Chapter 4. Air Base Ground Defense

ABGD is an ACE term, synonymous with rear area security (RAS), which defines base security operations at an airfield or FOB. ABGD encompasses the application of RAS as defined in MCWP 3-41.1, Rear Area Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-10, Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations, and JP 3-10.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (JTTP) for Base Defense. The MAGTF rear area is that area extending rearward from the rear boundary of the GCE to the MAGTF rear boundary.

A major disruption in logistic and support functions in the MAGTF’s rear areas will adversely affect combat operations. Units must defend themselves in rear areas, but if they are unable to do so, the MAGTF will move combat forces from the forward edge of battle to the rear. Moving forces to the rear will reduce the MAGTF combat strength.

Expeditionary maneuver warfare concepts such as operational maneuver from the sea, ship-to-objective maneuver, and sea-based logistics define operations that reduce the total forces ashore and require the MAGTF and its supporting agencies to operate primarily from sea-based platforms. These concepts will reduce many of the present RAS concerns; however, there will always be a requirement for RAS if substantial Marine Forces move ashore, especially if the ACE transitions from sea-based to shore-based operations.

FUNDAMENTALS

Although the MAGTF commander has overall responsibility for RAS, the first fundamental of RAS is individual responsibility. The MAGTF commander will normally divide the RAS area of responsibility into smaller areas and assign them to subordinate commanders. The ACE commander is normally assigned the responsibility of providing the security measures for the air base(s) from which the ACE is operating.
The second fundamental of RAS is unit responsibility. When executing RAS or unit defense, unit commanders can take the following active and passive measures:

Active measures—

- Training units in antiarmor and air defense.
- Organizing units for defensive operations.
- Equipping support and augment personnel with weapons and munitions.
- Conducting security patrols and using aerial reconnaissance.
- Using observation and listing posts.
- Providing traffic and access control to vulnerable facilities and activities.
- Providing security to convoys.
- Positioning LAAD units in depth within objective area.
- Integrating CAS and close fire support.
- Establishing defensive positions and obstacles.

Passive measures—

- Camouflaging, dispersing, and using natural cover.
- Establishing redundancy in critical facilities.
- Hardening installations.
n Using deception measures.

n Establishing dummy installations and positions.

The third RAS fundamental is that GCE assets should be tasked with security missions in the MAGTF rear area only in emergencies and to the minimum extent.

The fourth fundamental is that security measures are proportionate to the threat. RAS measures should be sufficient to handle the threat while diminishing the impact of support units in performing their primary missions.

THREAT

Enemy forces will attempt to disrupt rear areas to reduce CSS to the main battle. CSS facilities, air bases, lines of communications (LOC), and operations centers are considered high priority targets for the enemy in the MAGTF’s rear area. The enemy will try to—

1 Disrupt MAGTF combat operations by forcing MAGTF commanders to use combat forces to stabilize their rear area.

1 Force CSS and AGS units to maintain a high security posture thus degrading their capability to perform their primary functions.

1 Cause the MAGTF loss of equipment, mobility, and ability to resupply.

Levels

Commanders must consider the enemy force’s capabilities and potential impact on operations. During ACE operations, ABGD planners need to pay close attention to enemy threat organization, equipment, and potential damage to air bases and aviation operations. JP 3-10
divides the enemy threat into three levels, which commanders should use while planning and developing base security measures.

**Level I**
Unit, base, and base cluster self-defense measures are used to handle Level I threats. Examples of Level I threats include—

- Enemy-controlled agents.
- Enemy sympathizers.
- Terrorism.
- Demonstrations and riots.

**Level II**
These threats exceed the capabilities of local self-defense measures and require the employment of response forces. Local self-defense measures must be able to contain the threat until response forces arrive. Examples of Level II threats include—

- Small tactical units.
- Unconventional warfare forces.
- Guerrillas.

**Level III**
These threats exceed local security measures and response force’s capabilities and may require timely commitment of GCE tactical combat forces. (The ACE is incapable of handling Level III threats.) Level III threats consist of large tactical force operations (e.g., airborne, helicopterborne, amphibious, infiltration) and major air operations.
Conditions

The base commander sets the threat conditions (THREATCONs) based on the increased likelihood of attack. Refer to JP 3-10.1 and JP 3-07.2, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (JTTP) for Antiterrorism, for further information regarding THREATCON descriptions, measures, and required actions. The four THREATCONS above NORMAL are—

- ALPHA.
- BRAVO.
- CHARLIE.
- DELTA.

PLANNING

RAS planning starts at the theater CINC or joint force commander (JFC) level. The CINC or JFC assigns responsibilities for joint rear area (JRA) security to subordinate component commanders, such as the MAGTF commander. Efficient JRA security planning and execution requires effective and timely command and control. To plan and execute efficient JRA security, the MAGTF commander must—

- Ensure effective and timely command and control.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of each subordinate element within the MAGTF’s RAS plan.
- Identify the AO.
- Designate the MAGTF’s RAS coordinator (RASC).
Assign security responsibilities for—

- CSS and ACE facilities along main supply routes and LOC at remote sites located away from major CSS or ACE facilities.
- Air defense and fire support systems.
- Other specific security responsibilities.

Once the MAGTF commander has identified the ACE’s responsibilities, the ACE commander can develop the area security measures. Depending on the tactical distribution of ACE forces, the ACE commander may be responsible for several areas or bases.

The MWSS at an air base or FOB is typically assigned the mission of planning and executing security measures for that site. The MWSS should incorporate every asset at its disposal when developing the ABGD plan. These assets include the use and integration of air base tenant units, general fire support agencies, ACE air defense agencies, CAS, and available intelligence agencies within the ACE, MAGTF, and theater. The MWSS is responsible for planning, executing, and supervising ABGD operations for the ACE or air base commander, to include ensuring active and passive security measures can be implemented in a timely manner. Although the MWSS may develop the ABGD plan, the ACE commander or air base commander is the approving authority for the plan. ABGD security measures must be coordinated with the next senior JRA control agency.

ABGD planners should anticipate the likely enemy action based on current threat assessments and build their security measures appropriately. Through thorough planning, coordination, and control, ABGD planners can develop a strong rear area defensive posture that will limit the enemy’s ability to disrupt ACE and airfield operations. The ultimate goal of RAS and ABGD planning is to develop a defense architecture that will locate, fix, and destroy the enemy in rear areas before the enemy can disrupt MAGTF operations.
Refer to JP 3-10, JP 3-10.1, and MCWP 3-41.1 for further information regarding JRA security and RAS planning. Appendix C contains a checklist for RAS and ABGD planning.

**COMMAND AND CONTROL**

At the JFC level, JRA security measures are coordinated and maintained by the joint rear area coordinator through the joint rear tactical operations center (JRTOC). The JRTOC is the senior JRA command and control agency. Subordinate component commanders must coordinate their security measures with the JRTOC.

**Marine Air-Ground Task Force**

JRA security measures at the MAGTF level are coordinated and maintained by the RASC through the rear area operations center (RAOC). The RASC has RAS coordinating authority over subordinate elements of the MAGTF. The RASC will assign a tactical security officer (TSO) to supervise security operations within the RAOC. Unit commanders assigned an AO or base within the MAGTF’s AO will assign a TSO and establish a security operations centers for their respective areas. The RAOC assists the RASC in coordinating RAS operations with the other subordinate operations centers to ensure effective and timely command and control throughout the MAGTF’s rear area. In addition to organic personnel staffing, the RAOC may include a fire support coordinator, an air liaison officer, and an NBC representative.

The MAGTF commander could assign the responsibility of RASC to the CSSE commander. In this scenario, the RASC will either establish the RAOC in or adjacent to the CSSOC. The TSO and manning for the RAOC normally comes from the FSSG G-2 and G-3. The FSSG G-3 tactical readiness and training section has infantry officers within its structure ideally suited to perform these tasks. In the event that the CSSE and the ACE are collocated, the CSSE will normally serve as the RASC. The CSSE is usually best equipped and staffed to manage the RAS mission.
Aviation Combat Element

The MAGTF commander normally assigns the security responsibilities of the air bases and FOBs to the ACE commander, especially if the ACE is geographically separated from the GCE and CSSE. When two or more air bases are functioning individually, the ACE commander usually assigns MWSS commanders as the TSO for their respective air base. When two or more MWSSs are collocated at a single air base, the MWSG commander will designate one MWSS commander as the TSO while the other MWSS commander provides augmentation to support security operations. In both of these scenarios, the MWSS commander assigned as the TSO will establish a BDOC either within or adjacent to the AGSOC.

BDOC manning normally comes from the MWSS structure. The squadron gunnery sergeant, an infantry staff noncommissioned officer, should assist in managing the BDOC and ABDG operations. With an infantry background, the squadron gunnery sergeant is ideally suited to assist the TSO in planning, coordinating, and executing the ABDG plan. Refer to JP 3-10, JP 3-10.1, and MCWP 3-41.1 for additional information regarding RAS and base defense command and control.

ORGANIZATION

Organization of ABDG is situationally dependent and should incorporate the fundamentals of JRA security and MAGTF RAS. The ACE should have sufficient ground defense to provide the appropriate response to threat Levels I and II with limited reliance on GCE assistance or other outside augmentation. ACE ABDG requires GCE augmentation in Level III threat situations.

ABGD forces should include standing, mobile, and response forces to ensure round-the-clock force protection and unimpeded aviation operations. The organization of ABDG should be proportional to the threat while limiting the impact on the ACE’s ability to provide the six functions of Marine aviation to support the MAGTF. See figure 4-1.
The BDOC is the nucleus for the ACE rear area defense. The BDOC provides the management, tasking, and supervision for the ACE’s ABGD forces and operations. The ACE commander is ultimately responsible for ABGD but normally delegates that authority to the MWSS commander.

Through the squadron AGSOC, the MWSS commander controls and supervises the operation of the BDOC. Although the MWSS S-3 operations officer will supervise operations assigned to the squadron, the MWSS commander will assign another officer, normally the MP department officer in charge (OIC), to oversee ABGD operations.

The BDOC will consist of the security/ABGD OIC, the security/ABGD staff noncommissioned OIC, S-2, and the senior supervisor for each subordinate security and guard force within the organization.
The BDOC’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following functions:

1. Planning, coordinating, and controlling ABGD within the ACE’s assigned AO or base.
2. Planning and coordinating ground fire and CAS with other agencies to support ABGD.
3. Integrating ground base antiair defense (LAAD) into ABGD.
4. Coordinating and assigning ABGD responsibilities with other air base tenant units.
5. Coordinating and supervising the activities of ABGD agencies.
6. Coordinating ABGD operations with higher agencies (e.g., air base commander, RASC, senior RAOC).
7. Monitoring unit movement and facility positions within the ACE AO.
8. Monitoring current threat assessment within the ACE AO.
9. Identifying security augmentation requirements beyond ACE capability to the RASC.
10. Organizing and training organic and augment personnel to perform ABGD.
11. Establishing and maintaining communications with ABGD organizations.
12. Providing sufficient forces to meet the three levels of RAS threat response.
Military Police Department

During combat operations, the MP department maintains its T/O structure and usually forms the nucleus for ABGD and security operations. The MP department is typically responsible for providing—

- Flight line security.
- Traffic control.
- Law enforcement.
- Mobile security patrols.
- Response forces as required during ABGD.
- Training other security forces in—
  - Weapons.
  - Procedures.
  - Organization.
  - Communications.
  - Rules of engagement.
  - Use of deadly force.

The MWSS MP department will coordinate its operations with other MAGTF MP forces to ensure proper integration. The MWSS MP department provides the air base with a standing force to defend against the enemy until response forces arrive to handle Level II threats. The BDOC can employ the MP department in some capacity to react to the three levels of threat.
Guard Forces
Interior guard forces, also known as camp guard, are formed from an augment pool of personnel from the air base’s tenant units. The size of this force is situationally dependent on security requirements and the watch schedule required.

The guard force provides standing security for critical ACE facilities and areas. The force’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to—

- Providing security to the—
  - ACE TACC.
  - Other critical command posts.
  - ACE armory compound.
  - Air base roving patrols.
  - ASP.

- Manning sentinel posts around the air base.

- Providing personnel to respond as required to meet the threat.

Guard forces usually fall under the control of the guard chief, who is the senior staff noncommissioned officer from the guard force pool. The guard chief supervises the execution, training, and schedule for the guard force. Located within BDOC, the guard chief is subordinate to the security/ABGD OIC. The guard force must rely on assistance from response forces to handle Level II threats. The BDOC can employ the guard force to respond to the three levels of threat.

Tenant Unit Forces
As the level of enemy threat increases, the ACE commander may require all or parts of each tenant organization to support ABGD. During Level III threats, tenant units will secure and defend a previously
identified sector within the ABGD until GCE forces arrive. Tenant units will fall under the control of the TSO and BDOC. These units’ specific organization, responsibilities, and level of response are assigned in the ABGD plan.

**Response Forces**
Response forces are those forces purposely standing by to quickly respond to emergencies and increased threat posture beyond the capabilities of the dedicated security forces. The response force is the principal force the BDOC will use to respond to a Level II threat, but the BDOC may employ it to respond to a Level III threat until other forces arrive. Normally, MP and guard force shifts in the rest phase of their post-standing schedule are specifically assigned the responsibility of response duty. A typical MP or guard force watch rotation is 6 to 8 hours on post, 6 to 8 hours on response duty, and the remaining time off duty.

**Provisional Security Forces**
The RASC may assign the ACE to provide personnel and equipment to either augment or form provisional security forces. These forces consist of provisional mobile security platoons and helicopter security forces formed from augment personnel of various units. MCWP 3-41.1 covers the organization, responsibilities, and employment of these provisional security forces.

**Host-Nation Support**
Friendly HNs may provide invaluable civil and military assistance to U.S. forces throughout the operational continuum. This assistance can significantly contribute to support of the joint force and security of the JRA. The HN may provide a range of security forces from local police forces to military organizations. HN support may be incorporated into security planning and operations. Refer to JP 3-10 for more information regarding HN support and JRA security.