

Chapter 6

Exploitation

The most important goal of our action is the destruction of the enemy to the last limit of possibility

Field Marshal Prince Mikhail I. Kutuzov

Exploitation is a type of offensive operation that usually follows a successful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth (FM 3-0). Commanders at all echelons exploit successful offensive actions. Attacks that succeed in annihilating a defending enemy are rare. Failure to aggressively exploit success at every turn may give the enemy time to reconstitute an effective defense by shifting his forces or by regaining the initiative through a counterattack. Therefore, every offensive operation not restricted by higher authority or lack of resources should be followed without delay by bold exploitation. The commander designs his exploitation to maintain pressure on the enemy, compound and take advantage of his disorganization, shatter his will to resist, and seize decisive or key terrain.

6-1. Exploitation is the primary means of translating tactical success into operational advantage. It reinforces enemy force disorganization and confusion in the enemy's command and control (C2) system caused by tactical defeat. It is an integral part of the concept of the offense. The psychological effect of tactical defeat creates confusion and apprehension

throughout the enemy C2 structure and reduces the enemy's ability to react. Exploitation takes advantage of this reduction in enemy capabilities to make permanent what would be only a temporary tactical effect if exploitation were not conducted. Exploitation may be decisive.

6-2. Those plan, prepare, and execute concepts introduced previously continue to apply during an exploitation. Assessment concepts described in FM 6-0 and FM 6-22 also apply. The commander modifies these concepts as necessary to reflect the specific existing factors of METT-TC.

CONTENTS

Organization of Forces	6-2
Reconnaissance and Security.....	6-4
Combat Support and Combat Service Support.....	6-4
Control Measures	6-5
Planning an Exploitation.....	6-6
Executing an Exploitation.....	6-10
Gain and Maintain Enemy Contact	6-12
Disrupt the Enemy	6-12
Fix the Enemy	6-13
Maneuver.....	6-13
Follow Through.....	6-14

6-3. Local exploitation by the committed force follows a successful attack. A unit conducts a local exploitation when it capitalizes on whatever tactical opportunities it creates in the course of accomplishing its assigned offensive mission. Whenever possible, the lead attacking unit transitions directly to the exploitation after accomplishing its mission in a local exploitation. If this is not feasible, the commander can pass fresh forces (follow and assume) into the lead. The commander acts quickly to capitalize on local successes. Although such local exploitations may appear insignificant, their cumulative effects can be decisive. Subordinate commanders, working within a higher commander's intent, can use their initiative to launch an exploitation. When a commander initiates a local exploitation, he informs his higher headquarters to keep that commander informed of his intentions. This prevents the inadvertent disruption of the higher echelon's battle or campaign and allows the higher headquarters to assess the possibility of general collapse and to direct the initiation of pursuit operations.

6-4. Conduct of a major exploitation is a specific contingency mission assigned to a large unit in anticipation of offensive success by another unit of equivalent size. Divisions and brigades are the echelons that conduct a major exploitation although a corps can conduct a major exploitation as part of a multicorps operation.

ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

6-5. The forces conducting an attack are also the forces that initially exploit that attack's success. Typically, the commander does not assign a subordinate unit the mission of exploitation before starting a movement to contact (MTC) or an attack. The commander reorganizes his unit internally to reflect the existing factors of METT-TC when the opportunity to exploit success occurs. He uses fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) to conduct actions on contact. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of actions on contact.) If a commander needs additional resources to support the exploitation, he requests them from the appropriate headquarters. The additional resources may include intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to help identify targets for attack, as well as attack helicopters and controlled munitions, such as the Army tactical missile system, to attack identified targets. Each exploitation force should be large enough to protect itself from those enemy forces it expects to encounter. It should also be a reasonably self-sufficient combined arms force capable of operations beyond the supporting range of the main body.

6-6. The units that create an opportunity to exploit should not be expected to perform the exploitation to an extended depth. If the commander plans to exploit with a specific subordinate unit, he must specify the degree of damage or risk to that force he is willing to accept in the course of the current operation. If the initially attacking units incur significant losses of combat power, the commander should replace them as soon as possible. When the exploiting force's combat power weakens because of fatigue, disorganization, or attrition, or when it must hold ground or resupply, the commander should continue the exploitation with a fresh force. In both cases, the replacement force should have a high degree of tactical mobility so it can conduct the exploitation.

6-7. The exploitation may be more effective if the commander can commit additional forces and assign them the task of either follow and support or follow and assume. The commander assigns follow and support missions to units designated to assist exploiting forces by relieving them of tasks that would slow their advances. The lead unit and any follow and assume or follow and support units exchange liaison teams to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities. Units designated to follow and assume conduct a forward passage of lines and replace the initial exploiting forces when they approach their culminating point. Normally, the next higher commander retains control of the forces performing the tasks of follow and support or follow and assume. (Appendix B expands the discussion of these tasks.) When possible, units assigned these tasks should possess mobility equal to that of the exploiting unit or receive additional engineers and transportation assets to provide the necessary mobility. Once organized, they are committed forces and should receive habitually associated artillery, air defense, engineer, and other combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) forces in accordance with the factors of METT-TC. In an exploitation operation projected to cross significant distances, the commander may attach elements of a follow and support unit to the exploiting force to ensure unity of command and effort.

6-8. Since an exploitation operation typically covers a wider front than an attacking force, fire support assets may find their supported elements operating outside normal supporting ranges. They must displace forward to ensure the continued provision of fires on and beyond enemy formations, which may cause some difficulty in supporting the exploiting force's flank elements. To provide the required support, these fire support units, as well as independently operating assets, can be attached to subordinate elements of the exploiting force. Otherwise, the commander can move additional reinforcing fire support units and systems forward to fill the void.

6-9. Responsive air defense coverage provides rapid transition to an exploitation without the loss of momentum. The commander plans on repositioning his air defense artillery assets to ensure this responsiveness. Adequate mobile air defense units should accompany exploiting forces. Air defense arrangements for the initial attack are likely to remain effective throughout the exploitation. However, when the commander extends his formations and assets to cover more area, the air defense coverage becomes less effective. The commander needs to consider the risks associated with moving out from under his air defense artillery umbrella. Alternatively, he can request adjustments in the air defense coverage of higher echelons. Counterair operations by the other services (USAF, USN, and USMC) may provide the desired degree of air defense protection. The commander can use available air interdiction and close air support by fixed-wing aircraft to augment or replace Army fire support assets during an exploitation.

6-10. The exploitation mission demands a force with a significant mobility advantage over the enemy. Attack helicopters and air assault assets may constitute a portion of the exploiting force's combat power. They are extremely useful in seizing defiles, crossing obstacles, and otherwise capitalizing on their mobility to attack and cut off disorganized enemy elements. They can also seize or control key terrain such as important river-crossing sites or vital enemy transportation nodes along the exploiting force's route of advance into

and through the enemy's rear area. The commander integrates combat engineers into the exploiting force to help breach obstacles; keep ground forces maneuvering, and provide countermobility protection to the flanks. Typical problems that degrade an exploiting force's mobility are minefields and other obstacles. The commander also uses engineers to keep his supply routes open.

6-11. The commander retains only those reserves necessary to ensure his flexibility of operation, continued momentum in the advance, and likely enemy responses to the exploitation. (Chapter 5 discusses employment considerations for the reserve.)

RECONNAISSANCE AND SECURITY

6-12. When a commander initiates an exploitation operation, the exact enemy situation may not be clearly known or understood. The commander establishes a reconnaissance force to gain and maintain enemy contact. He complements his reconnaissance effort with sensors and surveillance assets and intelligence products produced by adjacent, higher, and lower echelons to maintain his situational understanding of the strength, dispositions, capabilities, and intentions of all significant enemy elements within his area of interest. The commander normally emphasizes reconnaissance more than security operations when conducting an exploitation. Nevertheless, since the exploiting force moves independently, he addresses the security needs of that force.

6-13. The commander assigns the appropriate security missions to his designated security forces the same way he would for an MTC. (See Chapter 4.) An exploiting corps or division commander typically organizes his forward-most security element into a covering force to protect the main body's movement and develop the situation before he commits his main body. These security elements respond directly to him.

6-14. If an exploiting force is unable to resource a covering force for independent operations, it may use an advance guard in place of a covering force. This is typical for a brigade conducting an exploitation on its own. In some cases when the higher echelon (corps or division) creates a covering force, a brigade may still push out an advance guard behind the covering force. This normally occurs when subordinate units in an exploitation advance in multiple parallel columns.

COMBAT SUPPORT AND COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

6-15. Combat support and combat service support arrangements must be extremely flexible during exploitation operations. In the conduct of exploitation operations directed against uncommitted enemy forces or in exploitation operations directed along diverging lines of advance, the commander commonly attaches CS and CSS units to the exploiting maneuver force. Alternatively, the support assets can follow the exploiting force in an echeloned manner along main supply routes (MSRs). Transportation and supplies to sustain the force become increasingly important as the exploitation progresses. As supply lines lengthen, the condition of lines of communications and the conduct of route and convoy security can become problems. The largest possible stocks of fuel, spare parts, and ammunition should accompany the force so that it does not lose momentum because of a lack of support. The exploitation effort may

be limited more by vehicle mechanical failures and the need for fuel than by combat losses or a lack of ammunition. Therefore, direct support maintenance support teams accompany the exploiting force to assess the problem and repair disabled vehicles within a limited time period or evacuate them to maintenance collection points for repair by general support maintenance units. The commander should consider using his utility and cargo helicopters to move critical supplies forward during the exploitation.

CONTROL MEASURES

6-16. An exploitation uses fewer control measures than many other operations because of the uncertain enemy situation and the need to provide subordinate commanders with the maximum possible flexibility to take advantage of fleeting opportunities. (See Figure 6-1.) Planners develop graphic control measures as part of the planning process. The commander issues these control measures as part of the attack order to facilitate C2 when the force transitions to an exploitation.

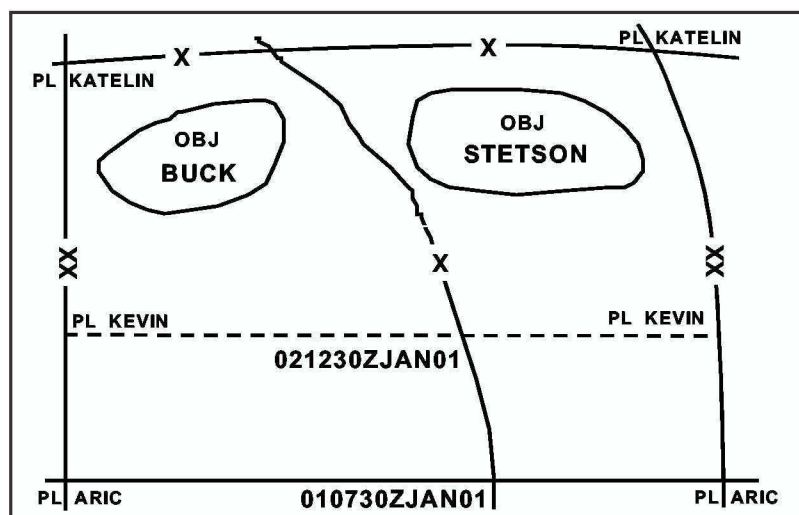


Figure 6-1. Exploitation Control Measures in a Contiguous AO

6-17. A unit conducting an exploitation normally operates in the same area of operations (AO) it was assigned for the attack. The exploiting unit assigns subordinate units their own AOs. Boundaries between subordinate units may change often to take advantage of opportunities. Since an exploiting unit deploys both reconnaissance and security forces, the commander must rapidly adjust his boundaries as the exploiting force advances. The commander designates obstacle-restricted areas to prevent friendly obstacles from hindering the movement of the exploiting force. He designates obstacle zones on the flanks of the exploiting force's movement corridors to enhance his security. He uses phase lines and subsequent objectives to control the conduct of the exploitation. The commander uses objectives to orient the movement of exploiting forces. Although an exploitation may result in taking a terrain objective, the primary focus should be on destroying the enemy force. The commander may establish a limit of advance if he can anticipate a culminating

point or some other restriction, such as political considerations regarding an international border, which requires its establishment.

6-18. A commander normally employs permissive fire support control measures during an exploitation. A coordinated fire line (CFL) ensures rapid response. Movement of the CFL is particularly important to provide adequate support as the force continues to advance. Even if the culmination of the exploitation is not anticipated, establishing a forward boundary is important to facilitate operations beyond that boundary by a higher headquarters. The commander can use additional control measures, such as targets and checkpoints, as required.

PLANNING AN EXPLOITATION

6-19. The commander's ability to deny the enemy options by proactive use of his battlefield operating systems is critical to a successful exploitation. He does this by arranging his battlefield operating systems within his opponent's time and space relationship in accordance with the factors of METT-TC.

6-20. The commander must plan for the decentralized execution of an exploitation. His commander's intent is especially important because subordinates must be able to exercise initiative in a rapidly changing, fluid situation. The commander must state the purpose of the exploitation, which may be to force the retrograde of enemy forces from an area, encircle enemy forces so they cannot withdraw, or destroy enemy artillery and other fire support systems. The intent must describe the desired end state. That intent will also determine his decisive and shaping operations and guide the designation of his main effort at any given point.

6-21. A clear commander's intent provides subordinates with guidance on how to integrate their operations into the overall operations of the higher headquarters. Only subordinates who can act quickly can seize all opportunities to damage the enemy or accelerate the tempo of operations. A commander should place minimal restrictions on his subordinates. These may include clear instructions regarding the seizure of key terrain and the size of enemy forces that may be bypassed. Reliable, secure communications between the exploiting force, the follow and support force, and the commander facilitate coordination that can maximize the impact of the exploitation. However, all subordinates should have a clear picture of the desired end state to conduct operations that support it, even if communications are lost.

6-22. Planning for an exploitation begins during the preparation phase of all offensive operations. To avoid losing critical time during the transition from an MTC or an attack to an exploitation, the commander tentatively identifies forces, objectives, and AOs for subordinate units before the offensive operation begins. When the opportunity to exploit occurs, brigade and higher-echelon commanders should initiate the exploitation, either as a branch of or a sequel to the existing operation. The commander's plan should attempt to avoid driving the enemy back in the direction of his own sustaining base.

6-23. During exploitation planning and execution, the commander balances the exploiting force's need for speed and momentum against its need for security as it begins to move beyond supporting range of the rest of the force.

6-26. In exceptional circumstances, when the enemy is clearly incapable of effectively resisting, the commander can choose temporarily not to retain a reserve but commit all his forces to the exploitation. He may employ a line formation with two or more elements abreast without a reserve when the approach to the objective must be made on as wide a front as possible. For example, a commander could use this formation when attempting to secure crossing sites over a major river. (See Figure 6-3.) He could also employ this formation against sporadic and weakening resistance when the enemy lacks a significant counterattack capability or when the counterattack can be blocked by means other than employing the reserve. Despite the lack of a constituted reserve, other actions, such as the effective employment of massed indirect fires, can provide the commander with the flexibility usually provided by the reserve for influencing actions during an exploitation.

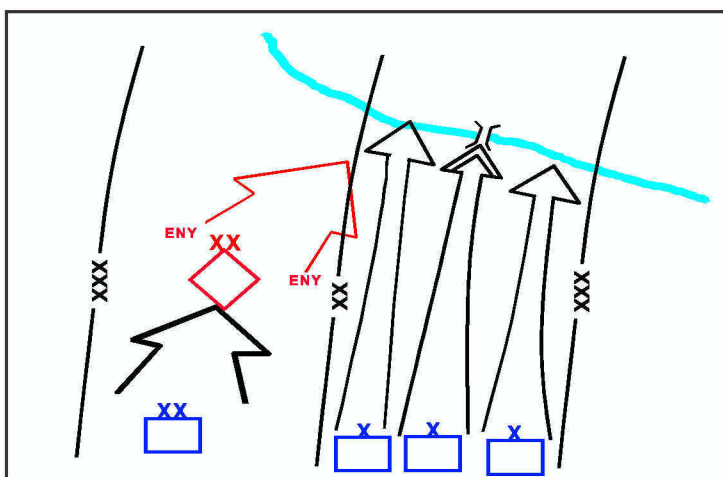


Figure 6-3. Division Exploitation: Brigades Abreast, No Reserve

6-27. A vee formation with two or more elements abreast and a reserve allows the unit to advance on a reasonably wide front with the bulk of the unit's direct firepower oriented forward. This configuration helps when creating gaps in the enemy's defenses. While the bulk of the unit is committed, the reserve is available to exploit the success of the attacking elements, assume the mission of the attacking elements, or counter enemy threats as they develop. (See Figure 6-4.)

6-28. Because of the need to rapidly transition from an attack to an exploitation, fire support planning for the exploitation must take place as part of the planning for the attack. The commander establishes links between his military intelligence, reconnaissance, attack aviation, field artillery, offensive information operations, and supporting fixed-wing assets to expedite the detection and delivery of effects against situationally dependant high-priority targets. He selects those targets regardless of their location within the enemy's defensive area to support the exploitation. During the exploitation, there is little time to revise target lists. Target considerations are similar in nature to those of an MTC. In addition, the exploitation requires a flexible, responsive, and redundant fire control net that must be planned in advance. Coordination with the echelon intelligence officer is critical as the situation develops

into exploitation. The exploiting force templates known enemy locations within its AO as danger areas and targets them.

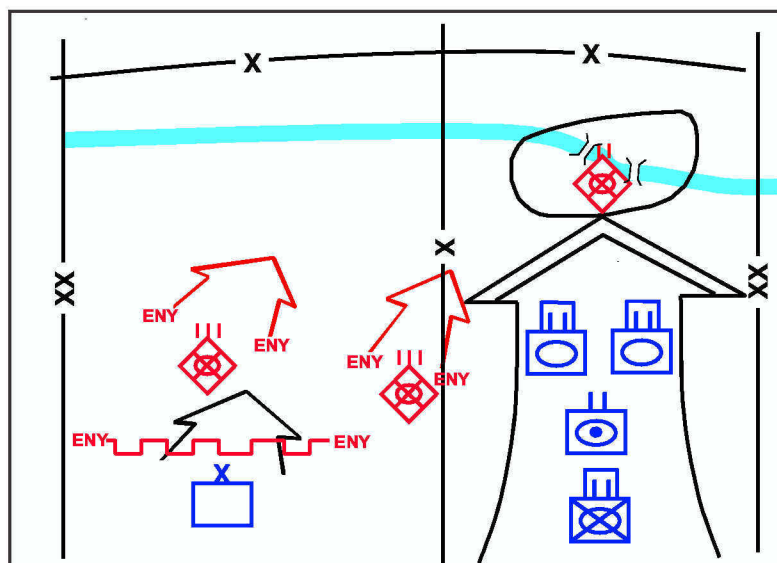


Figure 6-4. Brigade Exploitation: Two Battalions Forward, One in Reserve

6-29. The fire support plan includes allocating support for meeting engagements or hasty attacks that occur during the exploitation. The fire support coordinator plans targets beyond the projected locations of the exploiting maneuver force to shield the force from enemy counterattacks. He then addresses how to provide fire support to the force in its movement to the LOA and targets locations beyond the LOA to interdict the enemy's lines of communication (LOCs).

6-30. The commander plans for artillery displacement as an integral part of the exploitation. Artillery assets must displace at a pace that exceeds normal offensive operations, while maintaining the capability to provide accurate and lethal fires. The commander can normally plan on his forces using less ammunition during an exploitation than in an attack because fleeing enemy forces are normally not in prepared positions, and thus more vulnerable. The commander should also consider using close air support in the exploitation, especially to support those units moving beyond supporting range of the main body. Airborne forward air controllers can help identify and track high-payoff targets forward of the exploiting force.

6-31. The commander plans situational obstacles for each phase of the operation. For example, he plans in accordance with his rules of engagement to emplace scatterable minefields in those areas that could be used by an enemy counterattack force as his forces move forward.

6-32. The enemy may be willing to commit his aircraft against a friendly exploitation that endangers the viability of his defense, buying him time to prepare a defense while weakening the friendly force. The commander plans to move his air defense assets with priority of protection to the decisive operation. He also uses them to protect his lines of communication from enemy air

attack, thereby allowing his CS and CSS elements to keep pace with the operation. Planning must address how to rapidly resupply air defense missiles as they are used. It must also allow for adjustments in the priority of protection assigned to different elements during the exploitation.

6-33. The commander must anticipate the exploitation and ensure that his logistics plan supports the force all the way to the LOA. Planning for CSS in the exploitation includes designating future MSR, logistics release points, unit maintenance collection points, casualty collection points, medical treatment facilities, ambulance exchange points, and the depositing of enemy prisoners of war. In sustaining the exploitation, petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) consumption and vehicle maintenance are primary concerns of CSS planners. A significant factor is that an exploiting force tends to travel on a broad front, which may necessitate designating one or more lateral MSRs to handle the dispersion. Logistics operations must be prepared to bound their CSS assets farther forward and move them more often than in an attack.

6-34. Selecting a flexible MSR is critical because it must be able to respond to changes in the direction of the exploitation. Maintaining the MSR is a responsibility of the force engineer. During planning, the commander must specifically address the control of logistics units and convoys. He calls them forward and redirects them as needed. He may have to plan for guides to assist their movement around bypassed enemy positions and obstacles. He may assign some combat elements from the reserve an "on-order" mission to conduct rear area security to help protect CSS elements or secure the MSR. The commander must also ensure adequate plans exist for controlling displaced civilians on the battlefield so that they do not interfere with follow-on maneuver, CS, and CSS assets. This is a critical function of civil-military operations.

EXECUTING AN EXPLOITATION

6-35. Exploitation requires physical and mental aggressiveness to combat the friction of limited visibility, fatigue, bad weather, dangers of fratricide, and extended operations. It requires bold and aggressive reconnaissance, prompt use of firepower, and rapid employment of previously uncommitted units. Exploiting forces maneuver swiftly toward their objectives, sever escape routes, and strike at enemy command posts, communications nodes, reserves, artillery, and CS units to prevent the enemy from reorganizing an effective defense. Well supported by tactical air support, air cavalry, and attack helicopters, exploiting forces should be able to change direction on short notice.

6-36. To maintain sufficient forces to conduct an exploitation, the commander must ensure that his subordinates focus on his intent. They should not dissipate his combat power by seeking minor tactical successes or reducing inconsequential enemy forces. His aim is to reach the final objective with the maximum possible strength as rapidly as possible. The commander must provide his exploiting forces with mobile support, including air resupply, to move emergency lifts of POL and ammunition.

6-37. The transition from attack to exploitation may be so gradual that it is hardly distinguishable; it may also be abrupt. The abrupt transition may occur when a force uses massed quantities of precision munitions, achieves surprise, or overwhelms a much weaker enemy force. Normally, exploitation

occurs after the force secures its objective. With adequate support, the commander can launch the exploitation with his initial assault or at any time after that, depending on the effects of the fires and his desires.

6-38. Since the exploitation takes advantage of previous success, forces previously allocated toward attacking enemy forces normally continue their ongoing activities. These activities include—

- Attrition or defeat of enemy reserves prior to their commitment.
- Destruction of enemy countermobility assets prior to their employment on a friendly avenue of advance for the exploiting force.
- Disruption of enemy units attempting to reestablish a coherent defense.
- Disruption of enemy sustaining operations.

This assumes the commander has accurate intelligence data to target these enemy actions.

6-39. Generally, as one part of the attacking force finishes clearing an objective, the commander orders the remaining elements to exploit that success. To accomplish this with minimal confusion, the commander must know where each of his elements is and what combat formation each has adopted. If the commander has previously trained and rehearsed his force to change rapidly from one combat formation to another, to change missions, and to change the direction of advance, he can time the execution of such changes to maintain the initiative over an enemy.

6-40. The commander can also initiate an exploitation when he realizes that the enemy force is having difficulty maintaining its position or cohesion. Updated intelligence is crucial to the commander since it is difficult to accurately predict the exact conditions required to transition from an attack to an exploitation. Therefore, the commander and his subordinates watch the enemy's defenses for indications of disintegration that may signal the opportunity to transition to exploitation. Such indicators include—

- The threat or use of weapons of mass destruction by enemy forces, despite the probable US retaliation, may signal impending enemy collapse.
- Enemy reconnaissance intensifies.
- Rearward movement increases, especially by fire support and reserves.
- The enemy prepares to demolish or destroy his facilities, installations, equipment, and supply stockpiles.
- Various units intermix their vehicles and personnel in combat formations or march columns.
- Number of prisoners captured increases significantly.
- Enemy fire decreases in intensity and effectiveness.
- Fires increase in one or more individual sectors of the front that do not appear to be synchronized with the developing situation and at a time when the amount of defensive fires appears to be decreasing.
- Enemy resistance decreases considerably, or the enemy lacks any type of organized defense.
- Amount of abandoned enemy war materiel encountered increases significantly.

- Reports confirm the capture or absence of enemy leaders.
- Friendly forces overrun enemy artillery, C2 facilities, and supply points.
- Enemy units disintegrate and friendly companies and battalions can defeat enemy battalion- and brigade-size units, respectively.

In any case, the commander ruthlessly exploits vulnerable enemy forces after weighing and accommodating the risks.

GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

6-41. The exploiting force must gain and maintain contact with the enemy. This is a critical aspect of the exploitation since the enemy may be trying to break contact and distance himself from the friendly force to give him time to recover. After a successful attack, the exploiting force must perform aggressive reconnaissance to both its front and flanks. Mission and intent of exploitation determine how much enemy contact is required to maintain pressure on him, compound his disorganization, shatter his will, and seize key or decisive terrain. As discussed in Chapter 5, this reconnaissance effort must start almost immediately after an attacking unit secures its objective. If the commander has dedicated reconnaissance assets, he uses them to maintain enemy contact, observe the enemy's movements, and search for weakly defended enemy positions. If those assets are not available, other maneuver units perform those reconnaissance tasks. While maintaining contact with the enemy, the reconnaissance force tries to locate enemy reserves, uncommitted forces, and blocking positions. This effort helps the exploiting force avoid being led into ambushes as the enemy seeks to recover the initiative by counter-attacking.

6-42. When the previously assigned offensive mission is accomplished, units at all echelons push out their reconnaissance and security forces to discover whether the opportunity exists to initiate an exploitation. At brigade and battalion echelons, these reconnaissance and security forces must gain and maintain enemy contact while remaining within the supporting range of their parent brigade or battalion.

6-43. The commander uses air reconnaissance to augment his ground reconnaissance. He can employ aerial sensors, such as JSTARS, air cavalry, and unmanned aerial vehicles in advance of ground maneuver reconnaissance. This allows aerial observation of named and targeted areas of interest that facilitate the unit's movement and cue the attack of high-payoff targets. Scout and attack helicopters can locate enemy positions and engage the enemy to disrupt his movement and preparations. Aviation assets surge to maintain constant contact with the enemy and keep pressure on him.

DISRUPT THE ENEMY

6-44. Exploitation presumes the enemy has already been somewhat disrupted. An exploitation seeks to maintain or increase this disruption by preventing the enemy from effectively reconstituting his defenses. At the division and corps levels, the commander combines the effects of his operations against enemy reserves and uncommitted forces with the rapid maneuver of his close combat forces to maintain this disruption. Attack

helicopters can maneuver in front of exploiting ground maneuver forces to destroy high-payoff targets. The commander integrates available fixed-wing aircraft into his plan for attacking these targets. Rapid advances by the exploiting force keep the enemy force off balance and degrade his intelligence and surveillance capabilities, thus providing some security from attack. The commander uses all available resources to maintain pressure on the enemy, using both overwhelming combat power and asymmetric weapon systems. The commander never allows the enemy an opportunity to recover from the initial blow. The exploiting force's fire support system must deliver massed fires quickly to respond to any contingencies that arise during the exploitation.

FIX THE ENEMY

6-45. An exploiting force has three goals in fixing an enemy force. First, it tries to break down the enemy's combined arms organization by fixing enemy units in positions out of supporting distance of each other. This allows the exploiting force to defeat the enemy in detail. Second, the commander attacks out-of-contact enemy forces before they can adversely affect the exploitation. By attacking these enemy forces, the commander seeks to fix them in their current positions or force them to move to locations where they can be harmlessly contained until the exploiting force or a follow and support force can engage and defeat them. Third, it achieves a specific targeting effect—such as causing 15-percent casualties—that disrupts the enemy commander's plan.

MANEUVER

6-46. During an exploitation, the exploiting force maneuvers to maintain pressure on the enemy. The commander can use any heavy and mobile light forces, such as airborne and air assault elements, to secure terrain objectives or choke points critical to the advance and to cut enemy lines of escape. The commander takes advantage of available vertical envelopment capabilities. The exploiting force clears only enough of its AO to permit its advance. It cuts through enemy logistics units and LOCs to seize objectives vital to the enemy's defense. It attacks from the march to overrun weak enemy formations. In accordance with the bypass criteria, the exploiting force can contain and bypass those enemy pockets of resistance too small to jeopardize the mission while its commander reports these enemy forces to adjacent units, following units, and higher headquarters.

6-47. If an enemy unit is too strong for the leading elements of the exploiting force to overrun and destroy, succeeding elements of the force conduct a hasty attack based on the combat information provided by its leading elements. Such enemy forces are rarely attacked frontally. In almost all cases, the commander uses another form of maneuver to produce faster and better results with fewer casualties. While the exploiting force is seeking one or more assailable flanks, available fire support systems continue to engage the enemy to divert attention from the attempted envelopment and destroy as much enemy combat power as possible.

6-48. The exploiting force may face prepared belts of defensive positions in depth when it is exploiting the initial success of the attack. Therefore, the exploiting force must move rapidly to attack and destroy the enemy before he

can settle into his subsequent or supplemental positions. The more rapidly this can be done, the less likely it is that succeeding defensive lines will be fully prepared and the less effort it will take to penetrate each successive defensive position. The exploiting force repeats this process as many times as necessary until it breaks completely through the enemy's defenses.

6-49. The commander's primary concern when initiating an exploitation resulting from a successful attack is to shift his force into the appropriate combat formation and task-organize it with additional capabilities and resources to take advantage of a short window of opportunity. Assuming that the force accomplishes this with relative ease, he must control the formation as it moves and prevent its overextension. The commander must anticipate the enemy's reaction to his actions. The real danger to the exploiting force is not the immediate enemy but the enemy not yet engaged. Overextension is a risk inherent in exploitation. While the commander must be concerned with this, he must also guard against being overcautious.

6-50. Surrender appeals and ultimatums are particularly effective when directed against enemy units that have been surrounded, isolated, or bypassed. JP 3-53 and FM 3-05.30 detail the techniques for communicating with the enemy.

6-51. While the exploiting force is conducting its operations, the follow and support force, if available—

- Widens or secures the shoulders of a penetration.
- Destroys bypassed enemy units.
- Relieves supported units that have halted to contain enemy forces.
- Blocks the movement of enemy reinforcements.
- Opens and secures lines of communications.
- Guards prisoners, key areas, installations, and lines of communication.
- Controls dislocated civilians.

FOLLOW THROUGH

6-52. Once the exploitation begins, forces move to attack enemy forces without any operational pauses. Exploitation continues around the clock so the enemy cannot escape the relentless offensive pressure. The exploiting force retains terrain only as necessary to accomplish its mission. The commander must be careful not to dissipate combat power to achieve minor tactical successes or to reduce small enemy forces. Once he reaches the LOA, the commander quickly shifts his attention to survivability and countermobility because of the possibility of an enemy counterattack.

6-53. At some point a unit conducting an exploitation reaches a culminating point or transitions to a pursuit. Culmination can occur for the variety of reasons, such as friendly losses or the enemy's commitment of his reserve. The commander, when he makes an assessment that his force is approaching culmination, should transition to another type of operation. On the other hand, a pursuit enables the commander to complete his destruction of the enemy.

Chapter 7

Pursuit

In pursuit you must always stretch possibilities to the limit. Troops having beaten the enemy will want to rest. They must be given as objectives, not those that you think they will reach, but the farthest they could possibly reach.

Field Marshal Viscount Allenby of Meggido, Order to XXI Corps, 1917

A *pursuit* is an offensive operation designed to catch or cut off a hostile force attempting to escape, with the aim of destroying it (JP 1-02). Pursuit operations begin when an enemy force attempts to conduct retrograde operations. At that point, it becomes most vulnerable to the loss of internal cohesion and complete destruction. A pursuit aggressively executed leaves the enemy trapped, unprepared, and unable to defend, faced with the options of surrendering or complete destruction. The rapid shifting of units, continuous day and night movements, hasty attacks, containment of bypassed enemy forces, large numbers of prisoners, and a willingness to forego some synchronization to maintain contact with and pressure on a fleeing enemy characterize this type of offensive operation. Pursuit requires swift maneuver and attacks by forces to strike the enemy's most vulnerable areas. A successful pursuit requires flexible forces, initiative by commanders at all levels, and the maintenance of a high operational tempo during execution.

7-1. The enemy may conduct a retrograde when successful friendly offensive operations have shattered his defense. In addition, the enemy may deliberately conduct a retrograde when—

- He is reacting to a threat of envelopment.
- He is adjusting his battlefield dispositions to meet changing situations.
- He is attempting to draw the friendly force into fire sacks, kill zones, or engagement areas.
- He is planning to employ weapons of mass destruction.

CONTENTS

Organization of Forces	7-2
Frontal	7-3
Combination.....	7-4
Control Measures	7-5
Planning a Pursuit.....	7-7
Executing a Pursuit.....	7-8
Gain and Maintain Enemy Contact	7-9
Disrupt the Enemy	7-10
Fix the Enemy	7-10
Maneuver.....	7-10
Follow Through	7-11

Therefore, the friendly force must always consider the enemy's actions whenever it sees an opportunity to conduct a pursuit.

7-2. Division is the lowest echelon equipped with the intelligence assets to determine if the enemy is conducting a retrograde under Army of Excellence tables of organization and equipment. When faced with enemy attempts to break contact, lower echelons act to maintain contact until a division or corps commander directs them to initiate a pursuit operation.

7-3. Unlike an exploitation, which may focus on seizing key or decisive terrain instead of the enemy force, the pursuit always focuses on destroying the fleeing enemy force. This is seldom accomplished by directly pushing back the hostile forces on their lines of communication (LOCs). The commander in a pursuit tries to combine direct pressure against the retreating forces with an enveloping or encircling maneuver to place friendly troops across the enemy's lines of retreat. This fixes the enemy in positions where he can be defeated in detail. If it becomes apparent that enemy resistance has broken down entirely and the enemy is fleeing the battlefield, any type of offensive operation can transition to a pursuit.

7-4. Conducting a pursuit is a calculated risk. Once the pursuit begins, the commander maintains contact with the enemy and pursues retreating enemy forces without further orders. The commander maintains the pursuit as long as the enemy appears disorganized and friendly forces continue to advance. Like exploitation, pursuit tests the audacity and endurance of soldiers and leaders. In both operations, the attacker risks becoming disorganized. Extraordinary physical and mental effort is necessary to sustain the pursuit, transition to other operations, and translate tactical success into operational or strategic victory.

7-5. The commander must be aware of any approaching culmination point. The enemy is usually falling back on his supply base, and potentially on fresh units, while friendly forces become less effective as they expend resources faster than they can be replaced. Reasons to discontinue the pursuit include the presence of fresh enemy forces, greatly increased resistance, fatigue, dwindling supplies, diversion of friendly units to security missions, and the need to contain bypassed enemy units.

7-6. Those plan, prepare, and execute concepts introduced previously continue to apply during a pursuit. Assessment concepts described in FM 6-0 and FM 6-22 also apply. The commander modifies them as necessary to account for the specific existing factors of METT-TC.

ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

7-7. Normally, the commander does not organize specifically for a pursuit ahead of time, although he may plan for a pursuit as a branch or sequel to his offensive operation. Therefore, he must be flexible to react when the situation presents itself. The commander's maneuver and sustainment forces continue their ongoing activities while he readjusts their priorities to better support the pursuit. He acquires additional support from his higher headquarters in accordance with the factors of METT-TC. For most pursuits, the commander organizes his forces into security, direct-pressure, encircling, follow and

support, and reserve forces. The commander can employ available airborne and air assault units as part of his encircling force because of their ability to conduct vertical envelopments. Given sufficient resources, there can be more than one encircling force. The follow and support force polices the battlefield to prevent the dissipation of the direct-pressure force's combat power. Appendix B addresses the duties of a follow and support force. The reserve allows the commander to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities or respond to enemy counterattacks.

7-8. There are two basic organizational options in conducting a pursuit; each involves a direct-pressure force. The first is a frontal pursuit that employs only a direct-pressure force. The second is a combination that uses a direct-pressure force and an encircling force. The combination pursuit is generally more effective. Either the direct-pressure force or the encircling force can conduct the decisive operation in a combination pursuit.

FRONTAL

7-9. In a frontal pursuit, the commander employs only a direct-pressure force to conduct operations along the same retrograde routes used by the enemy. (See Figure 7-1.) The commander chooses this option in two situations. The first is when he cannot create an encircling force with enough mobility to get behind the enemy force. The second is when he cannot create an encircling force capable of sustaining itself until it links up with the direct-pressure force. Either situation can occur because of restrictive terrain or because an enemy withdraws in a disciplined, cohesive formation and still has significant available combat power.

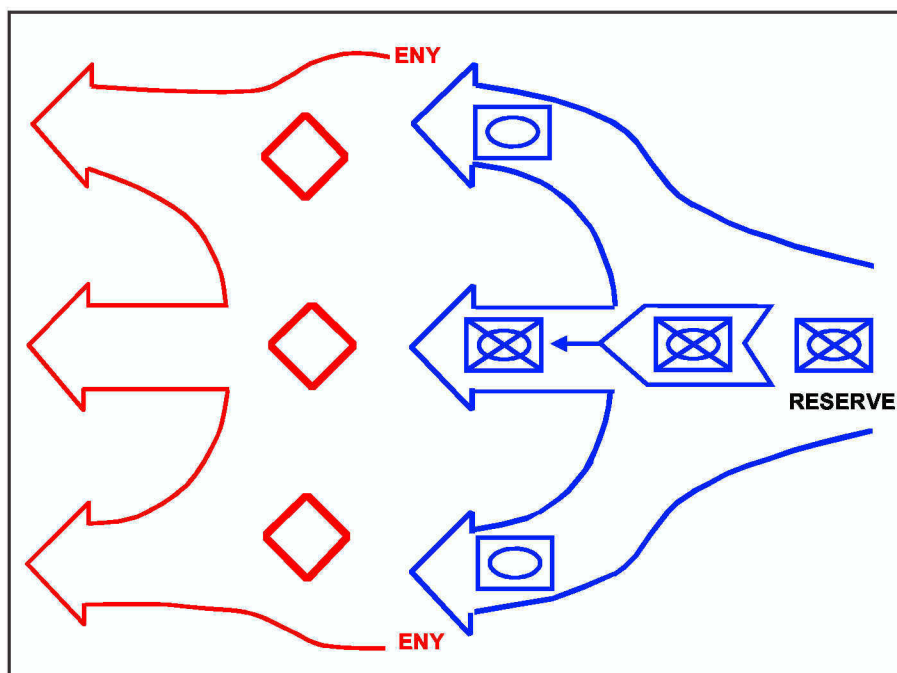


Figure 7-1. Frontal Pursuit

COMBINATION

7-10. In the pursuit, the most decisive effects result from combining the frontal pursuit with encirclement. (See Figure 7-2.) In the combination pursuit, the direct-pressure force initiates a frontal pursuit immediately on discovering the enemy's initiation of a retrograde operation. This slows the tempo of the enemy's withdrawal (or fixes him in his current position if possible), and may destroy his rear security force. The direct-pressure force's actions help to set the conditions necessary for the success of the encircling force's operation by maintaining constant pressure. The encircling force conducts an envelopment or a turning movement to position itself where it can block the enemy's escape and trap him between the two forces, which leads to complete annihilation.

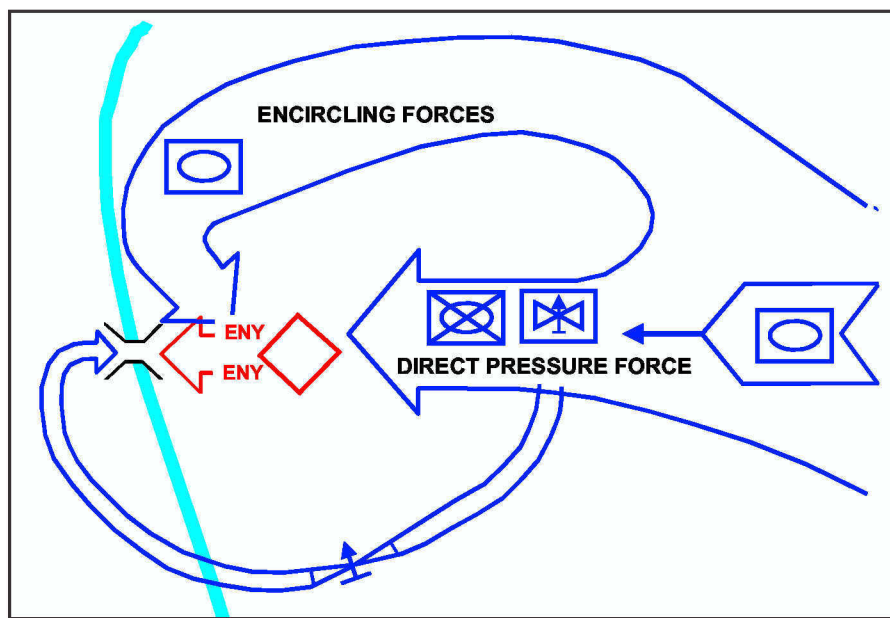


Figure 7-2. Combination Pursuit

7-11. The direct-pressure force conducts hasty attacks to maintain contact and apply unrelenting pressure until it destroys the enemy force. The direct-pressure force prevents enemy disengagement and subsequent reconstitution of the defense and inflicts maximum casualties. It forces the enemy to deploy frequently to delay the direct-pressure force and restricts his ability to disengage and rapidly move away. The direct-pressure force must be at least as mobile as the enemy. Heavy forces are ideally suited to this role, but the commander can employ light forces if the enemy is also foot-mobile. The direct-pressure force organizes to conduct a movement to contact and must be able to conduct a series of hasty attacks. It must be powerful enough to defeat enemy rear guard actions and maintain pressure on the enemy's main body.

7-12. The mobility of the encircling force must be equal—preferably superior—to the withdrawing enemy. If there is no inherent mobility differential, the commander must create one. This differential can also result from the direct-pressure force forcing the enemy to deploy. The commander can

enhance, and sometimes create, this mobility advantage by conducting countermobility operations against the enemy, specifically targeting locations such as choke points or bridges that will hinder the fleeing enemy's withdrawal. Heavy, air assault, and airborne forces are well suited for this mission. Attack helicopters are also effective when used as part of the encircling force. The encircling force must be strong enough to protect itself from the enemy's main body and slow or stop it until the friendly direct-pressure force can combine with the encircling force to destroy the enemy. It must be capable of mounting a hasty defense without placing itself at risk of annihilation. The encircling force must be self-contained since it normally operates out of supporting range of friendly indirect-fire systems. Therefore, it frequently has its supporting artillery attached. The primary mission of the encircling force is to prevent the enemy's escape by trapping him between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force. The commander can assign other missions to the encircling force, such as—

- Destroying the enemy's weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means.
- Linking up with airborne or air assault forces in their airheads.
- Reporting terrain conditions and other combat information beyond that normally addressed in the unit standing operating procedures.

The commander can assign the encirclement mission, wholly or in part, to available airborne or air assault units because their vertical envelopment capabilities allow friendly forces to be inserted deeper into enemy-controlled territory than would be possible with ground operations. The time required to plan airborne operations and stage airlift platforms impacts on the utility of airborne forces in small-scale pursuit operations.

7-13. The direct-pressure and encircling forces require engineer support to create lanes through obstacles, which enables them to move rapidly and continuously. The commander should place his engineers well forward in his movement formations to quickly breach any obstacles that cannot be bypassed. Engineers accompanying the encircling force must also be prepared to conduct countermobility and survivability tasks.

CONTROL MEASURES

7-14. The commander uses control measures to retain his tactical options to converge on the most important axis or to redirect his pursuit effort on a new axis. These control measures should be flexible and capable of rapid adjustments to reflect changing conditions. This flexibility is also necessary when engaging advancing enemy reserves or counterattack forces.

7-15. Centralized planning and decentralized execution characterize the pursuit. The commander balances the need to prevent fratricide with the need to allow subordinates to take advantage of fleeting opportunities in a pursuit with rapidly moving forces and a rapidly changing situation. The commander designates an area of operations (AO) for each maneuver unit involved in the pursuit. He establishes few control measures for the direct-pressure force other than phase lines and checkpoints because of the pursuit's nature. He uses these phase lines to designate a forward and rearward boundary for the direct-pressure force. The forward boundary relieves the direct-pressure force

of any responsibility beyond the forward boundary. It also gives the higher headquarters flexibility to deal with the encircling force and enemy elements located beyond that forward boundary. The rear boundary becomes the boundary between the direct-pressure force and the follow and support force.

7-16. If the encircling force is a ground element, the control measures are almost identical to those of an envelopment. The commander must designate a route, an axis of advance, or an AO adjacent to that of the direct-pressure force to allow the encircling force to move parallel to and eventually get ahead of the fleeing enemy force. He designates a terrain objective as a guide for the encircling force. (See Objective HAWKE in Figure 7-3.) However, he may change this objective rapidly and frequently, based on the progress of the encircling force and the enemy. The objective should be a piece of ground that provides the encircling force good, defensible terrain that the enemy cannot easily bypass. The commander often selects choke points, such as defiles and bridges, as objectives for his encircling force.

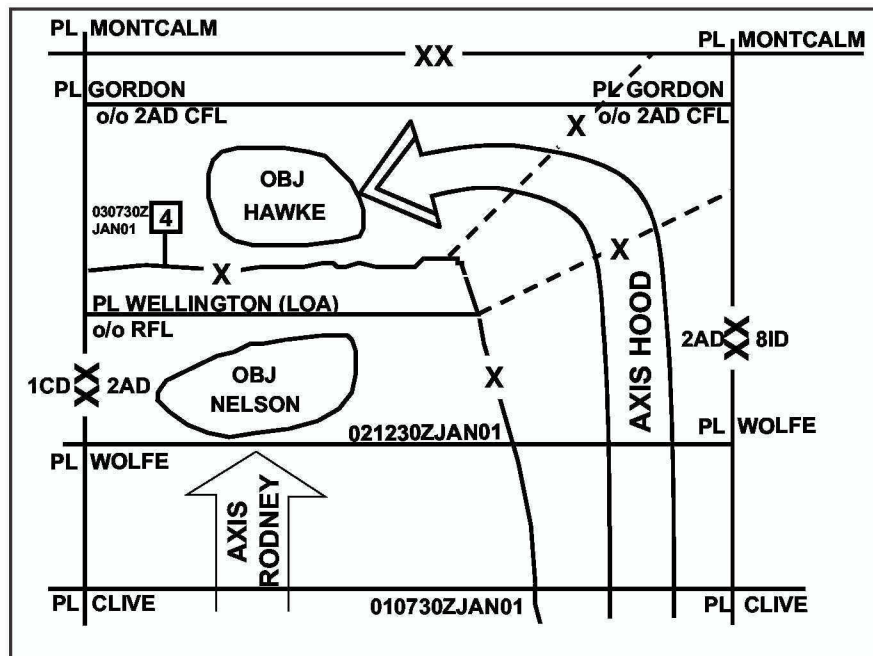


Figure 7-3. Pursuit Control Measures

7-17. The commander establishes a boundary or a restricted fire line between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force before the encircling force reaches its objective. He establishes other fire support coordinating measures (FSCM) around the area currently occupied by the encircling force to relieve it of unnecessary fire support coordination responsibilities. He directs security operations beyond the encircling force, allowing it to engage the withdrawing enemy without devoting resources to flank and rear security. The commander establishes additional control measures to control the convergence of both elements of the friendly force, such as phase lines and contact points.

PLANNING A PURSUIT

7-18. The commander anticipates an enemy retrograde operation as either a branch or a sequel to the plan. The plan should identify possible direct-pressure, encircling, follow and support, and reserve forces and issue on-order or be-prepared missions to these forces. The commander should employ the maximum number of available combat troops in the pursuit. He bases the details of his plan on the enemy's anticipated actions, the combat formation of the attacking troops, and the amount of planning time available. The commander also considers—

- Possible routes the enemy might use to conduct his retrograde operations.
- Availability of his intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to detect enemy forces and acquire targets in depth.
- Scheme of maneuver.
- Availability and condition of pursuit routes.
- Availability of forces to keep the pressure on the enemy until his destruction is complete.
- Critical terrain features.
- Use of reconnaissance and security forces.
- Allocation of precision-guided munitions and aviation support.
- Availability of CS and CSS resources.

Pursuit planning must address the possibility of defending temporarily during operational pauses while making preparations to continue the pursuit or to consolidate gains. However, the use of an operational pause generally results in the abandonment of the pursuit because the enemy is able to use that time to organize a coherent defense.

7-19. The commander must specifically address how to detect the enemy retrograde operations; otherwise, the enemy may succeed in breaking contact. The commander relies on active reconnaissance, an understanding of enemy tactics, and knowledge of the current tactical situation. He must watch for signs that indicate the enemy is preparing to conduct a retrograde, such as when the enemy—

- Lacks the capability to maintain his position or cohesion.
- Conducts limited local counterattacks.
- Intensifies his reconnaissance and intelligence efforts.
- Increases the amount of rearward movements and changes the type of elements conducting them, especially by fire support and reserves.
- Prepares his facilities, installations, equipment, and supply stock-piles for demolition and destruction.
- Decreases fire in intensity and effectiveness through the AO.
- Increases his fires in one or more individual sectors of the front, which does not appear to be in accordance with the developing situation, and at a time when the amount of defensive fires seems to be decreasing.

The presence or absence of any of the above signs may not necessarily indicate the start of a retrograde operation. The enemy could be attempting to draw friendly forces into an ambush or setting up a counterattack as part of his defense. The decision of when to start a pursuit is part of the art of tactics.

7-20. When the commander initiates a pursuit, he often creates the encircling force from uncommitted or reserve elements. Normally, these forces do not have fire support assets allocated to them. The commander must plan how to redistribute his fire support assets to properly support the encircling force. Attack helicopters and close air support are well suited to support the encircling force.

7-21. Engineer mobility and countermobility assets are instrumental in sustaining the rate of advance and hindering the enemy's withdrawal. Engineers prepare the route of advance and support the lateral dispersion of units transitioning to the pursuit and the movement of the reserve. During the pursuit, the commander must plan for his engineers to provide assault bridging and emergency road repairs to sustain the tempo of the pursuit. The commander also plans to use his engineer assets to block any bypassed enemy's withdrawal routes by using antitank and command-operated mines, demolitions, and obstacles.

7-22. Logistics units should plan for increases in the demand for fuel and maintenance as the tempo of operations increases. In the pursuit, priority of logistics normally goes to units having the greatest success. Logistics planners need to anticipate success since the depth of the pursuit depends on the capability of logistics assets to support the operation. The logistics elements supporting the pursuing force should be as mobile as possible. Logistics planners are particularly concerned with supporting the encircling force, such as casualty evacuation over possibly unsecured LOCs. The commander may need aerial resupply or heavily guarded convoys to support this force. Security for logistics convoys and LOCs are major planning considerations.

7-23. The commander uses all available logistics assets to provide essential support to the force pursuing the enemy. His pursuit plan must result in a force prepared to conduct wide-ranging operations using all available maneuver assets throughout his AO to complete the destruction and morale collapse of the enemy force.

EXECUTING A PURSUIT

7-24. The decisive operation in a pursuit destroys the withdrawing enemy. This generally occurs as a result of encircling the enemy between the direct-pressure and the encircling forces or a major geographic barrier—such as an unfordable river—and his defeat in detail. The timely and correct decision to initiate a pursuit is critical to its success. If the enemy begins a retrograde undetected, he avoids the constant pressure that results in disrupting that operation. The commander expects the enemy forces to conduct retrograde operations at times advantageous to them—usually at night or during bad weather.

7-25. A pursuit is often conducted as a series of encirclements in which successive portions of the fleeing enemy are intercepted, cut off from outside support, and captured or destroyed. ([Appendix D](#) discusses encirclement operations.) The direct-pressure force conducts a series of hasty attacks to destroy the enemy's rear security force, maintain constant pressure on the enemy's main body, and slow the enemy's withdrawal. At every opportunity, the direct-pressure force fixes, slows down, and destroys enemy elements,

provided such actions do not interfere with its primary mission of maintaining constant pressure on the enemy's main body. The direct-pressure force can bypass large enemy forces if it can hand them off to follow and support units, or if they do not pose a risk to the direct-pressure force.

7-26. As soon as the commander designates a unit as the encircling force and directs its actions, the force moves as swiftly as possible by the most advantageous routes to cut off the enemy's retreat. If the encircling force cannot move farther and faster than the enemy, it attacks the enemy's main body from the flank. When this occurs, the commander should constitute and dispatch a new encircling force.

GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

7-27. At the first indication of an enemy retrograde, the brigade or lower-echelon commander who discovers the enemy's rearward movement acts to maintain contact with the enemy across a wide area without waiting for orders from higher headquarters. This ensures that the enemy does not break contact and conduct an orderly retirement. These forces in contact constitute the nucleus of the direct-pressure force. As the situation permits, they reform into a movement column with reconnaissance and security elements in the lead and, if necessary, to the flank.

7-28. During a pursuit, the reconnaissance effort is intensive. Reconnaissance elements concentrate on all routes the enemy could use when conducting a retrograde operation. These elements provide information on the disposition of retreating enemy formations and on the forward movement of his reserves as the pursuit develops. The tactical situation during a pursuit may become obscure because of its potential depth. Much of the combat information needed during a pursuit is located behind the fleeing enemy force. Therefore, air reconnaissance, backed by technical intelligence systems, is vital to the overall reconnaissance effort. It can determine—

- The beginning of the rearward movement of enemy sustainment forces.
- The composition of retrograding forces and their direction of movement.
- The composition and direction of enemy reserve forces moving forward.
- The nature of obstacles and intermediate defensive positions.

Information about fresh enemy reserves and prepared positions is vital at the stage when a pursuit force may be approaching a culminating point; it may be the basis for terminating the pursuit.

7-29. The primary mission of the encircling force's reconnaissance assets is to find routes for the encircling force to allow it to move behind withdrawing enemy units and establish blocking positions. This mission may force these reconnaissance assets to operate outside the supporting range of the main body as they try to maneuver behind the retrograding enemy force. The encircling force avoids combat when possible until it reaches its assigned objective area. However, en route to its objective, it overruns any small enemy positions while bypassing larger enemy units. Forward security elements of the encircling force conduct activities to prevent the enemy from interfering with the forward movement of the encircling force's main body. These security elements move rapidly along all available roads or routes and overrun or bypass

small enemy pockets of resistance. If they encounter strongly held enemy positions, they attempt to find routes around or through these positions. The encircling force can then avoid these enemy positions and occupy blocking positions before withdrawing enemy forces can reach them. If necessary, the encircling force organizes a hasty defense behind the enemy to block his retreat.

DISRUPT THE ENEMY

7-30. Keeping the enemy from reconstituting an effective defense is critical to success. Constant pressure by direct-pressure forces and echelon fire support systems disrupts and weakens the enemy. The commander uses lethal and nonlethal direct and indirect fires to keep pressure on the enemy. The enemy commander must not be allowed to freely adjust his dispositions to counter the actions of the friendly force. Artillery fire and air strikes harass and disrupt the enemy's attempts to move engaged forces to the rear or bring previously uncommitted forces into action. In a pursuit, decisive operations may include the ground maneuver of the direct-pressure or the encircling force. Fire support targets in a pursuit include fires on enemy columns and troop or vehicle concentrations at road junctions, defiles, bridges, and river crossings. They also include the repulsion of enemy counterattacks, destruction or delay of enemy reserves, and destruction of the enemy's fire support means. The commander conducts offensive information operations against the enemy's command and control (C2) system as an integral part of this disruption process, with emphasis on destroying or degrading the enemy's capability to reconstitute and synchronize an effective defense.

FIX THE ENEMY

7-31. Using movement and fire effects or fire potential, the commander fixes a withdrawing enemy. If the direct-pressure force disrupts the enemy's C2 system, his ability to counter friendly efforts is significantly degraded, and the goal of fixing the enemy is much easier to accomplish.

7-32. The enemy attempts to use his reserves to restore the integrity of his defenses or prevent his withdrawing force from being overrun. Fixing enemy reserves is essential to the pursuit's success and is normally the focus of echelon shaping operations. The direct-pressure force fixes enemy reserves in place or slows them down so that they remain outside supporting distance until the withdrawing enemy force is completely annihilated.

MANEUVER

7-33. To execute the pursuit, the commander normally combines a frontal pursuit with an encirclement. The direct-pressure force conducting the frontal pursuit advances in a column formation as quickly as possible. After a penetration, existing gaps between the different units of the direct-pressure force are likely to increase in size. Aware of the vulnerability of his open flanks in this situation, the commander must deploy his reserves where they can respond to dangers on his flanks. He does not expect a uniform rate of advance on all axes. Some columns may move rapidly while others are still engaged in penetrating the enemy's rear guard defensive positions or meeting enemy counterattacks.

7-34. The actions of the direct-pressure force should facilitate the commitment of an encircling force that moves parallel to the rearward-moving enemy. The depth of the pursuit depends on the size of the forces involved. It takes a division-level or higher commander to make the decision to initiate a pursuit because of the resources necessary to conduct a pursuit. The commander directing the initiation of a pursuit informs his higher commander of his intentions. This allows even greater resources to be devoted to the pursuit and avoids desynchronizing the higher headquarters' major operation or campaign.

7-35. The direct-pressure force normally employs an advance guard to prevent the enemy from ambushing the main body of the direct-pressure force and to overrun or bypass small enemy forces. The security element moves on multiple avenues of advance. If it encounters enemy units beyond its capacity to defeat, it conducts actions on contact to develop the situation. The commander uses combat information provided by these actions on contact to guide the main body of the direct-pressure force to destroy withdrawing enemy forces. These actions of the direct-pressure force may or may not be in conjunction with the actions of any encircling force.

7-36. The commander does everything possible to place his encircling force behind the withdrawing enemy and trap the bulk of that enemy force between the encircling force and the direct-pressure force. The direct-pressure force maintains enough pressure on the withdrawing enemy force so the encircling force can envelop it. To perform this task, the direct-pressure force must be strong enough to overcome any enemy rear guard before the enemy's main body can make a successful withdrawal. Once in position, the encircling force defends or attacks as necessary, responding to the enemy's actions and those of the direct-pressure force to complete the enemy's encirclement.

7-37. The pursuing force must not give the enemy time to reorganize for an all-around defense after it is encircled. If the enemy forms a perimeter, the pursuing commander must repeatedly split it into smaller elements until he destroys the encircled enemy force. If time is not critical, the commander can keep the encirclement closed, defeat enemy breakout attempts, and weaken the enemy by fires alone. He can greatly accelerate the collapse of a large, encircled enemy force by using psychological operations, precision-guided weapons, and improved conventional munitions in mass. ([Appendix D](#) addresses the reduction of an encircled enemy force.) If the resulting encirclement does not destroy the withdrawing enemy force, the commander conducts additional pursuit operations until the enemy is destroyed.

FOLLOW THROUGH

7-38. Once the commander initiates a pursuit, he continues pursuing the enemy until a higher commander terminates the pursuit. Conditions under which a higher commander may terminate a pursuit include the following—

- The pursuing force annihilates or captures the enemy and resistance ceases.
- The pursuing force fixes the enemy for follow-on forces.
- The high commander makes an assessment that the pursuing force is about to reach a culminating point.

7-39. A pursuit often transitions into other types of offensive and defensive operations. If the enemy attempts to reorganize, forces conducting a pursuit execute hasty attacks. They conduct an exploitation to capitalize on the success of these attacks and then move back into pursuit. Forces conducting a pursuit may also transition into a defensive operation if the pursuing force reaches a culminating point. This usually occurs when the enemy introduces strong reinforcements to prepare for a counteroffensive.