

## Chapter 16

# Passage of Lines

*The principal task involved in a passage of lines is the preparation for continuing the attack.*

FM 1005, *Field Service Regulations: Operations*, 22 May 1941

**Passage of lines** is a tactical enabling operation in which one unit moves through another unit's positions with the intent of moving into or out of enemy contact. A commander conducts a passage of lines to continue an attack or conduct a counterattack, retrograde security or main battle forces, and anytime one unit cannot bypass another unit's position. The conduct of a passage of lines potentially involves close combat. It involves transferring the responsibility for an area of operations (AO) between two commanders. That transfer of responsibility usually occurs when roughly two-thirds of the passing force has moved through the passage point. If not directed by higher authority, the unit commanders determine—by mutual agreement—the time to pass command. They disseminate this information to the lowest levels of both organizations.

- 16-1. The commander's reasons for conducting a passage of lines are to—
- Sustain the tempo of an offensive operation.
  - Maintain the viability of the defense by transferring responsibility from one unit to another.
  - Transition from a delay or security operation by one force to a defense.
  - Free a unit for another mission or task.

The headquarters directing the passage of lines is responsible for determining when the passage starts and finishes.

16-2. A passage of lines occurs under two basic conditions. A **forward passage of lines** occurs when a unit passes through another unit's positions while moving toward the enemy. A **rearward passage of lines** occurs when a unit passes through another unit's positions while

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