

PART THREE

Defensive Operations

Chapter 8

Basics of Defensive Operations

So the defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows.

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

Defensive operations defeat an enemy attack, buy time, economize forces, or develop conditions favorable for offensive operations. Defensive operations alone normally cannot achieve a decision. Their purpose is to create conditions for a counteroffensive that allows Army forces to regain the initiative (FM 3-0). Other reasons for conducting defensive operations include—

- Retaining decisive terrain or denying a vital area to the enemy.
- Attritting or fixing the enemy as a prelude to offensive operations.

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