provide depth.

b. A threat defense consists of a security zone and a main defense belt. The attacker is faced with a series of mutually supporting platoon and company battle positions or strongpoints echeloned in depth. Obstacles are prepared forward of and within each defense belt to impede the attacker's advance, canalize him into "fire sacks," or expose him to counterattacks by tank-heavy reserves. Security zone forces try to halt or delay the attacker by forcing him to deploy before reaching the main defense belt.

c. The following are strengths of the threat defense.

(1) Mechanized and armored formations fight as a combined arms team.

(2) Heavy attack helicopters are used against close targets; fixed-wing aircraft attack artillery units, nuclear delivery systems, and other deep targets.

(3) Massive amounts of field artillery can be brought to bear. Each frontline division has 140 tubes, and with normal reinforcement can have up to 260 tubes of artillery.

(4) Counterfire and close support missions are fired simultaneously.

(5) The defense is antitank and strongpoint oriented with tank-heavy mobile reserves.

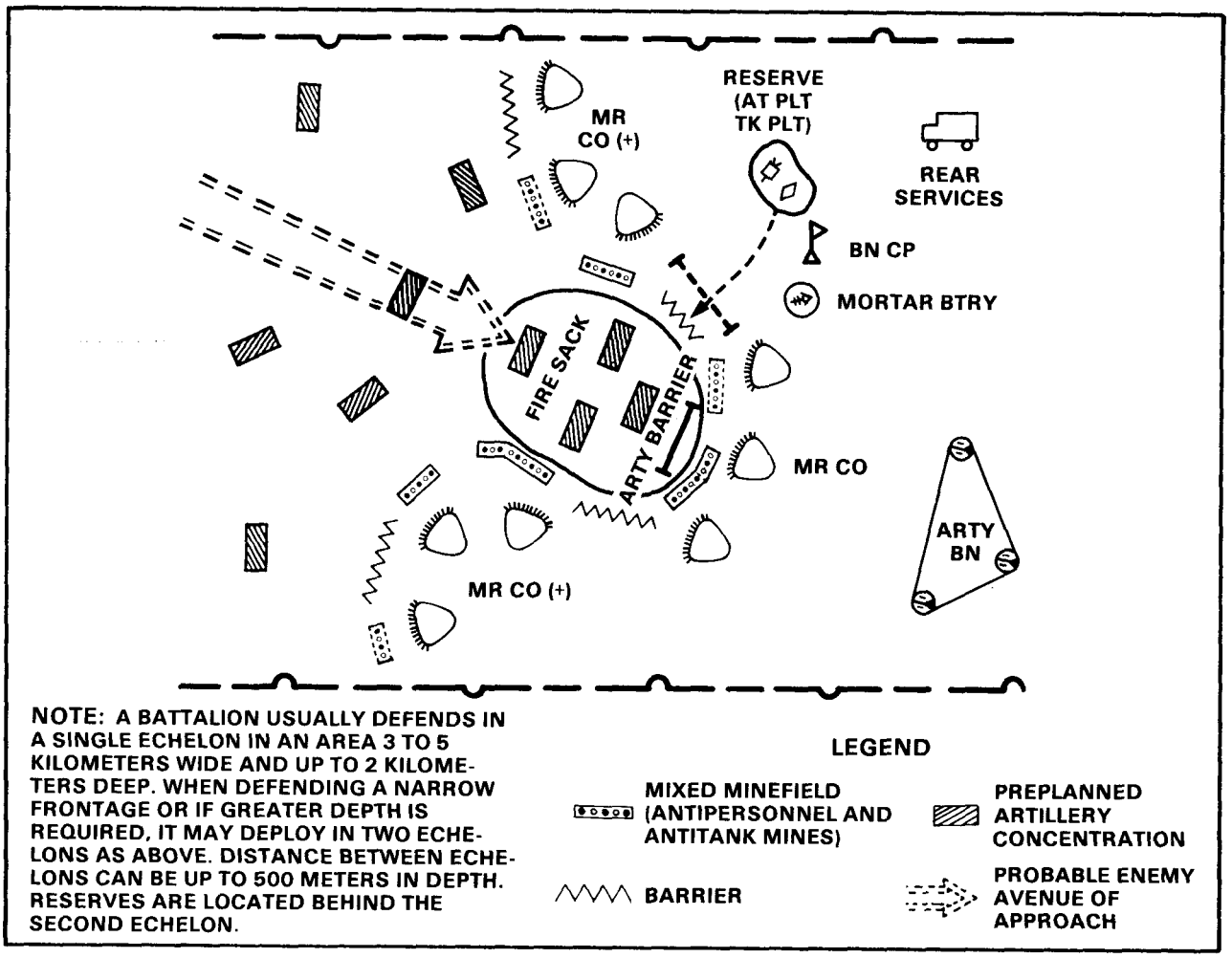

Figure 3-11. Reinforced motorized rifle battalion in the defense.

d. Vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the threat defense are as follows.

(1) Communications are excellent; however, at platoon level, primary command and control is with visual signals.

(2) Artillery command observation posts (COP) are the heart of the fire support system.

(3) Illumination and pyrotechnics are used to mark counterattack objectives at night. (Poor passive night vision capability.)

(4) Threat concept for continuous operations requires active infrared lights.

Section III. PLANNING FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

3-9. OFFENSIVE IPB AND RECONNAISSANCE

a. Offensive IPB coupled with aggressive reconnaissance provides the commander the following information:

- Location of existing and reinforcing obstacles.
- Enemy positions and orientations.
- Enemy intent based on his dispositions.
- Avenues of approach to exploit enemy weaknesses.
- Likely courses of action for employment of enemy reserves, counterattacking forces, and CS assets.

b. From the analysis of the enemy's scheme of defense, the commander develops a tentative plan to defeat it.

c. The enemy's defensive positions and terrain critical to the scheme of maneuver must be kept under observation to ensure that the enemy does not modify his defenses while the task force plan is being finalized and coordinated. Supporting and direct fires are used to impede enemy preparations to the degree practical and desirable.

d. Reconnaissance assets may also be used to assist friendly movement.

3-10. RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE PLANNING

a. Reconnaissance and surveillance operations are planned by the S2 and coordinated with the S3 to confirm or deny the S2's templating.

(1) Reconnaissance is continually conducted to collect information on which the commander plans, makes decisions, and issues orders. It concentrates on one or more specific target areas without the requirement for continuous coverage. The scout platoon is the unit in the task force dedicated to the reconnaissance mission, but all elements of the task force are required to assist in the reconnaissance effort. Other assets must be requested from higher headquarters.

(2) Surveillance is the systematic observation of areas by visual or other detection means for intelligence purposes. A surveillance mission is characterized by the greater size of

its target area and by repetition. Under optimum conditions, surveillance is continuous over the entire area of interest. The task force S2 requests that brigade provide surveillance of critical areas outside the task force area of operations.

b. Reconnaissance and surveillance operations are conducted by various elements:

(1) **Scouts.** These are the soldiers best trained to function as the "eyes" and "ears" of the task force. They are used in the area hardest to cover. Scouts reconnoiter to determine enemy locations, orientations, and dispositions. Before, during, and after the battle, they continue to report their observations and significant changes in enemy activity.

(2) **Ground surveillance radars.** A GSR can detect moving vehicles and personnel in open terrain at long ranges, and it can provide information on the number, location, disposition, and types of targets. Normally, GSRs are placed to cover open, high-speed approaches where early detection is critical. They are also used to monitor defiles and to detect enemy reconnaissance elements by oblique shots across the task force's sector along open, flat areas.

(3) **Remote sensor teams.** Remotely employed sensors (REMS), like GSR, are division assets attached or placed in direct support. The battalion must provide the manpower to emplace REMS; the team leader monitors the output for the S2. The REMS should be emplaced as far forward as possible. They are useful in covering dead space and broken terrain where observation would require more OPs or patrols than available. They can also assist in detecting attempts to breach friendly obstacles and in keeping track of enemy movements after security force withdrawal.

(4) **Infantry.** Manning OPs and patrolling are infantry missions.

(5) **Tanks.** While tank units are not manned to conduct patrols and man OPs, their use should be planned. The thermal sights are a useful means of detecting vehicle movement.

c. **Planning considerations.**

(1) The S2 coordinates efforts of all intelligence resources into one collection effort.

(2) Intelligence requirements (IR) are prioritized for R&S missions, and further refined as specific instruction orders.

(3) Economy of effort is necessary in planning the use of resources for maximum return. Duplication of effort is eliminated.

(4) The S2 plans secondary missions for each available asset.

d. **Planning process.**

(1) The task force S2 prepares a detailed R&S plan based on information generated during the IPB process.

(2) Specific taskings are given to company teams, the scout platoon, GSR sections, and any other element that has a reconnaissance and surveillance capability. As a minimum, the R&S plan should include:

(a) **Maneuver units.**

- Number and location of OPs required, or sectors requiring surveillance.
- Ambush requirements with locations and effective times.
- Reaction forces requirements.
- Obstacles to be protected.
- Patrol requirements with routes, objectives, and times.

(b) **Scouts.**

- Specific mission (route, zone, or a reconnaissance).
- Screen location, contact points with adjacent units, and time needed to be established.
- Attachments with effective time and reporting locations.
- Subsequent missions.
- CS and CSS support.

(c) **Ground surveillance radars.**

- Locations, sectors, schedules, and security/support arrangements.
- Day missions.
- Subsequent missions.
- CS and CSS support.

(d) **Remote sensors.** Location and emplacement responsibilities.

(e) **Coordinating instructions.**

- Passage instructions, including recognition signals, routes, passage points, and responsible party.
- Rules of engagement and disengagement.
- Reporting schedules.

(3) Intelligence preparation of the battlefield provides the S2 with a guide for effective R&S resources employment. The S2 must use the event template developed during IPB to guide him in where and when to look for the enemy and what units and activities to look for. It also guides him in orienting and directing his R&S resources to the proper area for the needed information. An R&S overlay of the area of operation is necessary to ensure that all areas are properly covered.

(4) To develop a useful R&S plan, the S2 must adhere to the following elements:

(a) Commander's guidance.

(b) Priorities, terrain and weather, and tactical situation, which determine requirements.

(c) Resources, terrain, long-range weather forecast, electronic warfare, operations security, and economy of effort.

(5) The R&S plan must be developed early in the commander's overall planning process. It must be disseminated early with taskings to promote day coordination, preparation, and reconnaissance. All elements must know where patrols and OPs are located to avoid combat with friendly forces.

e. **Reporting.** The S2 establishes reporting by an established time schedule. The SALUTE format is used for accurate reporting. Information collected must be quickly disseminated to all elements of the task force and higher headquarters.

f. Dissemination of information. Dissemination within the battalion task force is usually made by personal contacts, oral reports, eavesdropping, and briefings. Dissemination to higher and adjacent units is usually accomplished through reports, summaries, and intelligence estimates and analyses.

3-11. CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The concept of the operation describes a plan for massing firepower by synchronization of fires and maneuver.

a. **Maneuver.**

(1) The scheme of maneuver is the central expression of the commander's concept of the operation. The maneuver plan —

- Designates the main and supporting attacks.
- Describes the movement and positioning of maneuver forces from the line of departure through actions on the final objective.
- Directs the task force formation to be used and dictates specific points where the formation changes or company teams move to supporting positions.
- Provides orientation for the movement or attack using either zones of action, axes of advance, or directions of attack.
- Designates main attack objectives along with positions and intermediate objectives, if used.

(2) The scheme of maneuver must be flexible enough to take advantage of developing information. Attack plans will often have two or more initial options; a final choice, based on the latest intelligence, will not be made until just prior to the attack.

(a) The scheme of maneuver also addresses actions on the objective and synchronization of the close assault.

(b) Actions on the objective are an important aspect of attack planning. The commander must develop a plan to isolate and destroy individual enemy units (usually platoons or smaller) by achieving overwhelming combat power ratios at the decisive point and time. The plan must enable the commander to bring as much combat power to bear as possible by synchronization of maneuver elements and fires. Maneuver units must arrive at their attack by fire positions or commence the assault simultaneously in order to achieve the desired combat power ratios and avoid a "piecemeal" attack. Fires must be planned to enhance combat power ratios. To isolate enemy units from one another, the commander may use direct and indirect fires, including smoke for obscuration, and maneuver to fix units or prevent reinforcement.

(c) Reverse planning from actions on the objective is an excellent method for enhancing synchronization of the attack. It serves to clarify the commander's intent and to prevent over-emphasis on movement.

b. **Fires.**

(1) Fire support is used to destroy, neutralize, or suppress the enemy, and to provide smoke and illumination that facilitates task force maneuver. Fires support breaching forces, soften enemy forces on the objective before the assault, and suppress the objective area. Fires are shifted as the attack progresses through the enemy defense.

(2) A task force conducting the brigade main attack will normally have priority of the brigade's direct support artillery battalion, its organic mortars, and aviation supporting it. The commander and his staff develop the scheme of maneuver and supporting fires concurrently. The FSO plans, prepares, distributes, and continually updates the task force fire support plan.

(3) The FSO recommends and the commander determines those fire support tasks that make the greatest contribution to the attack. The FSO determines priorities and taskings for the battalion mortar platoon in conjunction with the overall fire support plan.

(4) The priority task for fire support in the attack is the suppression of antiarmor systems that inhibit maneuver.

(5) Other fire support tasks in the attack include:

(a) **Preparation fires.** Preparation fires, including preplanned CAS, can suppress, neutralize, and destroy enemy positions on the objective.

(b) **Obscuration and screening fires.** Fires using smoke assist breaching efforts, cover friendly maneuver, and can aid in deception efforts.

(c) **Counterbattery fires.** When manual breaching is anticipated, the FSO should coordinate for counterbattery fires, which are planned by higher headquarters.

(d) **Illumination fires.** Illuminating fire is always planned for night attacks, but usually held on order of the task force commander.

(e) **Priority targets.** Priority targets are normally allocated to weight the main attack.

(f) **Fires during the assault.** Assault fires are usually executed in the following sequence:

- Suppression fires to prevent the enemy from observing and engaging friendly elements and to conceal the movement of companies.

- Concentrated fires to destroy enemy fighting positions near the initial ojective.
- Subsequent fires that concentrate on deeper objectives.

(g) **Fires during consolidation.** Fires are placed on retreating enemy forces and on deeper positions. Targets are planned on likely enemy counterattack routes or placed on enemy withdrawal routes to force his destruction or capture.

3-12. MAIN AND SUPPORTING ATTACKS

In his concept of the offensive operation, the commander designates a main and any supporting attacks.

a. **Main Attack.**

(1) The units conducting the main attack are assigned a mission which, when achieved, successfully accomplishes the task force's mission. The main attack secures a key terrain objective or position or destroys an enemy force. Terrain objectives have traditionally been assigned to the elements making the main attack, but attacks by fire to destroy an enemy force may also be the main attacker's mission.

(2) In a battalion task force attack there is only one main attack. All other elements of the task force support the main attack. The plan of attack must contain provisions for exploiting success whenever it occurs. Commanders must avoid becoming so committed to an initially planned main attack that greater opportunities are neglected.

(3) Both *main attack* and *main effort* are mechanisms for allowing the concentration and coordination of combat power, but they are not synonymous. The main attack is the task force's main effort at the decisive phase of the attack. The main effort is the focus of combat power at any given time during the attack.

(4) In planning the scheme of maneuver, the main attack must have sufficient combat power and support to accomplish its mission. Methods of weighing the main attack include —

- Assigning the main attack to the companies with the highest combat power and bold, aggressive leaders.
- Allocating additional combat platoons.

- Attaching or placing combat support elements in direct support (such as minerollers and plows, engineers, AVLBs, ADA).
- Providing a priority of combat support (artillery, mortars, engineers, and ADA) and allocating priority targets.
- Positioning overwatch or support-by-fire elements to support.
- Coordinating adjacent unit or attack helicopter support by fire.
- Positioning and assigning planning priorities to the reserve.
- Locating the tactical CP where it can best control the main attack.
- Providing a priority for combat service support.

b. **Supporting Attack.**

(1) The supporting attack allows the main attack to be successful. The supporting attack contributes to the success of the main attack by accomplishing one or more of the following:

- Occupying terrain to support by fire the maneuver of the main attack.
- Fixing the enemy in position.
- Deceiving the enemy as to the location of the main attack.
- Isolating the objective.

(2) Supporting attacks place fires on the objective, and/or on known or likely supporting enemy positions. Fires are used to destroy as many of the defender's major weapons systems as possible before the main attack reaches the objective. Supporting attacks by fire should come from a different direction than the main attack. This forces the enemy to defend in two directions and avoids the masking of friendly fires as the main attack closes on the objective. Forces used in a support-by-fire role should be considered as potential reserve forces. Plans to move them forward to assist in the final assault or reorganization and continued operation are part of the commander's contingency planning.

(3) The supporting attack may be by fire and maneuver. In this case, one or more company teams are tasked to secure or seize terrain dominating the main attack's objective. This form of supporting attack is used when conditions will not

allow a supporting attack by fire. The task force seldom can have more than one supporting attack by fire and maneuver because this will weaken the main attack, make the attack difficult to control, and increase the chance of a piecemeal attack. However, it is possible to have one supporting attack by fire and one by fire and maneuver.

3-13. COMPANY TEAM MISSIONS IN THE ATTACK

Within the main or supporting attack the task force commander assigns companies and company teams one of four basic missions to support the task force scheme of maneuver.

a. **Attack to Seize/Secure a Terrain Objective.** If the mission is to seize an objective, the company must clear it of enemy. Securing means not only gaining possession of the objective but deploying in a manner that prevents its destruction or loss to enemy action. The commander must clearly state the purpose to be achieved by seizing or securing the objective.

b. **Overwatch.** A unit assigned an overwatch mission supports the movement of other elements by placing direct fire or adjusting indirect fire on enemy forces that can engage the supported unit. Designation of the element to be overmatched and fire control measures must be assigned. Range of enemy antiarmor systems normally require frequent repositioning by the overwatch element. The commander may designate series of overwatch positions or may specify positioning instructions for the overwatch element. Overwatch positions are usually shown graphically as checkpoints.

c. **Attack by Fire.** This mission requires engaging an enemy force with direct fire to destroy, fix, or suppress it. Positions and sectors of fire or other fire control measures can be assigned.

d. **Reserve.** The task force commander determines the size, composition, and location of his reserve. The commander prioritizes missions for planning and coordination, based on likely contingencies.

3-14. RESERVE CONSIDERATIONS

A task force reserve is designated whenever possible. The reserve is an uncommitted force, used during the operation at the critical place and time to ensure mission success. The reserve is assigned "be prepared" missions, in priority order for planning.

a. **Size.** A vague enemy situation, such as in a movement to contact, requires a strong reserve, whereas more developed information on the enemy, such as in a deliberate attack, could reduce the need for a reserve.

b. **Composition.** The reserve is normally a company team to ensure a flexible enough organization to react to various contingencies. It is often balanced or tank-heavy, but the exact composition is dependent on the factors of METT-T. Because an antiarmor company cannot close with the enemy, it should not be the sole reserve.

c. **Location.** The reserve follows the main attack at a distance sufficient to keep it from interfering with the movement of the lead company teams and to maintain its freedom of maneuver. The reserve maintains the flexibility to shift to a supporting attack if the main effort is changed.

d. **Commitment.** The reserve commander must understand the commander's intent, particularly the decision points for commitment. The reserve company commander must remain updated on the situation. The decision to commit the reserve is critical. The task force commander reconstitutes or redesignates the reserve as soon as possible. The reserve is used to:

- Maintain the momentum of the attack and exploit success.
- Defeat or block counterattacks.
- Hold key terrain seized by the attacking force.
- Fix a bypassed force.
- Assume the mission of a committed unit.

3-15. SYNCHRONIZATION OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

The commander and staff synchronize and integrate all combat, combat support, and combat service support assets organic and available to the battalion task force. Each element has primary offensive employment considerations that are explained in this section. Employment considerations that vary from those stated here are addressed specifically under the type of operation.

a. **Maneuver.**

(1) **Tanks.** With their combination of mobility, firepower, and armor protection, tanks are the primary mounted assault element of the task force. Tanks are used to weight the main attack. Tanks may be assigned support-by-fire missions when

their direct fires are needed to support assaults, or if obstacles initially prevent them from assaulting the enemy. Tanks are employed in at least platoon strength. When a reserve is formed, tanks are normally allocated to it.

(2) **Infantry.** Mounted infantry is used in the main attack when enemy antiarmor fires are weak or have been suppressed. Because of vulnerability to antitank fires, BFVs are used to overwatch tanks or dismounted infantry when facing more than light antiarmor resistance. Dismounted infantry may lead by infiltration to clear obstacles or key enemy positions and disrupt the enemy's defense. Dismounted infantry can maneuver on untrafficable terrain to attack from an unexpected direction to permit the resumption of mounted combat. Dismounted infantry may assault with tanks against strong enemy resistance to protect the tanks from close-range antiarmor weapons. Infantry can also be used extensively in reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance roles.

(3) **Antiarmor company.** In the offense, the antiarmor company maneuvers to provide overwatch and support-by-fire. Security and economy of force missions are also appropriate.

(4) **Scouts.** During the offense, the scout platoon is employed in a security or reconnaissance role for the moving force. The primary mission for the scout platoon in the offense is reconnaissance.

(5) **Attack helicopters.** Attack helicopters may be employed by brigade to provide overwatch, to cover areas ground units cannot cover, or to rapidly mass to provide increased antitank capability. When this occurs, coordination is required to ensure synchronized application of combat power.

b. **Fire Support.**

(1) **Field artillery.** Field artillery is used to suppress, neutralize, or destroy enemy direct fire weapons and to obscure task force maneuver. Fires support breaching operations, soften enemy forces on the objective before the assault, and suppress the objective area. Field artillery and mortars are positioned to shift as the attack progresses. The commander and his staff develop the scheme of maneuver and supporting fires concurrently. The FSO plans, prepares, distributes, and continually updates the task force fire support plan. Counterbattery fires are planned and executed at division. Usually, the priority task for fire support in the attack is

the suppression of antitank systems that inhibit maneuver. As units maneuver, fires must be shifted to ensure adequate suppression. Company FSOs are tasked to call for suppressive fires, and adjust them. The battalion FSO and FSE monitor calls for fire to ensure that unnecessary, unsafe, or excessive fires are not requested.

(2) **Mortars.** The mortar platoon operates as a platoon or as two firing sections. Because of range limitations, mortars must be emplaced well forward to provide effective fire support. This frequently puts mortars with companies in offensive operations. The mortar platoon leader is responsible for continuous coordination with the company in whose area he is positioned or with whom he is moving. The normal mission of the platoon in the offense is to provide fire support to the entire task force (general support) under the direction of the FSO. During the planning phase and subsequent coordination, the FSO determines the targets that are to be engaged by mortars. The FSE monitors the mortar FDC nets. In fast-moving offensive operations where there is a need for decentralized control, the mortar platoon or a mortar section may be given a direct support mission or attached to one company. In this case, the mortar element is on the net of the supported company and moves and positions to support that element as directed by the company FIST.

(3) **Air Force.** Close air support (CAS) represents air action against targets close to battalion forces. Each mission must be carefully controlled and requires detailed integration with the fire and movement of those forces. CAS missions may be either preplanned or immediate. When available, preplanned missions are most frequently used as preparation fires prior to deliberate attack. Immediate requests are filled by aircraft on ground alert or by diverting aircraft from other missions. Requests for immediate CAS go directly from the task force FAC through Air Force channels and are processed unless intermediate monitoring headquarters disapprove the request within 5 minutes. Immediate missions will normally take more than 30 minutes to arrive on station.

c. **Intelligence.**

(1) Ground surveillance radar. During the offense, GSR is employed with reconnaissance and security elements on an exposed flank or to provide additional observation and security. They are required to provide continuous surveillance. Radar should be kept as far forward as the tactical situation and terrain will permit.

(2) **Army aviation.** Available scout and attack helicopters can also be employed in support of the intelligence collection effort.

d. **Air Defense Artillery.** Whenever possible, ADA elements supporting the offense are kept under the centralized control of the platoon leader. Centralized control allows better coordination of ADA support and provides excellent coverage at choke points. Attaching ADA assets is often appropriate in fast-moving offensive operations to get coverage well forward, and to ensure area coverage.

e. **Mobility, Countermobility, Survivability.**

(1) **Engineers.** Priority of engineers in offensive operations is to mobility.

(a) **Mobility.** Engineers seek to improve movement of maneuver forces and critical supplies by reducing or eliminating obstacles, breaching minefield, and improving routes for maneuver and supply. The brigade commander normally attaches at least an engineer platoon to the task force and augments it with additional assets depending on the task force mission. Combat engineer assets are normally located well forward in the attack formation to provide responsive support.

(b) **Countermobility.** Engineers plan for the use of FASCAM to be delivered by the field artillery and Air Force. Obstacles may be used to enhance flank security and prevent enemy reinforcement. Countermobility support involves obstacle construction to delay, canalize, disrupt, or kill the enemy. Obstacles should increase target acquisition time and, therefore, the effectiveness of direct and indirect fire weapons systems.

(2) **NBC.**

(a) **Mobility/Countermobility.** NBC operations in the offense concentrate initially on countermobility plans. Chapter 6 discusses the use of smoke in offensive operations.

(b) **Survivability.** Mission-oriented protection posture (MOPP) levels are established based on enemy NBC capabilities, workload, and weather.

f. **Combat Service Support.**

(1) **Combat trains.** During offensive operations, the task force combat trains CP is the focal point of combat service support

for the unit. CSS functions are performed as far forward as the tactical situation permits. Class III, V, VII, and IX and replacements are "pushed" forward to the companies at the logistical release points (LRPs). The task force combat trains move with the main body. They stay at least a terrain feature behind the maneuver forces during attacks and assaults.

(2) **Support platoon.** During the offense, the support platoon priority should be providing resupply of Class III and V to maintain the momentum of the attack.

(3) **Medical platoon.** Priority of effort for the medical platoon is to perform rapid triage and evacuation of casualties. The aid stations should locate in areas easily accessible to wheeled vehicles.

(4) **Maintenance platoon.** The maintenance platoon must quickly repair or evacuate combat vehicles to the main supply routes. The concept of fix-forward is imperative in order to maintain sufficient combat systems to maintain the momentum of the battle.

3-16. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR NIGHT ATTACKS

Limited visibility attacks are conducted to achieve surprise and capitalize on our night vision capabilities. Planning must begin as early as possible to allow daytime preparation for the night attack. Sleep plans are adjusted; commanders make every effort to ensure that leaders are rested before night attacks. The plan must be simple and must facilitate execution.

a. Night attacks are planned basically the same as daylight attacks, and many principles and techniques for night attack also apply to daytime limited visibility attacks.

b. The task force normally conducts night attacks with dismounted infantry. Light infantry can infiltrate during limited visibility to support a link-up and daylight attack by mechanized units or to destroy selected targets. During exploitations, pursuits, and attacks against known enemy weak positions, the task force attacks mounted at night.

c. The dismounted night attack is conducted in four phases: preparation, movement, assault, and consolidation and reorganization.

(1) **Preparation.** This phase includes all reconnaissance activities. The most critical preparation for the attack is the

positioning of the support elements that generate suppressive fires at the point of attack.

(2) **Movement.** The dismounted elements of the task force move by stealth from the point of departure to an assault position. The order of movement should be the support element followed by the breaching element, then the assault element. The task force can close with the enemy at night by taking advantage of the enemy's inability to acquire and engage targets at long range, and of reduced mutual support between his positions.

(3) **Assault.** The support element establishes overwatch positions on the flanks of the point where the enemy's protective barriers (minefield) will be breached. Once this is completed, the breach element positions itself at the edge of the minefield.

(a) The breach element marks the breached lane and provides guides to the assault elements, which move quickly to exploit the breach. The support force and heavy mortars fire into the interior of the position to prevent the enemy from repositioning forces.

(b) The assault element must be able to control fires of the close overwatch forces to keep fires forward of the assault element. Planning should include visible light signals to identify assault elements and to lift or shift fires.

(4) **Consolidation and reorganization.** The consolidation and reorganization phase is basically the same for a night attack as for a daylight attack, but must be planned in greater detail. The plan should include the following:

- Contact points between units and recognition signals.
- Provisions for guides to lead support elements through obstacles to final consolidation positions.
- A route for each unit or a priority of movement if multiple routes are not available.
- A limit of advance.
- Repositioning of air defense assets.

d. Task force SOPs and orders must make provisions for marking vehicles and positions at night. Plans and rehearsals must include redundant communications systems. Although radio is the primary means of communication in the attack, the commander must stress increased use of other means. Consideration should be given to the following alternative systems of communication:

- Wire.
- Audible signals.
- Visual signals.
- Messenger.

e. Night attack control measures are usually more restrictive than those used during daylight. All control measures for a night attack must be easily identifiable on the ground. The commander should impose only those measures necessary to exercise control. The following control measures in planning night attacks are the minimum necessary to ensure success:

- Attack position.
- Point of departure.
- Direction of attack.
- Release points.
- Assault position.
- Probable line of deployment (PLD).
- Objective.
- Limit of advance.

f. Leaders at all levels must be well forward to maintain orientation while moving in the attack. Even with improved night vision devices (NVD) and thermal sights, night navigation is still difficult. The following can be used to assist navigation:

- Identifiable terrain.
- Guides.
- Visible light markers.
- Flares and illumination rounds.
- Compass and odometer.
- Ground surveillance radar.

g. Fire support considerations are as follows.

(1) **Direct fire.** Units must remain aware of adjacent unit positions, as the potential for fratricide increases during limited visibility. Detailed and precise fire control measures must be established and understood, especially all signals for lifting and shifting supporting fires.

(2) **Indirect fire.** Fires should be planned to suppress and isolate the objective, and provide illumination and

obscuration. Initially, limited visibility attacks should be nonilluminated. Although the task force has the advantage of seeing in the dark with its NVDs and target acquisition systems, illumination is planned so that it is available when required.

3-17. BYPASS PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

In a bypass operation, the commander deliberately avoids offensive combat with an enemy force or position, thus avoiding dissipation or diversion of combat power to efforts other than accomplishment of the mission. Bypass operations will occur during the movement to contact, deliberate attack, exploitation, and pursuit. The decision to bypass is based on —

- The requirement to maintain momentum and aggressive action.
- The commander's knowledge of enemy strength.
- The degree to which the bypassed enemy can interfere with the advance.
- The general state of the enemy force. If enemy resistance is crumbling, greater risks can be taken.

a. Authority to bypass is not normally delegated below task force level. Orders will limit the size of the enemy force that can be bypassed without the authority of the next higher commander. Regardless of the level to which authority has been granted, the commander conducting the bypass immediately notifies the next higher commander of his intention. The bypassed enemy must be kept under observation, and troops must be detailed for this task. At no time must the enemy force be able to interfere with the bypassing units.

b. One or both of the following bypass techniques may be employed:

- Avoid the enemy and bypass.
- Fix the enemy by fire and bypass.

c. The mission to bypass implies that the task force must fix the enemy with part of the maneuver elements and bypass with the balance of the force (see Figure 3-12, page 3-36).

(1) The TF commander will normally direct a unit to fix and maintain contact with the enemy until relieved by follow-and-support forces. This may require the fixing force to be reinforced with combat support elements. The fixing force commander coordinates with the follow-and-support force commander as early as possible and provides him with all

available information about the enemy and terrain. Following this, the fixing force quickly rejoins the main force.

(2) Occasionally, the fixing force may be directed to break contact with the enemy after the bypassing force has completed the bypass. This will occur when the bypassing force has no requirement to maintain an uninterrupted logistics flow, such as in a raid. In this case, the fixing force blocks the enemy, employing defensive, delaying, limited offensive action, and all available fire support, until ordered to rejoin the bypassing force.

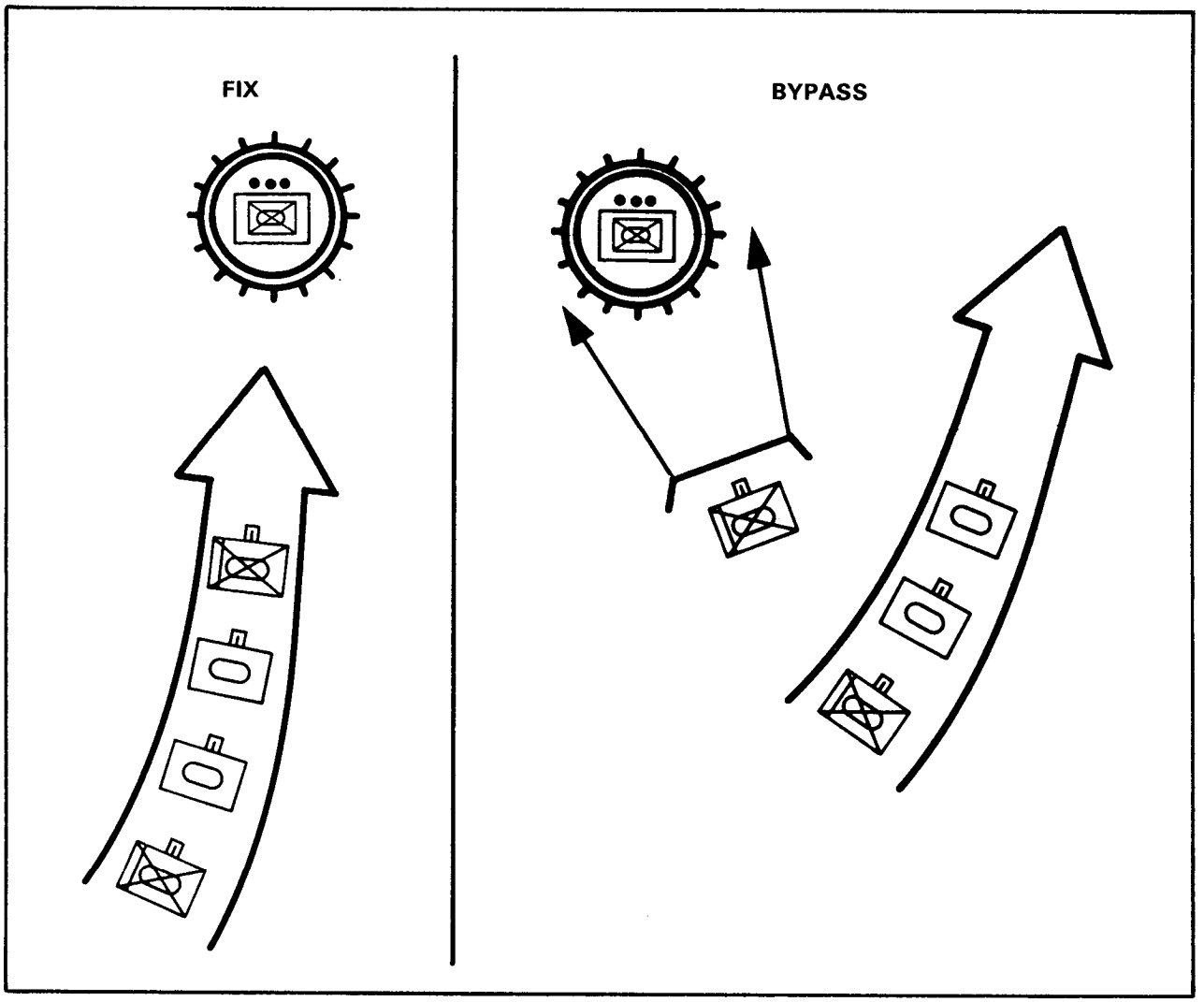

Figure 3-12. Task force conducting a fix and bypass.

3-18. ASSAULTS AND ACTIONS ON THE OBJECTIVE

The assault is the overrunning and seizing of an occupied enemy position. The goal of any assault is to destroy the enemy as rapidly as possible with minimum friendly casualties, while physically overrunning or occupying the position.

a. **Considerations.**

(1) Assaults may be mounted or dismounted. Generally, mounted assaults permit a more rapid operation, while dismounted infantry slows the operation but adds a greater degree of security. The commander determines if, when, and where infantry dismounts based on his analysis of the factors of METT-T and the degree of risk he is willing to accept.

(2) In any assault, the objective must first be isolated by direct and indirect fires.

(3) The unit making the assault is the task force's main effort. As such, it receives priority of support.

b. **Mounted Assaults.**

(1) In mounted assaults, infantry remain mounted during the assault or tanks assault without infantry. This allows the greatest speed and shock action and provides the best protection for infantry against small-arms and indirect fire.

(2) Mounted assaults are conducted against weak or hastily prepared enemy positions or in meeting engagements.

(3) In a mounted assault, tanks lead. If the objective is to be cleared, infantry dismounts and sweeps the objective to clear any remaining pockets of resistance.

(4) A major advantage of mounted assault is the ability to move onto the objective closely following variable time (VT) fuzed mortar and artillery fires and smoke. Using such fires, the assault is conducted with tanks and BFVs buttoned up. Dismounted infantry initiates clearing operations immediately after the VT fires are lifted or shifted.

c. **Dismounted Assaults.** To maintain speed, maximize protection against small-arms and indirect fires, and conserve the strength of the soldiers, infantry moves mounted as close to the objective as possible. Dismounted assaults are usually conducted when any of the following conditions apply:

- The enemy is in prepared positions.

- The enemy possesses a strong antiarmor capability.
- Tanks are not available to lead the assault.
- Terrain favors dismounted operations.
- Obstacles prevent maneuver across the objective.
- Stealth is required to close on the objective.
- A mounted assault stalls on or short of the objective.

3-19. CONSOLIDATION AND REORGANIZATION

Actions on the objective continue from the assault into consolidation and reorganization. The task force may not be required to consolidate and reorganize, but may continue to attack or to exploit as directed by brigade.

a. **Consolidation.** Consolidation of the objective is the elimination of any remaining resistance on the objective and preparing the position to be able to withstand counterattack. Consolidation must be planned and coordinated before the attack. The resulting task force positioning must facilitate subsequent missions. An attacking unit must also disperse to avoid becoming a lucrative target. The following points are normal phases of consolidation and reorganization of an objective:

(1) **Eliminate enemy resistance.** The task force ensures that the objective is cleared by destroying, capturing, or forcing withdrawal of all enemy vehicles and personnel.

(2) **Defend.** Having cleared their objectives, companies occupy hasty fighting positions in preparation for an enemy counterattack. Hasty protective minefield are coordinated and emplaced. Attacking elements DO NOT occupy vacated enemy positions, as these positions may be targeted by the enemy. Armor and antiarmor platoons are positioned to cover likely avenues of mounted approach. Mechanized infantry dismount and orient along likely avenues of dismounted and mounted infantry approach.

(3) **Establish security.** Security is established concurrently with the occupation of hasty defensive positions. Each company positions OPs to monitor the most likely avenues of enemy approach. Patrolling is initiated as early as possible.

(4) **Plan fires.** Once in position, company commanders and platoon leaders verify task force TRPs and designate sectors

of fire to control direct fires. Indirect fires are planned on likely approaches and beyond, as necessary, to facilitate future operations.

(5) **Conduct reconnaissance.** The scout platoon will screen the task force along the most dangerous enemy avenue of approach.

(6) **Prepare for contingency missions.** The task force commander and staff continue IPB and troop-leading procedures in preparation for "on-order" and "be prepared" missions during consolidation.

b. **Reorganization.** Reorganization includes all measures taken to maintain the combat effectiveness of the unit. Reorganization includes —

- Replacing key personnel. Replacements are brought forward by LOGPAC resupply.
- Evacuating or recovering casualties, prisoners of war, and damaged equipment.
- Redistributing supplies, ammunition, and equipment within the unit as necessary. Basic loads of ammunition and fuel, and prescribed loads of repair parts are replenished by LOGPACs.

3-20. OFFENSIVE CONTROL MEASURES

Control measures are used with specific missions to subordinate units to define the scheme of maneuver. Sufficient control measures are used to coordinate the efforts of the task force and to allow the task force commander to rapidly give FRAGOs to change the plan during the attack. Normally, the least restrictive measures possible are used. See FM 101-5-1 for a complete discussion of control measures.

a. **Objective.**

(1) The task force commander assigns terrain objectives if the task force mission is to **seize** or **secure** a terrain feature. If the task force mission is **destruction** of an enemy force, he assigns objectives for orientation and control.

(2) The task force commander may assign **intermediate objectives** to company teams when a piece of terrain is critical to the scheme of maneuver.

(3) Objectives should be on easily identified terrain features and should facilitate consolidation, reorganization, and continuation of the mission.

b. **Zone of Action.**

(1) Task forces are normally assigned zones of action. A zone of action is defined by boundaries and is the unit's area of operation.

(2) Zones of action are assigned when the mission of units requires a clear delineation of areas of responsibility. Boundaries do not require a subordinate unit to clear the zone of enemy forces unless so specified in the operation order. If units are authorized to bypass enemy forces, the commander must give guidance as to the size force that can be bypassed. If enemy units are bypassed, brigade will destroy the bypassed enemy force with a follow-and-support unit, with the brigade reserve, or by fire. However, any enemy force that can interfere with the task force's or brigade's maneuver must be fixed, if bypassed. Even small, armored forces represent such a danger, while larger dismounted forces might not. Brigade must be informed of all bypassed enemy units. Normally, a bypassed enemy force is fixed in place by part of the task force until another unit arrives to relieve the fixing force.

(3) The task force commander is responsible for all operations in his assigned zone except those specifically assumed by higher headquarters. He is free to maneuver his units and to fire within the zone. The commander is responsible for locating and destroying the enemy in his zone consistent with the. accomplishment of his mission and to the extent necessary to provide for the security of his command. Task forces seldom assign zones of action to subordinate units.

(4) A zone of action should –

- Provide adequate maneuver space to the subordinate unit.
- Clearly assign key terrain features and avenues of approach to them.
- Extend beyond the objective for fire support coordination.

c. **Axis of Advance.** An axis of advance is used to indicate the general direction of movement of a unit. Commanders must ensure that deviation from the assigned axis of advance does not interfere with the movement or fires of adjacent units. When more than one axis of advance is used, one is designated as the main attack.

d. **Direction of Attack.** A direction of attack is a restrictive control measure used when the task force commander needs to designate a **specific** direction of attack or to tightly control a plan of attack. A unit must employ the bulk of its combat power along the

assigned direction of attack. The unit cannot deviate from it except to maneuver against enemy forces interfering with the advance. A direction of attack —

- Follows well-defined terrain features such as trails.
- Is used principally in night attacks and counterattacks.

e. **Line of Departure.** An LD is used to coordinate the commitment of attacking units or screening elements at a specific time. The LD should be easily recognized on the ground and on the map and should be generally perpendicular to the direction of attack.

f. **Attack Positions.** Attack positions are the last covered and concealed positions passed through before crossing the LD. Attack positions are used by company teams to coordinate, organize, and/or resupply before crossing the LD. When the attack involves a passage of lines, the attack position should be to the rear of the elements in contact. This attack position must be coordinated with the unit in contact.

g. **Assault Position.** Assault positions are located between the line of departure and the objective where forces deploy for the assault of the objective. Ideally, they are the last covered and concealed positions before the objective.

h. **Final Coordination Line.** The FCL is a line close to the enemy position used to coordinate the lifting and shifting of supporting fires with the final deployment of the task force. It should be recognizable on the ground. It is **not** a fire support coordination measure.

i. **Phase Line.** A phase line extends across the zone of action of the task force. Phase lines are established to control and coordinate maneuver, to coordinate fires with maneuver, and to assist in executing contingency plans.

j. **Overwatch Position.** Overwatch positions are usually indicated graphically as checkpoints.

k. **Attack-by-Fire Position.** An attack-by-fire position is used to designate the position from which direct fires are placed on an objective or into an engagement area (see Figure 3-13, page 3-42).

1. **Infiltration Lane.** When stealth is required to move through an area occupied by the enemy, infiltration lanes may be used.

m. **Limit of Advance.** The limit of advance is the control measure used to stop the forward progress of attacking units; it does **not** restrict fires.

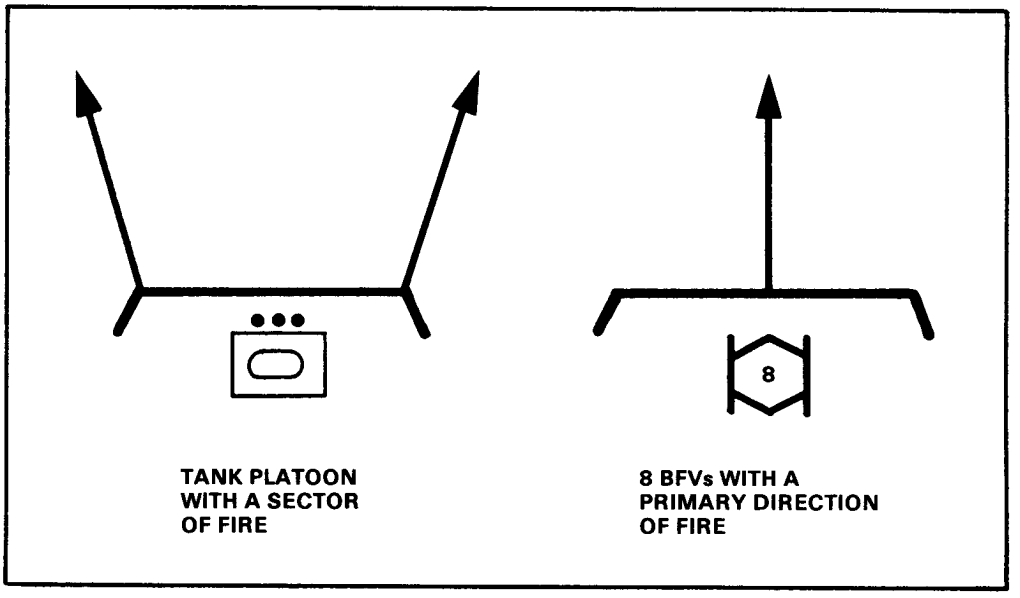

Figure 3-13. Attack-by-fire position symbol.

n. **Checkpoints.** Checkpoints provide the commander the capability of rapidly shifting fires and reorienting maneuver forces by using recognizable terrain features.

o. **Techniques for Fire Control While Moving.** Direct fires may be controlled on the move by marking a target with white phosphorus (WP) or tracers, and using it as a hasty TRP. Another expedient method to control fires is to use the clock system, with 12 o'clock being the general direction of advance.

Section IV. CONDUCTING ATTACKS

3-21. MOVEMENT TO CONTACT

a. The battalion task force conducts a movement to contact to make or regain contact with the enemy and to develop the situation. Task forces conduct movement to contact independently or as part of a larger force (see Figure 3-14). The battalion task force will normally be given a movement to contact mission as the lead element of a brigade attack, or as a counterattack element of a brigade or division. Movement to contact terminates with the occupation of an assigned objective or when enemy resistance requires the battalion to deploy and conduct an attack to continue forward movement.

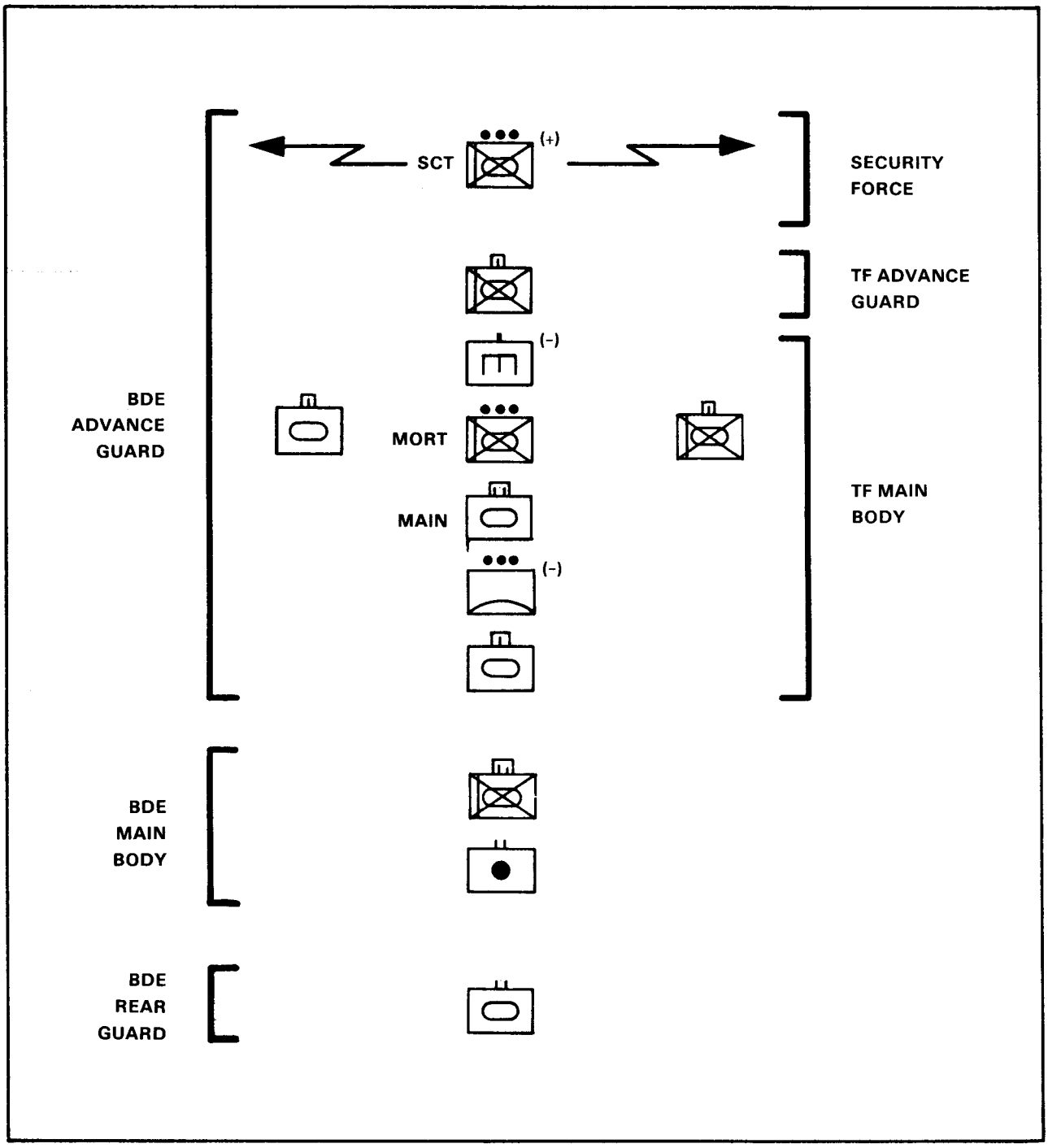

Figure 3-14. Battalion Task Force movement to contact as part of a brigade attack.

b. A task force given a movement to contact mission is assigned a zone of action or an axis of advance and an objective at a depth sufficient to ensure contact with the enemy. Movement to contact is conducted in a manner that allows the task force to maneuver to fully develop the situation, maintain freedom of action, and, if possible, defeat the enemy once contact is made.

c. Key planning considerations for the movement to contact are:

(1) **Movement.** Task force movement is oriented on the objective and along any assigned axis of advance. The task force moves consistent with the following factors:

- Speed required by brigade.
- Available avenues of approach.
- Requirements to maintain mutual support between maneuver units, security, and fire support to the security force.
- Making contact with the smallest element possible.
- Reacting to contact faster than the enemy.

(2) **Task organization.** The task force is organized with a security force, advance guard, main body, and flank and rear guards.

(a) **Security force.**

- The security force is normally established with the battalion scout platoon. Engineers and FOs are attached to the scout platoon and the security force as necessary. Normally, the screening force has initial priority of indirect fires. The mission of the security force is to determine the size, activity, location, and depth of the enemy force. Decisive engagment is avoided but, once found, the enemy must be kept under surveillance and his activity reported.
- The security force is assigned area reconnaissance missions. It **must** cover the frontage of the task force axis of advance.
- The security force must be far enough ahead of the advance guard (usually 2 to 6 kilometers) to provide adequate warning and sufficient space for them to maneuver. However, the security force must not be so far ahead that the advance guard cannot rapidly assist it in disengaging from the enemy should that become necessary. The advance guard keys its movement on the movement of the security force.

- When the enemy force is discovered, the security force calls for and adjusts fires on the enemy. Once the lead elements close on the enemy, the screening force places fires on the enemy's positions in depth or on forces maneuvering against the main body.

(b) **Advance guard.**

- The advance guard for a task force movement to contact is usually a company team. Its composition is METT-T dependent. In open terrain, a tank-heavy team is preferred. At night, a mechanized-infantry-heavy team is preferred. The engineers follow or are attached to the lead elements. When a task force is moving in parallel columns, the two lead companies are task organized accordingly. The mission of the advance guard is to provide security for the main body and facilitate its uninterrupted advance. This is done by rapidly developing the situation upon encountering the enemy's force, destroying reconnaissance or delaying enemy forces, and reducing obstacles.
- The advance guard is the task force commander's initial main effort. Priority of fires is shifted to the advance guard once it is committed.
- In planning the movement to contact, each contingency operation should revolve around the actions of the advance guard. The lead elements must be well trained and well rehearsed on battle drills, especially those involving obstacle reductions and actions on contact.

(c) **Main body.**

- The main body remains 1 to 2 kilometers behind the advance guard lead element, keying its movement to that of the advance guard. The main body remains close to the advance guard to provide responsive support when it is committed.
- The main body of the task force contains the bulk of the combat elements and is arrayed to achieve all-round security. It is flexible enough to maneuver rapidly to a decisive point on the battlefield to destroy the enemy. The tactical CP follows the advance guard; the main CP moves behind the lead element of the main body.
- The use of standard formations and battle drills allows the battalion commander to rapidly shift combat

power on the battlefield. Companies employ the appropriate movement techniques within the battalion formation.

(d) **Flank and rear guards.**

- Flank security is normally accomplished with platoon-size elements from one or more of the companies in the main body providing a flank guard under company control. These elements are located at a distance from the main body that would allow the task force time and space to maneuver to either flank. In open terrain, this distance may extend from 2 to 3 kilometers. Indirect fires are planned on major flank approaches to enhance security.
- The trailing company of the main body provides a rear guard to protect the task force rear.
- Security is also attained by rapid forward movement which gives the enemy less time to react or to reposition forces to attack the task force.

(3) **Integration of combat support and combat service support elements.**

(a) **Antiarmor.** Antiarmor platoons are used as flank and rear security or are positioned to overwatch the advance guard.

(b) **Scout platoons.** The scout platoon is normally the battalion task force security force. When not performing as the security force, the scout platoon is employed in a flank screen or required to maintain contact with an adjacent battalion task force.

(c) **Field artillery.** Priority targets and FASCAM are allocated to the security force and advance guard. Direct support field artillery is provided by the brigade or division. Field artillery units are positioned by brigade to provide continuous indirect fires for the moving battalion task force.

(d) **Mortars.** The task force mortars are placed under the operational control of the advance guard to provide responsive fires and smoke to support initial actions on contact.

(e) **Air Force.** CAS, if available, is employed to interdict enemy counterattack forces or destroy defensive positions.

(f) **GSR.** GSRs are employed on flank avenues of approach to provide early warning to the battalion task force. If movement occurs during limited visibility, GSRs may be used to guide the advance guard and elements of the main body toward the objective.

(g) **Air defense artillery.** ADA assets are generally employed to provide area coverage for the task force, and to cover movement through restricted areas. However, some ADA assets may be placed in direct support of the advance guard.

(h) **Engineers.** Priority of engineer support is to mobility. Elements of the supporting engineer unit are employed with the security force to reconnoiter obstacles. Engineers travel with the advance guard to assist in mobility of the advance guard and main body. AVLBs move to the rear of the advance guard to be in position to provide responsive support to the maneuver of the main body. FASCAM is planned to support the security force and the advance guard.

(i) **Combat trains.** The task force may form unit trains for an extended movement to contact. Otherwise, it forms into echeloned combat and field trains. The combat or unit trains move as part of the task force main body. The combat trains consist of the command post, support platoon, and medical platoon. All other assets not essential for tactical support are located at the field trains.

(j) **Support platoon.** The task force support platoon moves with the main body during the movement to contact. The support platoon priority of support is to Class III and Class V. Communications are maintained with the battalion combat trains CP and field trains CP to monitor the fight and responsively switch support to a redesignated main effort.

(k) **Medical platoon.** Priority of effort of the medical platoon is to the evacuation of wounded.

(1) **Maintenance platoon.** The maintenance platoon detaches a trail party to the battalion task force rear guard. The trail party recovers or repairs damaged equipment or coordinates its collection with the FSB. All other maintenance assets locate with the field trains and prepare to provide support once the situation allows.

3-22. MEETING ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIONS ON CONTACT

The meeting engagement is normally the result of a movement to contact. A meeting engagement is the initial contact that occurs when a task force not completely deployed for battle encounters an enemy force on which little information is known. The enemy may be moving or stationary. The task force commander wargames contingencies to define how much initiative he will allow subordinate commanders in reacting to a meeting engagement. The goal, once contact is made, is to quickly and decisively overcome the enemy before he can effectively react. To do so, the battalion commander keeps his force in a position to maneuver immediately to the contact, gather and report information, and issue instructions.

a. The security force makes the inital contact. They must quickly determine the size and activity of the enemy force and avoid being fixed or destroyed — if possible, the security force avoids detection.

b. If the enemy is moving, the screening force determines the direction of movement and the size and composition of the force. The screening force FO places fire on the lead enemy companies. Speed of decision and execution is critical when the enemy is moving. When two forces converge, threat doctrine calls for his force to immediately conduct a hasty attack from the line of march and attempt envelopment.

c. If the enemy is stationary, the security force determines if enemy positions are prepared and reinforced by obstacles or minefield. The security force attempts to identify individual antitank weapon positions, and the enemy's flanks and gaps in his positions.

d. The advance guard quickly moves to overpower and destroy platoon-size and smaller security forces and combat outposts. Larger forces normally will require deployment of the main body. The advance guard protects the main body and allows the task force the freedom to maneuver by fixing larger than platoon-size enemy forces.

e. In developing the situation, the advance guard commander maintains pressure on the enemy by fire and maneuver. He probes and conducts a vigorous reconnaissance of the enemy's flanks to determine his exact location, composition, and disposition. The information gained by the security force and advance guard is used to develop a task force plan of action.

f. The task force commander has several action on contact options based on the enemy situation and his mission.

(1) **Bypass.** If rapid forward movement is required, and if bypass of enemy forces has been authorized by the brigade commander, the task force can bypass. If the size and mobility of the bypassed force represents a threat, the enemy force must be fixed or contained until released by brigade follow-on forces or reserve.

(2) **Hasty ambush.** Ambush is effective against a moving force that is not aware of the presence of the task force. Instead of immediately opening fire, the advance guard (and possibly the entire task force) moves into hasty firing positions oriented on an engagement area. When most of the enemy formation is in the engagement area, the enemy is attacked by massed fires and maneuver.

(3) **Hasty attack.** Task force planning and SOP reactions to contact define the criteria for conducting hasty attacks or for slowing the advance to prepare a deliberate attack. Preparations for a deliberate attack are initiated when the enemy is in strong, prepared positions with extensive obstacles, bypass is not authorized, and a hasty attack is not possible or has failed.

(4) **Defense.** The task force may defend after making contact with a stronger force or as a prelude to a deliberate attack. The task force defends initially from hasty positions, employing spoiling or counterattacks as possible to slow and disrupt the enemy advance.

3-23. HASTY ATTACK

The hasty attack differs from the deliberate attack only in the amount of time allowed for planning and preparation. The hasty attack is conducted either as a result of a meeting engagement or when bypass has not been authorized and the enemy force is in a vulnerable (unprepared or unaware) position. Hasty attacks are initiated and controlled with FRAGOs. There are two categories of hasty attack depending on the disposition of the enemy:

- An attack against a moving enemy force.
- An attack against a stationary enemy force.

a. **Attack Against a Moving Force.**

(1) When two opposing forces converge, the side that wins is normally the one that acts fastest and maneuvers to positions of advantage against the opponent's flank. Task force contingency planning and SOP reactions to contact facilitate

the execution of a hasty attack. The advance guard attacks or defends, depending on the size and disposition of the enemy force. The task force commander maneuvers trailing or adjacent teams against the enemy's flank or rear, while attacking by fire and interdicting enemy units attempting to do the same (see Figure 3-15).

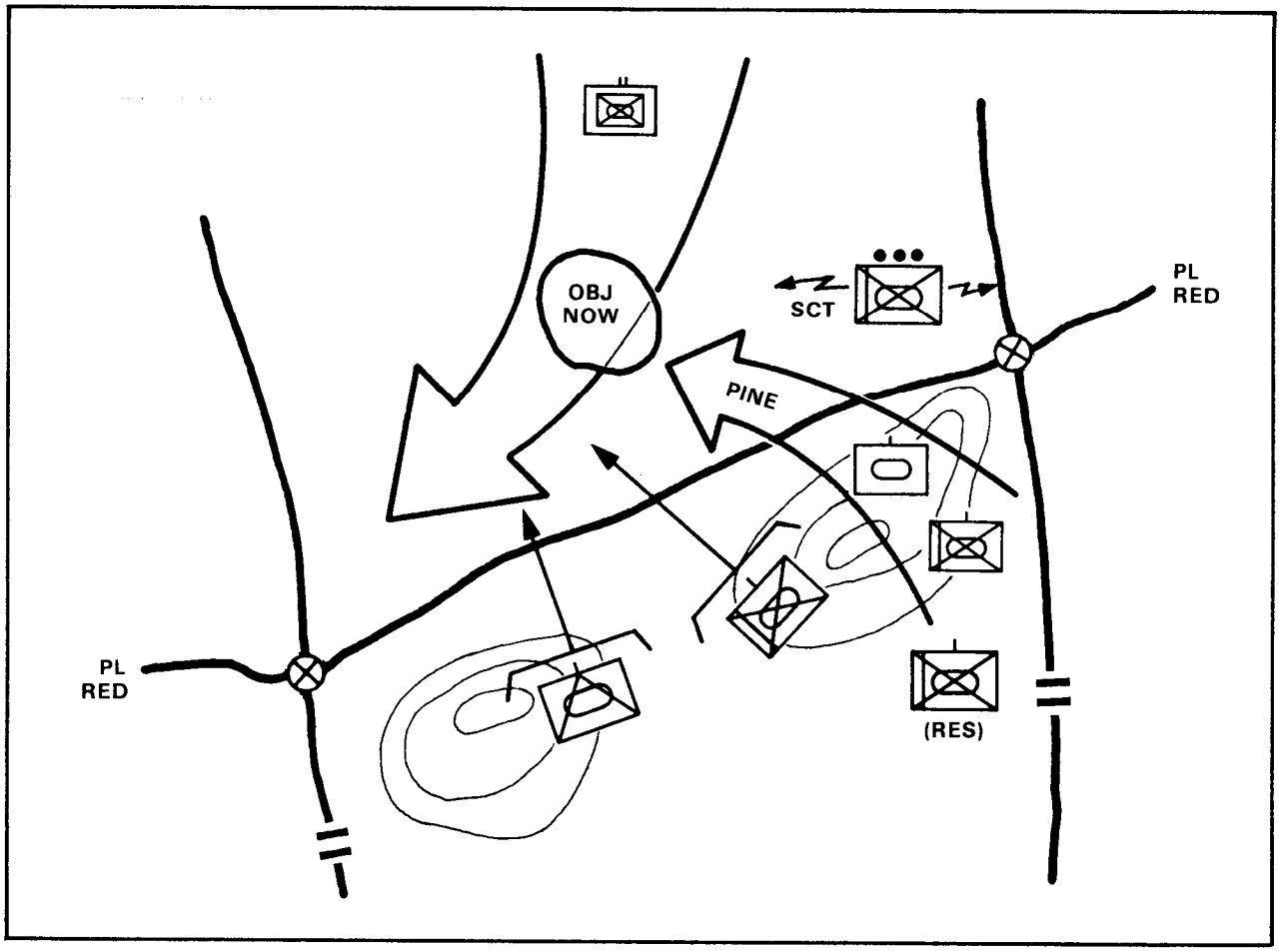

Figure 3-15. Hasty attack against a moving enemy force.

(2) Tanks normally lead the attack; BFVs and TOWs overwatch and support the maneuvering tanks by fire.

(3) FASCAM, smoke, and other supporting fires may be used to disrupt enemy maneuver and cover that of the task force.

(4) The scouts and advance guard provide initial information on the enemy force and develop the situation.

(5) The lead company team defends from hasty positions to fix the enemy element.

(6) A company team seizes high ground to provide overwatch and flank security.

(7) The trail team(s) counterattacks the enemy flanks supported by field artillery, antiarmor company, and CAS.

(8) Task organization is not changed.

b. **Attack Against a Stationary Force.**

(1) A hasty attack against a stationary force (composed mainly of individual fighting positions and hasty protective obstacles) is initiated after scouts or lead company teams reconnoiter the enemy's positions to find flanks or gaps that can be exploited. This must be done quickly to gain the initiative. The task force coordinates maneuver elements and supporting fires to avoid a piecemeal commitment of combat power.

(2) The task force commander coordinates the actions of his subordinates through FRAGOs and previously issued contingency plans and control measures. He clearly states the time, direction, and objectives of the attack. He develops the situation to find and secure or clear approaches to the enemy's flank or rear.

(3) Dismounted infantry assaults supported by direct and indirect fires may be necessary to defeat the enemy. Tanks support by fire and begin their assault timed to arrive on the enemy position at the same time as the dismounted infantry. Dismounted infantry clears the position before resumption of mounted movement.

c. **Integration of Combat, Combat Support, and Combat Service Support Elements.**

(1) **Maneuver.**

(a) **Scout platoon.** During the hasty attack, the scout platoon quickly determines enemy locations and dispositions. It is then deployed to the battalion's most critical flank in a screen role, or beyond the objective to provide early warning of enemy reinforcement.

(b) **Antiarmor company.** Antiarmor platoons are deployed quickly to positions that provide overwatch to the main attack.

(2) **Fire support.**

(a) **Field artillery.** Priority of support is to maneuvering elements.

* (b) **Mortars.** Mortars provide general support to the battalion. Priority of support is to smoke operations to facilitate maneuver.

(c) **Air Force.** Immediate CAS is requested to support the battalion's main attack.

(3) **Intelligence.** GSRs are deployed to cover possible avenues of approach into the flank(s) of the attacking battalion.

(4) **Air defense artillery.** ADA assets move as closely as possible to the attacking company team to provide protection from enemy air.

(5) **Mobility, countermobility, survivability.**

(a) **Engineers.** During the hasty attack, engineers move with the lead company team to assist in breaching obstacles and provide mobility support to follow-on company teams.

(b) **NBC.** Chemical (nonpersistent) agents are planned to interdict threat counterattacking forces.

(6) **Combat service support.**

(a) **Combat trains.** At the initiation of the hasty attack, the combat trains deploy to a location that will not interfere with the maneuver of battalion task force company teams, or the elements of follow-on units. The combat trains CP eavesdrops on the operation, anticipates logistical requirements, and prepares to "push" them forward.

(b) Medical platoon. The aid station establishes operations near an MSR or easily identifiable spot and prepares to triage and evacuate wounded.

3-24. DELIBERATE ATTACK

a. Task force deliberate attacks differ from the hasty attack in that they are characterized by precise planning based on detailed information, thorough preparation, and rehearsals. Deliberate attacks normally include large volumes of supporting fires, main and supporting attacks, and deception measures.

b. The tank or mechanized infantry battalion will normally conduct a deliberate attack as the main or supporting effort of a brigade attack, or as the brigade reserve.

c. A deliberate attack requires time for collecting and evaluating enemy information, reconnoitering, planning, and coordinating. The attack may be made from positions in contact or through a forward unit following a passage of lines. Attachments and task organization may be changed to fit the concept of operation. The commander must provide the necessary combat support for each company team and establish proper command and control relationships between units. The commander should designate support, breaching, and assault forces and position them in the attack formation for anticipated breaching operations.

d. Detailed plans for fire and maneuver are completed for an area that has been reconnoitered. Planning for actions beyond the limit of reconnaissance is less restrictive, with maneuver of forces and firepower planned in broader terms to provide flexibility and allow initiative.

e. In planning a deliberate attack, the principles of command and control discussed in Chapter 2 are applied. The commander and staff —

- Adhere, as a minimum, to the 1/3 - 2/3 rule.
- Follow troop-leading procedures to use available time efficiently.
- Issue warning orders to initiate leader reconnaissance, movement, and subordinate unit planning and preparation.
- Conduct detailed reconnaissance and IPB to determine precise locations, orientations, dispositions, and intent of the enemy.
- Use a reverse planning process to develop detailed plans from the objective area back to the LD or assembly area.
- Designate a main attack.
- Task-organize maneuver units to support the main effort for each phase of the operation.
- Ensure that coordination and synchronization of maneuver, CS, and CSS assets is built into the plan and supports the main attack.
- Deliver the order from a vantage point that overlooks the terrain and ensure that the order contains a clear statement of mission and intent.

- Conduct rehearsals of the fire support plan and, to the extent possible, the movement plan.
- Conduct continuous reconnaissance and schedule a final intelligence update just before the attack.

3-25. TECHNIQUES FOR THE DELIBERATE ATTACK

a. The commander employs those techniques that will avoid striking the enemy's main strength. He uses deception to deceive the enemy as to the point of the main attack; he uses surprise to take advantage of his initiative in determining the time and place of his attacks; and he uses the indirect approach to strike the enemy on the flanks and rear.

b. Battalion task forces penetrate enemy company defenses to isolate and destroy elements of platoon size or smaller. The battalion task force completes the defeat of the enemy company in detail. Throughout the attack, the task force remains ready for enemy counterattacks and prepared to exploit success.

c. The coordinated attack is usually conducted in four phases. The task force will —

- Close on the objective.
- Isolate the site for penetration.
- Breach or penetrate to gain a foothold into the position.
- Exploit the penetration.

(1) **Close on the objective.** The commander uses terrain or limited visibility or both to avoid enemy fires and to exploit weaknesses or gaps in the enemy defense. Envelopment is the preferred form of maneuver. When natural cover and concealment is unavailable, the commander uses smoke, suppression, and speed to minimize exposure to enemy weapons systems. Enemy "fire sacks" are avoided.

(2) **Isolate the site for penetration.** Regardless of the form of maneuver used to close on the objective, a penetration is usually required during the deliberate attack.

(a) The commander masses overwhelming combat power at the point of initial penetration.

(b) Artillery and mortar fires (including smoke) are used to suppress adjacent enemy positions and isolate the objective.

(c) Overmatch is positioned where direct fire weapons can support the assault and prevent enemy reinforcement.

(d) Envelopment is the preferred form of maneuver at every echelon. The enemy is attacked from a favorable direction based on his strength and orientation. Deliberate attacks are normally conducted against prepared defenses and require the infantry to dismount in the assault. The stronger the defenses, the more deliberate and methodical the attack and the greater the reliance on dismounted infantry.

(3) **Breach or penetrate to gain a foothold.**

(a) Infantry dismounts outside the range of enemy direct fire weapons systems and moves forward by covered and concealed routes under the protective fires of tanks and BFVs positioned in overwatch.

(b) The penetration of the enemy position is made on a narrow front. Bypass of obstacles is preferred to breach. The breach must lead to an exploitable weakness or gap in the enemy's defenses.

(c) The infantry uses breaching and assault techniques similar to those used in the assault of a complex obstacle, and will reduce trench lines, bunkers, fortified positions, and the antitank weapons in them.

(4) **Exploit the penetration.**

(a) Tanks will frequently follow the dismount elements and support from close overwatch. Tanks then move to exploit the initial breach as quickly as possible.

(b) Bradleys use the long-range stabilized fire of the 25-mm gun and TOW to provide effective overwatch fires. Bradleys will leave overwatch when the antitank defenses are destroyed and assist in exploiting the breach and holding the shoulders of the penetration.

(c) Reconnaissance elements use the penetration to reposition as required and obtain information on enemy positions in depth.

(d) Reserves widen and deepen the penetration, and prepare to repulse counterattacks.

(e) Once the objective is cleared, the mounted attack is continued to subsequent objectives or the task force begins consolidation and reorganization.

d. The battalion task force must integrate and coordinate combat, combat support, and combat service support to capitalize on them as combat multipliers.

(1) **Maneuver.** Normally, the task force scheme of maneuver for a deliberate attack employs three elements: main attack, supporting attack, and reserve.

(a) **Main attack.** The mission of the main attack is to penetrate the enemy's defenses and secure the terrain to be seized. The main attack emphasizes the indirect approach.

(b) **Supporting attack.** The mission of the supporting attack is to fix or suppress an enemy force not being directly assaulted by the main attack. The supporting attack accomplishes its mission by emphasizing fire rather than maneuver. The fires of the supporting attack must be combined with indirect fires to achieve the maximum effectiveness.

(c) **Reserve.** The task force normally retains a reserve to complete the destruction of the enemy's position or to exploit the success of the attack. The reserve may be used initially to overwatch the main attack.

(d) **Scout platoon.** During the preparation for the deliberate attack, the primary mission of the platoon is reconnaissance missions to gather intelligence on enemy defensive locations, orientation, and dispositions. Zone reconnaissance missions to facilitate the movement of the main, supporting, and reserve units are a secondary mission. During the attack, the scout platoon's mission is to report enemy repositioning and counterattack. It prepares to screen to the front of the battalion task force upon consolidation of the objective.

(e) **Antiarmor company.** Antitank elements are normally positioned to provide overwatch and support-by-fire onto the objective and potential enemy counterattack routes.

(2) **Fire Support.**

(a) **Field artillery.** The task force commander employs field artillery to aid his company teams in moving forward. In the deliberate attack, preparation fires and/or series of targets are often planned and delivered on the objective in accordance with a predetermined time schedule. The commander plans fires to suppress, isolate, and blind the enemy forces in and about the

axis of advance and objective area. These fires are both smoke and HE. In addition, short duration FASCAM is used to help isolate and impair the enemy's ability to counterattack.

(b) **Mortars.** Mortars move well forward with the main effort. Although they can provide HE suppression, their primary mission is smoke placed in front of the objective and between the task force and the enemy to conceal friendly movement and isolate the enemy by obscuring enemy weapon systems. Once on the objective, the mortars position to provide general support to the battlion task force defense.

(c) **Air Force.** Close air support missions are planned and flown at the request of the battalion task force. The number of sorties received is dependent on the number allocated by brigade. The deliberate attack planning process requires detailed planning, integration, and coordination of CAS with the battalion task force scheme of maneuver. Tank and artillery positions are the priorities of CAS in the deliberate attack.

(3) **Air defense artillery.** During the deliberate attack, ADA assets are positioned well forward to support the main effort. ADA coverage for the main effort is focused against likely air avenues of approach and concentrated at choke points and river crossing sites.

(4) **Mobility, countermobility, survivability.**

(a) **Mobility.** Normally, reconnaissance is done by troops who are to breach obstacles, accompanied by an engineer who will assist in the assessment of obstacles. Engineer elements are employed well forward with the main attack to enhance mobility. They accompany the breaching force and assist in reduction and crossing of obstacles encountered. In the deliberate attack, stealthy prebreach of obstacles by engineers or dismounted infantry is a preferred technique.

(b) **Countermobility.** Short duration FASCAM can be planned behind an enemy unit to seal withdrawal routes or counterattack routes.

(5) **Combat service support.** The combat trains normally do not accompany the battalion task force during the deliberate attack. They remain in a location and readiness posture that allows them to move forward rapidly to planned locations from which to effect CSS upon consolidation on the objective.

3-26. ATTACK OF A STRONGPOINT

During offensive operations, enemy strongpoints may be encountered. The task force commander must assume that a stationary enemy has completed, or is in the process of completing, a strong defensive position. If the strongpoint cannot be bypassed, or neutralized, a deliberate attack may be necessary to destroy it. Attacking a strongpoint requires more artillery, smoke, and engineer support than a normal offensive operation. There are four steps in the process of destroying an enemy strongpoint:

- Reconnoiter and task-organize to take advantage of enemy weaknesses.
- Isolate the point of initial penetration with smoke and fires.
- Breach or find bypass routes around obstacles and gain a foothold into the position.
- Exploit this penetration to complete the destruction of the strongpoint.

a. **Reconnoiter and task-organize.**

(1) Reconnaissance of the strongpoint is conducted in the same manner as reconnaissance for a deliberate attack.

(2) The task force organizes into a breaching force, a support force, and an assault force. A company-sized reserve is retained or part of the support force is designated as reserve.

(a) The breach force is usually formed around a mechanized infantry company. Engineers, if available, are part of the breach force. Any mechanical breaching equipment is also attached to this force. The breach force makes the initial breach and passes the assault force through it.

(b) The support force is organized to provide supporting direct (and indirect) fires to the breach force initially, then to the assault force. The support force may consist of tank companies or tank-heavy company teams and the antiarmor company.

(c) The assault force is usually a mechanized-infantry-heavy company team. The assault force may be required to breach enemy close-in obstacles and should, therefore, include infantry and, if available in adequate mass, engineers. The assault force attacks through the breach and destroys the enemy position.

b. **Isolate the Point of Penetration.** The decisive point is the site on which the initial breach of the enemy position will occur. This point will be the weakest platoon position in the strongpoint. This position must be isolated by intense direct and indirect fires and smoke to destroy enemy positions and to prevent lateral movement to reinforce this platoon. Units attack by fire against assigned objectives or at the direction of a single individual such as the task force S3. The task force commander is normally with the assaulting or breaching elements. Indirect fires and smoke are planned in groups and series to ensure continuous fires isolate the enemy.

c. **Breach and Penetrate.** The breach of the enemy strongpoint is the task force initial main effort (see Figure 3-16). The breach force breaches the enemy's protective obstacles, gains a foothold in the trench line, and creates a gap in the strongpoint large enough to pass through the assault force. In planning the breach operation, the following are considered:

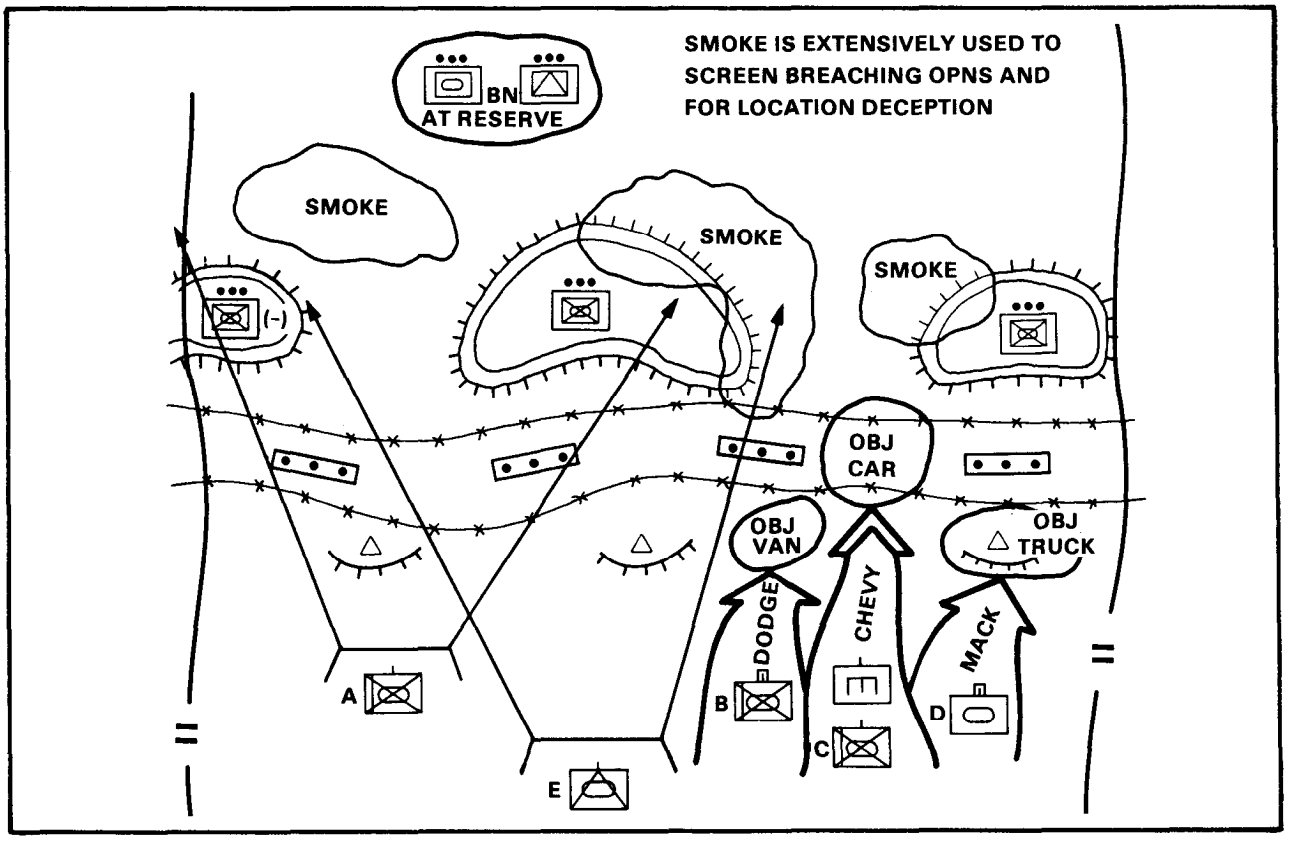

Figure 3-16. Attack of a strongpoint — the breach.

(1) Tanks and BFVs support by fire, while dismounted infantry and engineers move along covered and concealed routes to the penetration point. The primary mission of engineers is the breaching of the outer and larger obstacles that protect the main position. The dismounted infantry breaches minor obstacles and assaults to clear or destroy trench lines, bunkers, fortified positions, and the antiarmor weapons in them. If available, mechanical breaching devices are used.

(2) If sufficient obstacle lanes have been cleared, tanks follow and support the dismount elements by fire. Tanks move quickly to exploit the initial breach.

(3) BFVs initially support by fire and are called forward when the antiarmor defenses are destroyed. They then assist in holding the shoulders of the penetration.

(4) The initial penetration is made on a narrow front by the assault force. The concept is to make a narrow penetration into the enemy's defenses and then widen, deepen, and exploit it.

(5) Gaps between units should not be allowed to develop. Mutual support between attacking elements is maintained so that they are not isolated and defeated. As the task force penetrates the enemy position, it can expect the enemy to counterattack to cut off the penetration. The enemy emphasizes an extensive system of communication trenches to permit counterattacks by their dismounted infantry. Therefore, it is important to quickly secure decisive points within the enemy's position, widen the initial penetration, and push forces deeper into the stronghold.

(6) Overwhelming suppressive fire and smoke is planned to hide and protect assault breaching efforts. Counterbattery fires may also be coordinated.

(7) Breaching may also be accomplished by stealth as a preparatory action by engineers or dismounted infantry.

d. **Exploit the Penetration.** After the successful breach, the assault force becomes the task force main effort (see Figure 3-17). The assault force passes rapidly through the breach, supported by the fires of the support force and the breach force. The assault objective is an isolated enemy platoon position. In planning the assault, consider the following points:

(1) The assault force must get to and destroy the enemy platoon position. If the assault force can get to the rear of the

strongpoint, the remainder of the task force can neutralize the remaining platoon strongpoints by attacking from positions on the flank or rear.

(2) The assault force must also organize into support, breach, and assault elements. As subsequent platoon positions are encountered, the breaching process may have to be repeated. As in the initial breach, BFVs support by fire while the tanks and dismounted infantry complete the reduction of the strongpoint and associated trench lines.

(3) The task force commander should be prepared to commit the reserve to complete the destruction of the strongpoint and prepare for a counterattack or continue to attack.

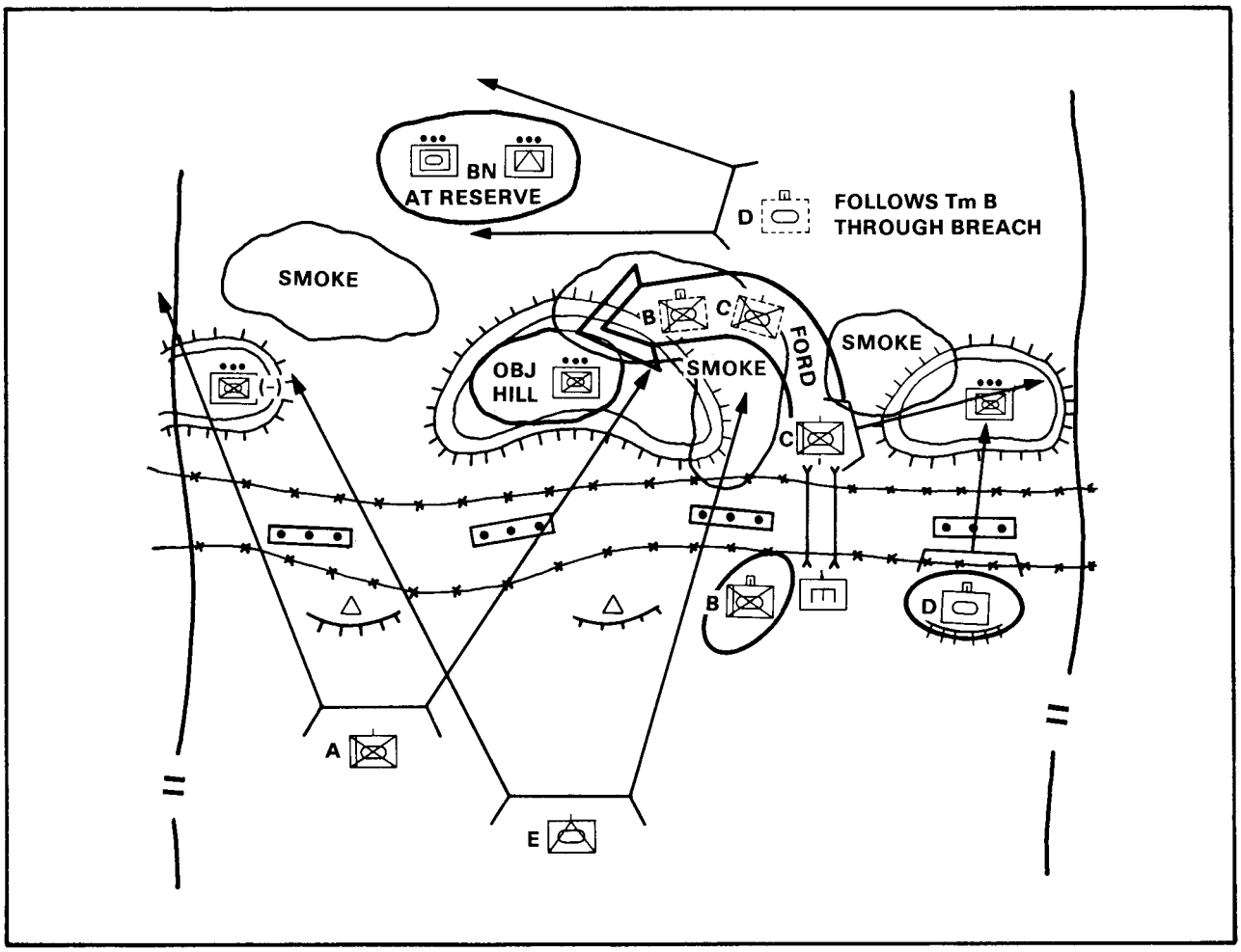

Figure 3-17. Attack of a strongpoint — the assault.

Section V. OTHER OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

3-27. EXPLOITATION

a. The exploitation is conducted to take advantage of success in battle. Exploitation prevents the enemy from reconstituting an organized defense or conducting an orderly withdrawal. It may follow any successful attack. The task force normally participates in the exploitation as part of a larger force. The keys to successful exploitation are **speed** in execution and maintaining direct **pressure** on the enemy.

b. Opportunities for exploitation are indicated by —

- An increase in the number of enemy prisoners.
- An increase in abandoned materiel.
- The overrunning of artillery, command facilities, signal installations, and supply dumps.
- A decrease in enemy resistance.
- A breakdown in enemy command and control as evidenced by confusion and a loss of cohesion.

c. Exploiting force missions include —

- Securing objectives deep in the enemy rear.
- Cutting lines of communication.
- Surrounding and destroying enemy units.
- Denying escape routes to an encircled force.
- Destroying enemy reserves, CS, and CSS units and assets.

d. The task force conducting an exploitation moves rapidly to the enemy's rear area using movement to contact techniques, avoiding or bypassing enemy combat units, and destroying lightly defended and undefended enemy installations and activities. Bypassed enemy forces are reported to brigade headquarters for destruction by follow-and-support forces. The task force is usually assigned an objective deep in the enemy rear based on the higher commander's intent. This objective may be one that will contribute significantly to the destruction of organized resistance or one for orientation and control.

(1) If the mission is to seize or secure a deep objective, the task force avoids engagements and moves to the objective as quickly as possible.

(2) If the objective is assigned for orientation and control, the task force seeks targets anywhere in its zone of action or along its axis of advance. In this case, the exploitation is executed as a tank sweep.

e. The exploitation continues day and night for as long as the opportunity permits. The initial plan must ensure that adequate stocks of fuel, spare parts, ammunition, protective clothing, decontaminants, medical supplies, and food are available to the task force. The momentum of the exploitation must not be slowed because of lack of support. Aerial resupply may be requested during the exploitation.

3-28. PURSUIT

a. The pursuit normally follows a successful exploitation. It differs from an exploitation in that a pursuit is oriented primarily on the enemy force rather than on terrain objectives. While a terrain objective may be designated, the enemy force is the primary objective. The purpose of the pursuit is to run the enemy down and destroy him.

b. The task force participates in the pursuit as part of a larger force. The pursuit is conducted using a direct-pressure force, an encircling force, and a follow-and-support force. The task force may comprise or be part of any of these forces.

(1) The direct-pressure force denies the enemy units the opportunity to rest, regroup, or resupply by repeated hasty attacks to force them to defend without support or to stay on the move. The direct-pressure force envelops, cuts off, destroys, and harasses enemy elements.

(2) The encircling force moves with all possible speed to get in the enemy rear, block his escape, and, with the direct-pressure force, destroy him. The enveloping force advances along routes parallel to the enemy's line of retreat to establish positions ahead of the enemy main force.

(3) The follow-and-support force is organized to destroy bypassed enemy units, relieve direct-pressure force elements, secure lines of communication, secure key terrain, or guard prisoners or key installations.

c. Engineers in exploitation and pursuit operations should be well forward in the columns to aid the movement of the force. Breaching equipment must be well forward in anticipation of encountering and breaching destroyed bridges, road craters, abatis, and interdiction mining.

d. CSS is critical to the success of the pursuit. Techniques of sustainment operations are the same as for exploitation.

3-29. RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

a. A reconnaissance in force (see Figure 3-18) is a deliberate attack to discover and test enemy disposition, composition, and strength. Reconnaissance in force is ordered by a division or higher commander.

b. The battalion task force is the smallest force used to conduct a reconnaissance in force. The TF normally moves on a broad front. A reserve is maintained to exploit enemy weakness. Its aim is to determine enemy dispositions and strength. However, the reconnaissance in force may uncover weaknesses that, if promptly attacked, would permit an immediate tactical success. Objectives are designated on terrain that will force the enemy to react. A reconnaissance in force is planned and conducted using the following considerations.

(1) When some knowledge of the enemy is available and the enemy is defending or temporarily halted, the reconnaissance in force may be conducted to obtain specific and detailed information on his location and disposition.

(2) Necessary information cannot be gathered by other systems.

(3) The possibility that future plans may be revealed to the enemy by the reconnaissance in force must be weighed.

(4) There is the possibility that the reconnaissance in force may lead to a general engagement under unfavorable conditions that may require extrication.

c. If the reconnaissance in force finds a gap or weak point in the enemy's defense, the higher headquarters must be prepared to immediately exploit. The higher commander does this by directing the task force conducting the reconnaissance in force to continue the attack, or he may commit additional forces to pass through and continue the attack.

3-30. ATTACKS FROM A DEFENSIVE POSTURE

Attacks from a defensive posture include counterattack and spoiling attacks as either hasty or deliberate operations. The task force can conduct counterattacks and spoiling attacks as part of a brigade or higher defense, or it may order a subordinate unit to conduct a counterattack as part of the task force defensive plan.

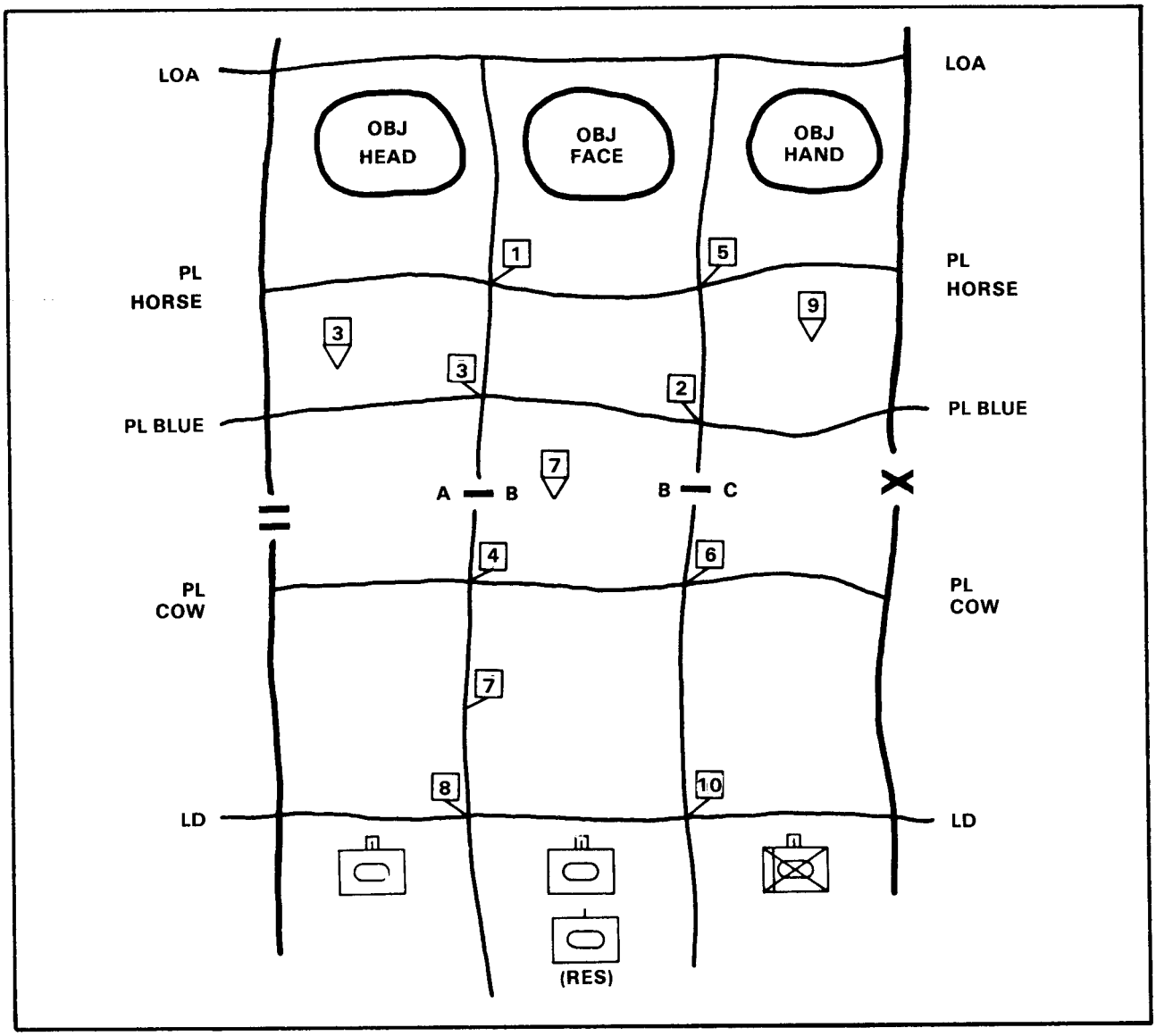

Figure 3-18. Reconnaissance in force.

a. **Counterattack.** The counterattack attempts to defeat an attacking enemy or regain key terrain. Counterattacks may be conducted by a reserve or lightly committed forward element. Timing is critical, and any delay or preparatory movement allows the enemy time to react. Therefore, thorough counterattack planning and rehearsals should be done in advance. Normally, the commander prioritizes counterattack missions for planning

by the reserve and establishes appropriate control measures (including routes, LD/LCs, attack-by-fire positions or objective areas, and other fire control measures) for each. The counterattack is launched when the commander senses that the balance of power on the battlefield has changed and he can exploit the situation by counterattacking to seize the initiative. Once the reserve is committed, another should be reconstituted.

b. **Spoiling Attack.** The spoiling attack attempts to strike the enemy when he is most vulnerable, during preparations for attack in assembly areas, attack positions, or on the move before crossing his line of departure. Usually, circumstances preclude full exploitation, and the attacking force halts on its objective or withdraws to its original position. Because of the distances and force ratios involved, companies do not conduct spoiling attacks, except as a raid.

Planning considerations for attacks from a defensive posture are discussed in Chapter 4.

3-31. FOLLOW-AND-SUPPORT

a. Follow-and-support forces are normally battalion task forces or higher formations employed primarily in exploitation and pursuit operations to facilitate maintaining the momentum of the attack. They may also be used in the conduct of a penetration. A force with a follow-and-support mission is a committed unit.

b. Follow-and-support forces assist attacking units by relieving them of tasks that would otherwise slow their advance. These tasks include —

- Destroy bypassed pockets of resistance.
- Relieve elements of the attacking force that have been left to block or contain enemy forces.
- Secure the flanks of a penetration to prevent the enemy from closing it.
- Expand the area of the penetration by breaking through other enemy defenses.
- Secure lines of communications.
- Secure key terrain overrun or bypassed by the attacking unit.
- Protect key installations.
- Guard prisoners of war.

c. When augmented with additional CSS assets, follow-and-support forces may also be assigned missions such as control of refugees and casualty collection and management.

d. When operating as a follow-and-support force, task force movement techniques are similar to those used in the movement to contact. Plans are coordinated with the unit that the task force follows, and the tactical CP moves initially with that unit's tactical CP. The task force main CP monitors the command net of the unit it is following.

3-32. RAID

a. A raid (see Figure 3-19, page 3-68) is an attack into enemy territory to accomplish a specific purpose and with no intention of gaining or holding terrain. Raids may be conducted to —

- Capture prisoners.
- Capture or destroy specific enemy materiel.
- Destroy logistical installations.
- Obtain information concerning enemy locations, dispositions, strength, intentions, or methods of operation.
- Disrupt enemy plans.

b. Battalion task forces may conduct, or may direct subordinate elements to conduct, a raid.

c. Raids may be conducted mounted or dismounted, and may be accomplished through infiltration or air assault. Mounted raids normally are conducted as an exploitation with a limit of advance, or as an attack with a limited-depth objective. Dismounted raids are conducted as a combat patrol.

d. Raids may be conducted in daylight or darkness, within or beyond supporting distance of the parent unit. Air assault raids have a greater chance of success during hours of darkness and low illumination. When the area to be raided is beyond supporting distance of friendly lines, the raiding party operates as a separate force.

e. Raiding force security is vital, because the raiding party is vulnerable to attack from all directions.

f. Raids are timed so that the raiding force arrives at the objective area at dawn, twilight, or other times of low visibility. Fire support, if in range, is well planned.

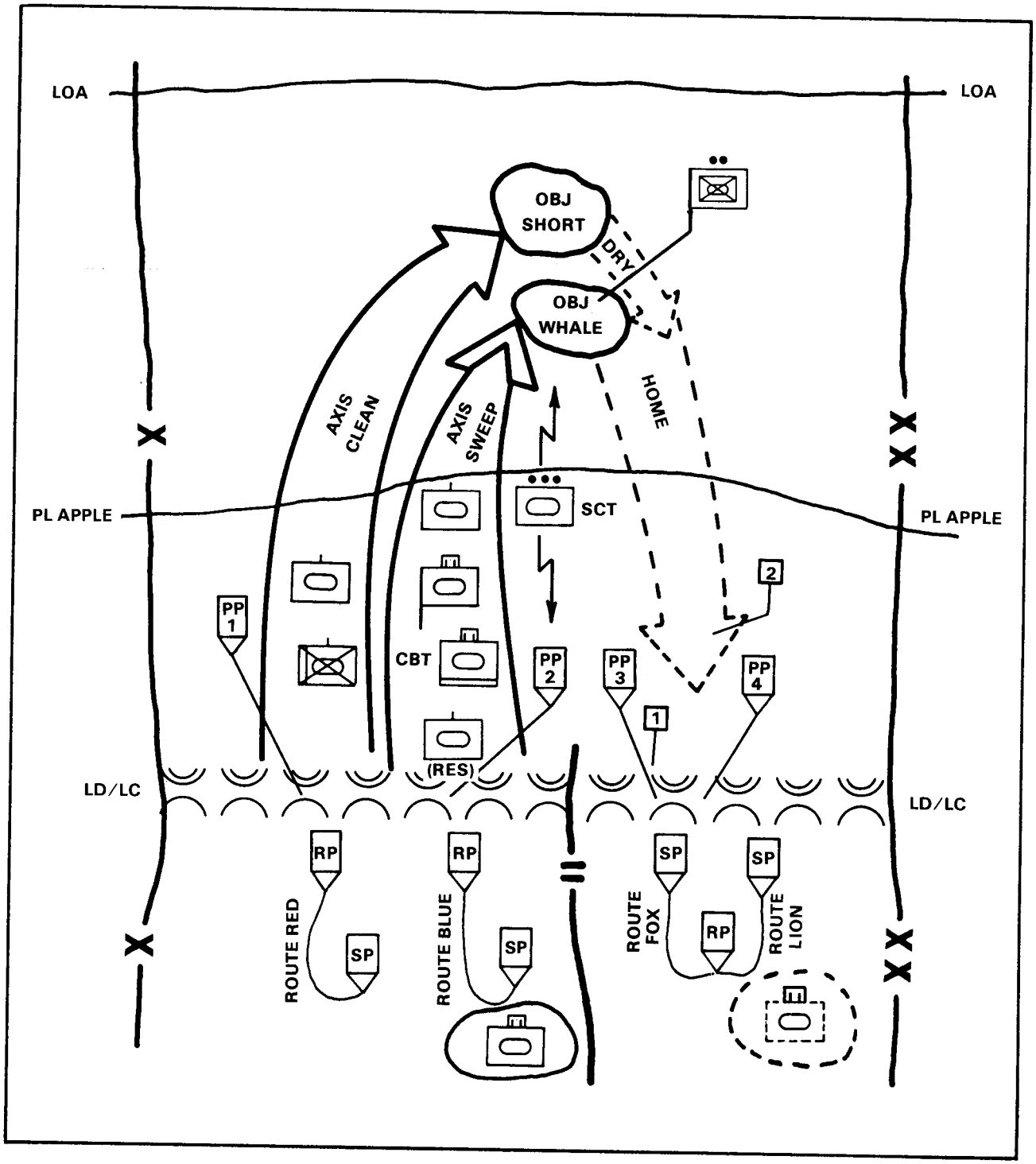

Figure 3-19. Raid.

g. During movement in daylight, the raid force uses covered routes of approach. During reduced visibility, when surprise through stealth is possible, advance and flank security detachments precede the raiding force. They prevent premature discovery of the raid by locating enemy security detachments and directing the raiding party around them.

h. The withdrawal is usually made over a different route from the one used to approach the objective. Security detachments are employed to ensure that the routes of withdrawal are open. Protective fires are planned along the axes of advance and withdrawal.

i. Rally points are planned for units to assemble to prepare for the attack on the objective, or to assemble after they have completed the mission and are ready to withdraw.

j. Logistical considerations in raids include the type and number of vehicles and weapons that the raiding force will have, movement distance, length of time the raiding party will operate in enemy territory, and expected enemy resistance. Usually, the raiding force carries everything required to sustain itself during the operation. Resupply of the raiding force, if required, is by aircraft.

3-33. FEINT

A feint is a supporting offensive operation to draw the enemy's attention away from the area of the main attack and induce him to move his reserves or shift his fire support. Feints must appear real. **Contact with the enemy is required.** Planning considerations are:

a. The higher commander's intent must be defined and understood to avoid the loss of the force conducting the feint.

b. Sufficient assets must be provided to the force conducting the feint to ensure mission accomplishment and unit survival.

c. Clear follow-on orders must be issued to ensure that the feinting force is prepared to exploit the success of the main attack if required.

d. Limited depth objectives are assigned.

3-34. DEMONSTRATION

The demonstration is an operation to deceive the enemy about the main attack. Its purpose is similar to a feint; however, **no contact**

with the enemy is made. Demonstrations support a division or corps operations plan. Planning considerations are:

a. The limit of advance must be carefully selected to allow the enemy to "see" the force but not to effectively engage it with direct fire.

b. The force must be protected from surprise attack or enemy spoiling attacks.

c. Follow-on missions must be planned so that the task force can leave the demonstration area and not be destroyed by indirect fire.