

Chapter 11

The Retrograde

The withdrawal should be thought of as an offensive instrument, and exercises framed to teach how the enemy can be lured into a trap, closed by a counter-stroke or a devastating circle of fire.

B.H. Liddell Hart, 1944

The *retrograde* is a type of defensive operation that involves organized movement away from the enemy (FM 3-0). The enemy may force these operations or a commander may execute them voluntarily. In either case, the higher commander of the force executing the operation must approve the retrograde. Retrograde operations are transitional operations; they are not considered in isolation.

- 11-1. The commander executes retrogrades to—
- Disengage from operations.
 - Gain time without fighting a decisive engagement.
 - Resist, exhaust, and damage an enemy in situations that do not favor a defense.
 - Draw the enemy into an unfavorable situation or extend his lines of communication (LOCs).
 - Preserve the force or avoid combat under undesirable conditions, such as continuing an operation that no longer promises success.
 - Reposition forces to more favorable locations or conform to movements of other friendly troops.
 - Position the force for use elsewhere in other missions.
 - Simplify the logistic sustainment of the force by shortening LOCs.
 - Position the force where it can safely conduct reconstitution.
 - Adjust the defensive scheme, such as secure more favorable terrain.

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