

Section III. Delay Against Mechanized Forces

A delaying operation is an operation in which a force under pressure trades space for time by slowing down the enemy's momentum and inflicting maximum damage on the enemy without, in principle, becoming decisively engaged. (Joint Pub 1-02). The delaying force must have mobility roughly equal to the enemy force.

Delaying operations are conducted:

- When a force's strength is insufficient to defend or attack.
- To attrit the enemy.
- To draw the enemy into an unfavorable situation like a mobile defense.
- When the enemy intent is not clear and the commander desires time and intelligence.
- By the security element to protect and to provide early warning for the main force.
- By the security force to deceive the enemy as to the location of the MBA.
- To allow time to reestablish the defense or to prepare for offensive action.

4301. Fundamentals of the Delay

The fundamentals of the delay are essentially the same as those for the defense. A delay differs in that decisive engagement is avoided if at all possible. Special consideration is given to the following fundamentals:

- a. Centralized Control and Decentralized Execution.** Each commander must have freedom of maneuver against the enemy while the rearward movement of units must be coordinated by a higher headquarters to prevent gaps through which the enemy can bypass or envelope friendly units.
- b. Maximum Use of Terrain and Obstacles.** Terrain that provides long-range fires and covered withdrawal routes are utilized for delay positions. Engagement areas are selected that make maximum use of natural obstacles. Other obstacles are emplaced to canalize and delay the enemy and positioned to support the disengagement.
- c. Maximum use of fires.** Long range fires, to include offensive air support, are brought to bear against the enemy to destroy high payoff targets and to force the enemy to deploy.
- d. Force the Enemy to Deploy and Maneuver.** Repeatedly forcing the enemy to deploy into assault formations and to maneuver will delay his advance.
- e. Maintain Contact With the Enemy.** This prevents the enemy from advancing unimpeded and keeps the friendly unit commander aware of their location.
- f. Avoid Decisive Engagement.** Units decisively engaged lose their freedom of maneuver and cannot continue to delay.

4302. Techniques for Delaying

A delaying force will normally be assigned sectors in which to delay and the initial delay positions. Additionally, phase lines may be imposed by the higher headquarters to control the timing of the delay. This process could begin at MEF or division level and be repeated at the regimental and battalion levels.

a. Delay Missions. There are two basic types of delay missions that may be assigned to a regiment or battalion.

(1) Delay in Sector. This is the least restrictive mission. There is usually no requirement to hold key or decisive terrain.

(2) Delay in Sector (Forward of a Specified Line for a Specified Time). This is a high-risk mission that requires preventing enemy forces from reaching a specified area earlier than the specified time or event, regardless of the cost. The task force commander normally limits the maneuver from delay position to delay position, or restricts crossing a particular phase line based on a specific time or event.

b. Methods of Delay. Units conducting a delaying operation can delay from successive positions or from alternate positions or a combination of both. The technique selected will be dependent on the width of the assigned sector, the nature of the terrain, and the forces available.

(1) Delay From Successive Positions. This is a technique for delaying in which all the delaying unit's main battle forces are positioned forward in a single echelon. (See fig. 4-25.) Units delay continuously on and between battle positions throughout their sectors, fighting rearward from one position to the next, holding each as long as possible or for a specified time. The force may retain a small reserve.

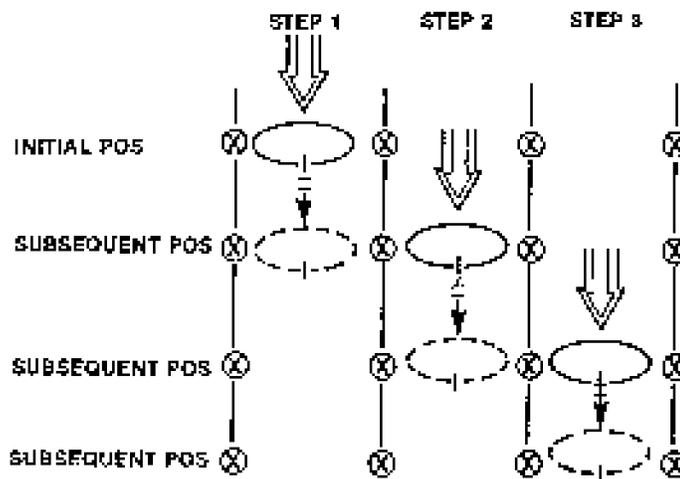


Figure 4-25. Delay From Successive Positions.

(2) Delay From Alternate Positions. This is a technique in which a unit delays in sector with two subunits deployed in depth. (See fig. 4-26.) While the first subunit is fighting, the second occupies the next succeeding position to the rear and prepares to assume the fight.

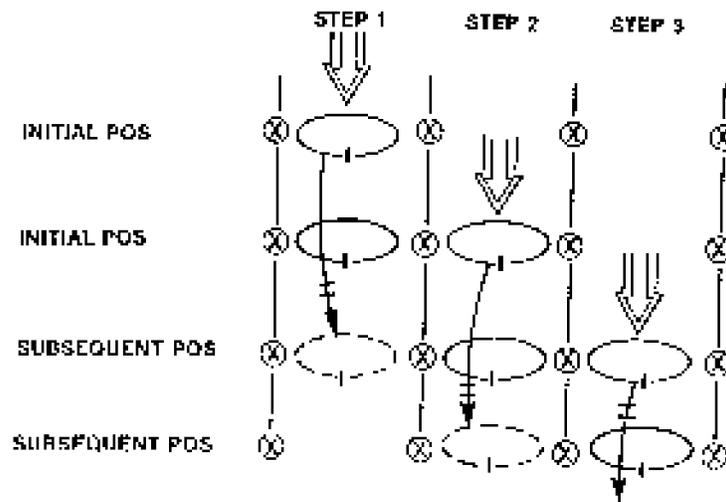


Figure 4-26. Delay From Alternate Position.

The first subunit delays back to the second position, disengages and passes through or around the second subunit. It then prepares to resume the action from a third position further to the rear, while the second subunit takes up the fight.

4303. Employment of Delaying Forces

LAR and mechanized forces are ideally suited for delay operations because of their long-range weapons and mobility. Helicopterborne and truck mounted forces may conduct a delay in restrictive terrain that prohibits the enemy force from enveloping the delaying force. For example, mountainous terrain with restricted avenues of approach.

Most operations within the security area involve those principles normally associated with the delay. Indeed, the actions of companies and platoons moving within the MBA to other battle positions are often indistinguishable from classic delay maneuvers.

Chapter 2 describes enemy offensive doctrine. Following the enemy's reconnaissance, he will lead with an advance guard battalion, which is led by an advance guard consisting of a combat recon patrol and a forward security element, both organized around tank units. When these units are engaged, the main body of either the advance guard or a regiment will attempt to envelope friendly forces. If their bypass is successful, their second echelon forces will attempt to destroy the bypassed units. Conversely, the enemy could fix with his lead echelon and bypass with the second. Either way, delaying commanders at every level must optimize the capabilities of their forces to avoid decisive engagement or encirclement by the enemy.

a. Reconnaissance Units. Reconnaissance units may be employed as stay behind forces to observe the enemy and engage concentrations of enemy forces with supporting arms. When positioned along avenues of approach, consideration should be given to planning FASCAM targets which may delay second echelon enemy forces at critical times. Reconnaissance units may also be withdrawn from forward positions and placed along the flanks to provide early warning of enemy forces attempting to envelope or flank friendly delay positions. Again, reconnaissance elements can control supporting arms at critical times to disrupt the enemy.

b. LAR Units. LAR units are normally initially employed as part of the security force. Subsequently, they may be employed as stay behind forces to attack specific enemy combat support or service support units in order to disrupt his attack. LAR units may also be employed for flank security or as a reserve. LAR units also possess the speed and mobility to conduct raids deep into the enemy's rear areas.

c. Mechanized Infantry Mech-pure units normally do not engage enemy armored forces from a delay position where decisive engagement is not desired. Their primary mission at delay positions is to provide local security to the GCE antiarmor assets such as tanks and ATGMs. Retention of infantry on the position during decisive engagement begins may result in unnecessary casualties. Normally, the infantry should displace to subsequent delay positions or prepare final delay positions in the event decisive engagement is required.

d. TOWs and Javelins. TOW units may be employed in sections for mutual support with mechanized infantry providing local security. In a HAW-MAW-LAW type of engagement, TOW units occupy delay positions and engage enemy at long-range (3750m). TOW units represent a highly mobile economy of force asset that may be employed anywhere from the security area to the rear area. Javelins may be employed similarly. With its 2,000m(+) range, some standoff may still be achieved. However, this distance can be quickly traversed by an enemy armored/mechanized threat unless terrain and/or obstacles favor the delaying force. Although man portable, Javelins should be provided with some type of increased mobility (AAV or HMMWV) if employed as a mutually supporting antiarmor element with TOW elements. The Javelin's soft-launch and fire-and-forget capabilities enable gunners to engage and displace to a new firing position often before the firing signature or the gunner can be observed by the enemy. Employing TOWs and Javelins in a combined arms role as mutually supporting antiarmor elements allows a commander of a delaying force to exploit each systems standoff capabilities. The commander can position TOW equipped elements to engage attacking enemy forces at maximum effective range (3750m) and continue to engage them until the Javelin equipped elements accept battle handover at 2000+. Each element can potentially cover the other element's displacement to subsequent firing positions.

e. Tanks. During a delay, tanks are employed as the primary weapon to engage enemy tanks which lead the enemy advance guard and main body forces. Their high rate of fire, armor protection against enemy artillery and mobility, make tanks best suited for this mission. Tanks may also be retained in a reserve to support the disengagement of forces decisively engaged or to conduct counterattacks.

f. Engineers. Engineers are normally employed in general or direct support of the delaying force with a priority of tasks assigned. Available mechanized infantry units may be utilized to assist the engineers. There are two primary tasks which the engineers will be required to accomplish: countermobility and mobility. Both tasks may be critical in a delay operation. Obstacles are positioned to canalize the enemy into EAs and to delay the enemy during disengagement from a delay position. Equal consideration should be given to preparing or improving withdrawal routes for the delay forces.

4304. Employment of the Reserve

The establishment and employment of a reserve is highly desirable. Normally, a reserve is not maintained at the company level. The composition of reserve forces and the tasks they may be required to accomplish are shown below:

- *Contain penetrations.* Infantry units prepared to accept decisive engagement, TOW units, and tank units can accomplish this task.

- *Counterattack.* Counterattack to reduce penetrations, take advantage of an exposed enemy flank, or to extricate a decisively engaged friendly unit. Tank units are best suited for this mission.

- *Conduct a spoiling attack.* A reserve force may conduct an attack disrupting the enemy's tempo and cohesion, forcing the early deployment of following forces and supporting arms.

4305. Planning and Conducting a Delay Operation

a. Time Factors. Planning a delay operation against a mechanized force differs from other forces in that greater consideration must be given to time-distance factors and the enemy's ability to use restrictive terrain. When encountering a delay position, the enemy may attempt to fix the delaying force with his lead element and bypass or to envelop the delaying force with his second echelon utilizing wooded areas or other types of restricted terrain. The mechanized commander must anticipate this tactic and analyze the time and distance required by the enemy to execute such a plan. A similar time-distance analysis is required of the delaying force's ability to disengage and move to a new delay position. These analyses will enable the commander to hold a position as long as possible without becoming decisively engaged or cut off.

b. Disengagement. Disengagement is the act of physically breaking contact with the enemy. A unit has disengaged when the enemy can neither observe or engage the unit with direct fire. Basic considerations for disengaging are shown below:

- Battle positions should be sited to facilitate disengagement.
- Disengagement should be conducted quickly to conceal the intention from the enemy and to effect a clean break before the enemy can react.
- Disengagement is conducted before decisive engagement. Detailed study and use of terrain is required.
- The sequence subordinate units will withdraw is planned in detail.
- When possible, units disengage by echelon.
- Disengagement may include rearward passages of lines.
- Heavy volumes of direct and indirect fires are used to assist the disengagement.
- Withdrawal routes (primary and alternate) to the next position should be clearly marked and unobstructed.

Disengagement criteria may be established for units and individual type of weapons. *Disengagement break lines* are locally imposed locations forward of the battle position that key a unit or a type of weapon system to move based on the presence of certain numbers or types of enemy vehicles. For example, six tanks reaching a certain distance from a battle position may signal a TOW section to disengage and displace to a new firing position.

Normally, the order of weapon system disengagement will be defined in the company commander's operations order. TOWs and Javelins normally initiate the engagement and leave first due to their vulnerability to indirect fire and tank

fired high explosive fragmentation rounds. Mechanized infantry is followed lastly by tanks. In periods of reduced visibility or in close terrain the enemy infantry threat may require that tanks and AAVs displace first.

Control measures used in the delay are as follows:

- Phase lines of all higher commands.
- Supplemental phase lines.
- Checkpoints.
- Delay positions (sometimes called battle positions).
- Sectors.
- EAs and TRPs.
- Contact points.
- Passage points.
- Assembly areas, MSR, and logistics release points.
- Coordinating points.
- Routes and lanes.
- Trigger points and disengagement break lines (company level).

c. Conduct. The delay is conducted as aggressively as possible by commanders at each level of command. The commander must centrally control the operation but allow decentralized execution by his subordinates. They should be allowed as much freedom of maneuver as possible. The following actions are taken to conduct a delay.

- (1) All but essential personnel and material are withdrawn early to facilitate movement during the operation.
- (2) Reconnaissance elements are forward to provide timely information on the enemy.
- (3) The initial delaying positions will normally be the only positions that can be organized, prepared, and occupied deliberately. Subsequent positions will normally be hastily prepared and occupied.
- (4) The HAW-MAW-LAW method of engagement is normally used against the approaching enemy.
- (5) Each position is defended until it is threatened with decisive engagement.
- (6) When maximum delay has been achieved, movement to the next position begins.
- (7) If decisive engagement of a unit occurs, the commander may take all of the following actions:
 - Allocate priority of all fire support to the threatened unit.
 - Direct adjacent units to engage enemy targets forward of the threatened unit.
 - Reinforce the unit.
 - Conduct a counterattack to disengage.
- (8) The reserve may be a designated unit or the least engaged unit. Reserve missions are--
 - Reinforcing.
 - Assisting in disengagement.

- Providing overwatch.
- Assuming another unit's mission.
- Counterattack.
- Blocking.
- Spoiling attack.

(9) The delay must end with a planned operation such as a defense, a withdrawal, or an attack.