

Chapter 8

Defensive Operations

Little minds try to defend everything at once, but sensible people look at the main point only; they parry the worst blows and stand a little hurt if thereby they avoid a greater one. If you try to hold everything, you hold nothing.

Frederick the Great

8-1. Army forces defend until they gain sufficient strength to attack. Defensive operations defeat an enemy attack, buy time, economize forces, or develop conditions favorable for offensive operations. Alone, defensive operations normally cannot achieve a decision. Their purpose is to create conditions for a counter-offensive that allows Army forces to regain the initiative. Although offensive operations are usually required to achieve decisive results, it is often necessary, even advisable at times, to defend. Commanders defend to buy time, hold terrain, facilitate other operations, preoccupy the enemy, or erode enemy resources.

CONTENTS

Purposes of Defensive Operations	8-1
Characteristics of Defensive Operations....	8-2
Preparation	8-2
Security	8-2
Disruption	8-3
Massing Effects.....	8-3
Flexibility.....	8-3
Types of Defensive Operations	8-3
Mobile Defense.....	8-4
Area Defense	8-5
Retrograde.....	8-5
Defensive Operations Within the	
Operational Framework.....	8-8
Decisive Operations in the Defense	8-9
Shaping Operations in the Defense	8-11
Sustaining Operations in the	
Defense	8-12
Considerations for Nonlinear	
Defensive Operations.....	8-12
Conducting Defensive Operations	8-12
Planning for Defensive	
Operations	8-13
Preparing for Defensive Operations	8-15
Executing Defensive Operations.....	8-16
The Impact of Technology	8-18

PURPOSES OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

8-2. The purpose of defensive operations is to defeat enemy attacks. Defending forces await the attacker's blow and defeat the attack by successfully deflecting it. Waiting for the attack is not a passive activity. Army commanders seek out enemy forces to strike and weaken them before close combat begins.

8-3. Operationally, defensive operations buy time, economize forces, and develop conditions favorable for resuming offensive operations. Therefore, major operations and campaigns combine defensive operations with offensive

