

## Chapter 1

# Challenge to Maneuver

AirLand Battle is a battle of maneuver. It requires initiative, agility, depth, and synchronization—all of which depend on freedom to maneuver. Terrain conditions and enemy offensive and defensive tactics integrate fires, maneuver, and obstacles to destroy our maneuver capability.

Existing terrain can severely limit movement and maneuver. Mechanized forces are limited in movement by steep slopes, vegetation, dry and water-filled gaps, rocks, and a variety of other natural and man-made obstacles. Maneuver is restricted even more than movement. Successful maneuver is dependent on the ability of the maneuver commanders to use the terrain to move and deploy their subordinate elements into tactical formations.

Successful enemy tactics specifically use fires, existing terrain, and man-made obstacles to strip our freedom to maneuver. To counter this threat, friendly maneuver commanders must be able to mass combat power at a critical time and place and overcome any man-made obstacles. The most severe obstacle that the United States (US) forces face is a well-trained Army modeled on Soviet forces and employing Soviet obstacle tactics. This type of enemy, therefore, is the challenge that combined arms breaching operations (described in this manual) must overcome.

Soviet regiments and higher echelons have organic capability to rapidly prepare ditches, wire obstacles, minefield, and other obstacles. The Soviets have built their doctrine on past experience. They rely heavily on the minefield as the primary obstacle, remembering the decisive role of mine warfare in World War II (WWII) that the following example serves to illustrate:

In the latter half of December 1944, forces of the Third Ukrainian Front made a forced crossing of the Danube River south of Budapest, broke through the Germans' prepared defense, and threw the German forces back 50 to 80 kilometers to the west. In Budapest, 180,000 German troops were surrounded. In the last few days of December, the Fourth Guards Army met sharply growing German resistance while attacking north and west. On 30 December, elements of the 5th and 3rd SS Panzer Divisions concentrated near Komarno and built crossing sites on the Danube River. Russian reconnaissance indicated that the Germans were preparing an attack to relieve Budapest.

In the face of the impending attack, the Fourth Guards Army shifted to the defense. Forward units organized into strongpoints and centers of resistance covering the most

important avenues of approach. They covered gaps between strongpoints with direct fires and night patrols.

Although preparations were conducted in continuous contact with the Germans, the defense was prepared quickly. By the end of 1 January 1945, the Fourth Guards Army had prepared 39 antitank strongpoints with 523 guns (5 to 30 guns in each position). Divisions completed a strong antitank defense, created reserves, and secured unit boundaries and flanks.

Strict priorities were set for obstacle and fortification work. Fifty percent of the fighting strength of the first echelon and all personnel from the second echelon were involved in this effort. Combat engineer battalions from the Army combat engineer brigade formed mobile obstacle detachments. Each detachment carried 2,000 to 2,500 mines, which accounted for 79 tank and 12 armored personnel carrier kills in the subsequent battle.

During the operation, the commander maintained a strong reserve. The antitank reserve consisted of up to four tank destroyer regiments and included self-propelled artillery regiments during crucial parts of the battle.

The defensive preparations over the two-day period, 30 December to 1 January, allowed the Soviets enough time to prepare an echeloned, fortified defense linking strongpoints and obstacles to soundly defeat a numerically superior German armored force.

Soviet analysis of historical experience has resulted in a doctrine to thwart the ability to maneuver. In the defense, the Soviets use all available assets to prepare obstacles and fortifications. They will usually dedicate ditching assets to prepare vehicle fighting positions and trenches, although they will sometimes prepare antitank (AT) ditches. The Soviets rely most heavily on minefields for tactical obstacles and use wire obstacles to reinforce fortifications and protective obstacles near strongpoints. *Appendix A* presents Soviet obstacle techniques in more detail.

Soviet offensive strategy consists of a fluid battlefield characterized by a series of meeting engagements and deep thrusts. They use mobile obstacle detachments called *Podvizhnyy* (*Otryad Zagrazhdeniya* (POZs) to provide rapid-response, flank, and counterattack protection, emphasizing the use of mines in the offense. The Soviets consider rapidly emplaced minefields, integrated with their AT reserve, to be their primary protection against counterattack.

Figure 1-1 illustrates a POZ rapidly emplacing a minefield to protect the flank of a Threat force conducting a flank attack from the march. This minefield helps secure the enemy's flank by attacking the friendly force's freedom to maneuver for a counterattack.

Location and type of obstacle effort during a meeting engagement is an excellent indicator of enemy intentions. Rapid mining across the front of a Threat force indicates shift to a hasty defense. Lack of follow-on effort to dig in surface-laid minefields indicates that the halt is temporary and that the Threat force intends to resume the offensive through their minefield.

The Soviets carry sufficient mines to implement this doctrine. Divisions in the offense carry large quantities of both antipersonnel (AP) and AT mines.

They have fielded minelayers that move with maneuver units to quickly place flank and defensive minefield (see Appendix A, Table A-1). Helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and the BM-22 multiple-rocket launcher can deliver other scatterable mine (SM) systems which can be used in interdiction and area-denial roles. The Soviets are developing additional methods of remote minelaying, including air and artillery delivery.

Friendly attacking forces must consider Soviet obstacle-emplacement capability when examining the enemy situation in the command estimate process to determine the priority intelligence requirements (PIR) and to develop a reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) plan. The Soviets in a defensive posture will emplace protective and tactical minefield, trenches, and wire obstacles to support strongpoints. Antihandling devices suggest that the Soviets intend to remain in a defensive position for more than a few hours. Figure 1-2 illustrates a typical motorized rifle platoon (MRP) obstacle array in support of a motorized rifle company (MRC) strongpoint. AP mines and antihandling devices suggest that the Soviets intend to remain in a defensive position for more than a few hours.

Soviet doctrine uses the mine as a means of slowing the enemy until sufficient direct and indirect fires may be brought to destroy or deter it. The Soviets have equipment to bury mines but will surface-lay them to speed emplacement and retrieval time for a hasty defense. This also enables them to put in effective dummy minefield.

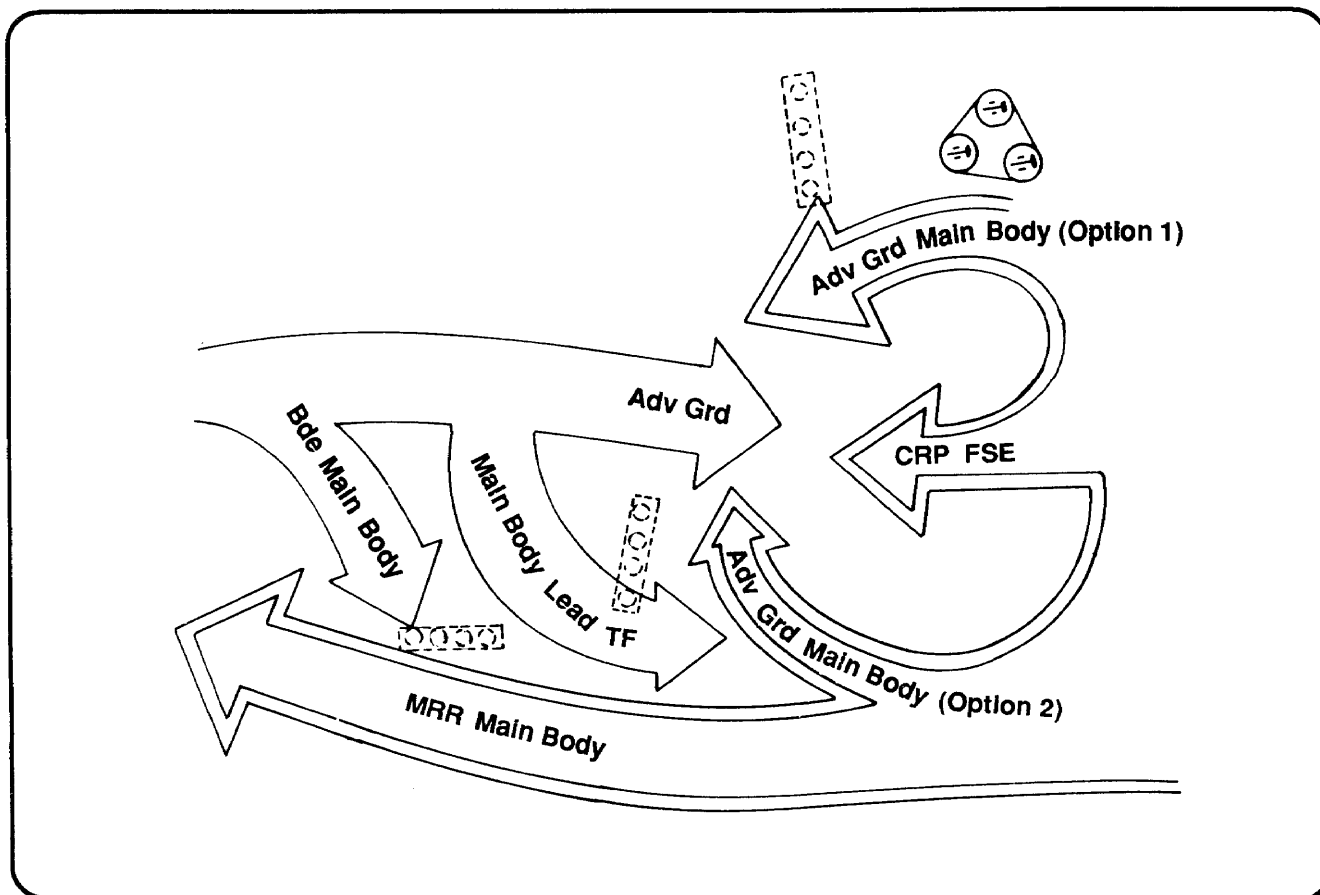


Figure 1-1. Soviet use of obstacles in a meeting engagement.

## 1-2 Challenge to Maneuver

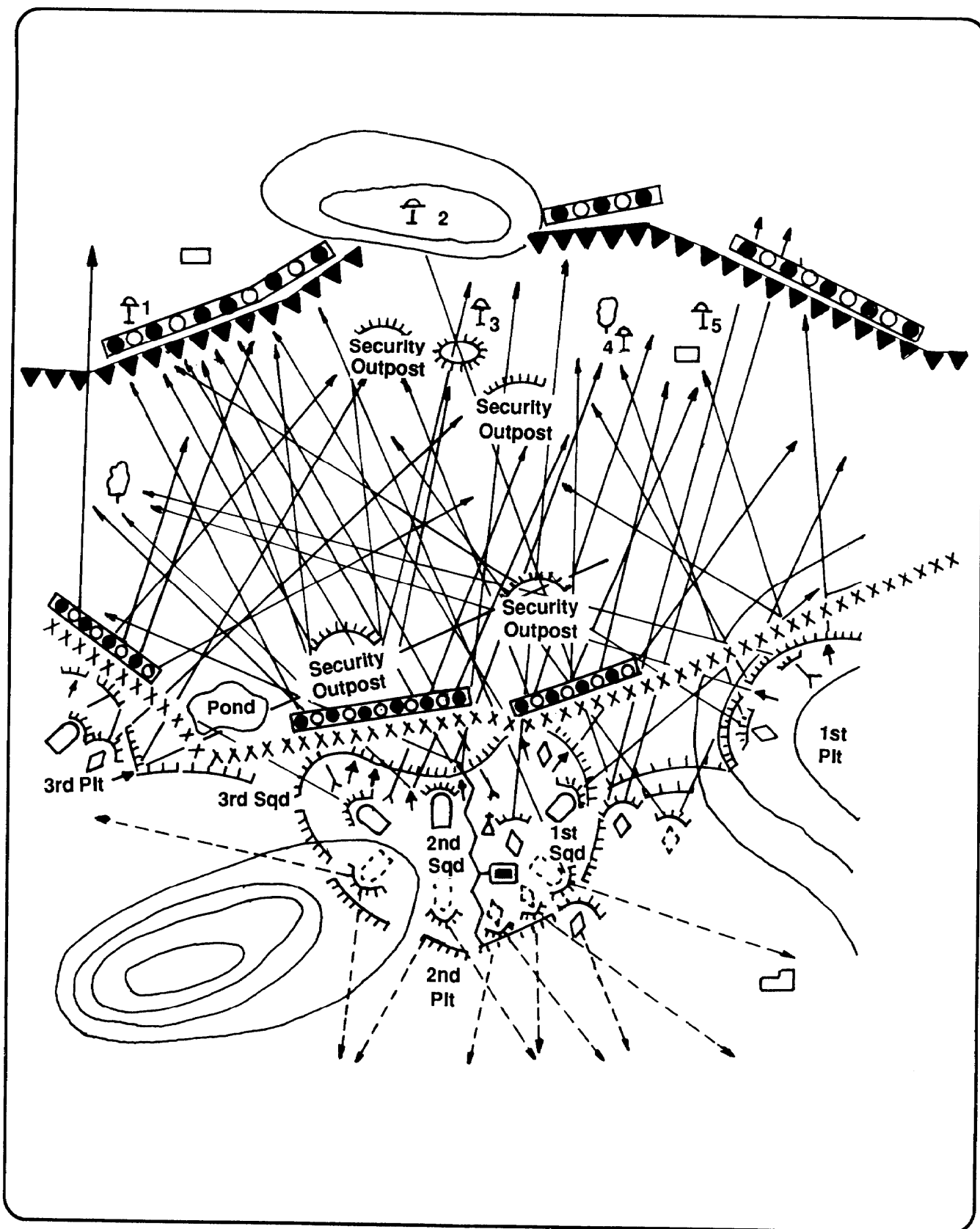


Figure 1-2. Obstacles integrated into a Soviet defense.

Where possible, the Soviets tie obstacles into the terrain to increase an attacker's difficulties. For example, minefield placed adjacent to a streambed or AT ditch require the crossing force to not only breach the minefield but also to clear sufficient lanes to allow other equipment to breach the gap. These complex obstacles require attacking forces to deal quickly with a variety of obstacle situations.

Obstacles are closely integrated with the fire plan—always in range and sight of direct-fire weapons. Integrating obstacles with direct fires provides a combination of kills that is far greater than either could get alone. The Soviets in a prepared defense expect to kill 56 percent of the combat vehicles (30 of 53 fighting vehicles in a balanced task force (TF) that attempt to “bull through” a minefield.

This kill rate was verified in the Armored Platoon Effectiveness Test (ARPET) conducted by the Combat Development Experimentation Center at Fort Ord, California, in 1985. The results of this test conclude that units encountering minefield and fires will account for 50 to 75 percent of the tank kills in a future European war.

In addition to direct fires and obstacles, indirect fires play a major role in the fire plan. The Soviets plan to mass high volumes of artillery fire on obstacle complexes in fire sacks.

Preplanned fires can arrive on target within minutes from the time the fire is called and can be adjusted on the breaching location rapidly. This artillery greatly complicates breaching operations, since it can fire any conceivable mixture of high explosives (HEs), improved conventional munitions (ICMs), and flechette rounds. Artillery will cover both obstacles and bypasses.

Flank obstacles not covered by direct ground fires may be covered by tactical aviation or helicopters to thwart counterattacks.

In addition to Threat tactical, protective, and natural obstacles, previously emplaced friendly and allied minefields and obstacles present obstructions to counterattacks, envelopments, and deep attacks. Soviet minefield and other obstacles present a tremendous challenge to the maneuver capability so essential to successful execution of AirLand Battle doctrine. Friendly forces overcome obstructions to maneuver with breaching operations. Every attack mission includes breaching operations as maneuver-critical events with specified missions to subordinate elements. All forces whether combat, combat support, or combat service support must be able to handle the obstacles they encounter on the battlefield.