

Preface

PURPOSE

This manual describes how divisions and brigades conduct river crossings. It shows the relationship to corps operations, where appropriate, and includes details for lower echelons to support the brigades. It provides doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures in one reference to accomplish this special operation.

SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

River crossings throughout recorded history have been important, frequently critical military operations. Commanders located the end of enemy lines, crossed a river a short distance away, and attacked the enemy flank to achieve surprise. Napoleon's crossing of the Po River in 1796 is a famous example. The wide-frontage warfare of this century, however, has seldom allowed a large-scale outflanking maneuver at a river. Campaign success has more often depended on an army seizing and holding crossings against direct opposition.

Corps assigns missions and provides the necessary support and equipment. Divisions normally assign bridgehead objectives and control movement across the river. Brigades are the bridgehead forces, which execute the crossings either independently or as elements of a larger force.

River crossing skills and knowledge are highly perishable. As with many other tactical operations, they require constant practice in planning and execution. There are relatively few opportunities to train with the frequency needed to keep a high degree of proficiency in this tough operation. For that reason, this manual includes considerable detail on techniques and procedures.

A river crossing is a special operation in that it requires specific procedures for success because the water obstacle prevents ground maneuver in the usual way. It demands more detailed planning and technical support than normal tactical operations. It also features specific control measures to move the force across a water obstacle. This obstacle may be a river, a lake, or a canal. Unlike other obstacle types, the water obstacle remains effective during and after the crossing operation. See *Field Manual (FM) 90-13-1* for other counterobstacle operations.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

As in the past, the United States (US) Army conducts river crossings within the context of its basic doctrine. This manual applies the current AirLand Battle doctrine described in *FM 100-5* to river crossings. It incorporates recent developments in command and control for command post facilities and military decision making. It also aligns US doctrine more closely with ongoing standardization efforts in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In particular, it implements the water crossing doctrine of *International Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 2395*.

USER INFORMATION

The proponent of this publication is the US Army Engineer School. Send comments and recommendations on Department of the Army (DA) Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to Commandant, US Army Engineer School, ATTN: ATSE-TDM, Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-6650.

Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men. The terms "enemy" and "threat" are used interchangeably in this manual.