

Chapter 9

The Area Defense

Regardless of the considerations which dictated the adoption of a defensive attitude, the tactics of defensive combat are essentially to develop the maximum firepower against an advancing enemy, to reduce our own losses by a better knowledge and utilization of the terrain, and thereby to stop the enemy's advance or throw him back by counter-attack.

FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations*, May 1941, Para 652

The *area defense* is a type of defensive operation that concentrates on denying enemy forces access to designated terrain for a specific time rather than destroying the enemy outright (FM 3-0). An area defense capitalizes on the strength inherent in closely integrated defensive organization on the ground. The commander may assign corps, divisions, and separate brigades the task of conducting an area defense as part of their mission. Subordinate echelons defend within their assigned areas of operations (AOs) as part of the larger-echelon's operation.

9-1. A commander should conduct an area defense when the following conditions occur:

- When directed to defend or retain specified terrain.
- When he cannot resource a striking force.
- The forces available have less mobility than the enemy.
- The terrain affords natural lines of resistance and limits the enemy to a few well-defined avenues of approach, thereby restricting the enemy's maneuver.
- There is enough time to organize the position.
- Terrain constraints and lack of friendly air superiority limit the striking force's options in a mobile defense to a few probable employment options.

CONTENTS

Organization of Forces	9-2	Positioning the Reserve	9-10
Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Operations	9-2	Spoiling Attacks and Counterattacks	9-12
Security Operations	9-2	Preparing an Area Defense	9-13
Main Battle Area Operations	9-3	Executing an Area Defense	9-16
Reserve Operations	9-3	Gain and Maintain Enemy Contact	9-17
Control Measures	9-5	Disrupt the Enemy	9-19
Planning an Area Defense	9-6	Fix the Enemy	9-20
Position Selection	9-8	Maneuver	9-20
		Follow Through	9-23

