

## 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.

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