FORMS OF MANEUVER

Just as similar phases are common to all offensive operations, so similar forms of maneuver are common to all attacks. These forms of maneuver include envelopment, the turning movement, infiltration, penetration, and frontal attack. While frequently used in combination, each attacks the enemy in a different way, and each poses different challenges to the attacking commander.

ENVELOPMENT

Envelopment is the basic form of maneuver in any doctrine which seeks to apply strength against weakness. Envelopment avoids the enemy's front, where his forces are most protected and his fires most easily concentrated. Instead, while fixing the defender’s attention forward by supporting or diversionary attacks, the attacker maneuvers his main effort around or over the enemy’s defenses to strike at his flanks and rear. Flank attacks are a variant of the envelopment, in which access to the enemy's flank and rear is furnished by the enemy's own forward movement. Single envelopments are directed against only one flank of the defending forces, while double envelopments attack both flanks. Either variant can develop into an encirclement if the attacking force is able to sever the defender’s lines of communications (LOCs) and prevent his reinforcement or escape.

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Successful envelopment requires discovery or creation of an assailable flank. In meeting engagements and counterattacks, this may actually be the flank of the enemy force. In less fluid conditions, it is more likely to be a gap or weak point in the enemy’s defense. Such gaps can be created by conventional, nuclear, or chemical fires, or by penetration prior to envelopment.

Envelopment typically requires less initial combat power than other forms of maneuver, since the attacker need not push through heavily defended prepared positions. However, envelopment places a premium on agility, since its success depends on reaching the enemy’s vulnerable rear before he can shift his forces and fires.

**TURNING MOVEMENT**

The turning movement is a variant of the envelopment in which the attacker attempts to avoid the defense entirely, instead seeking to secure key terrain deep in the enemy’s rear and along his lines of communication. Faced with a major threat to his rear, the enemy is thus “turned” out of his defensive positions and forced to attack rearward at a disadvantage.
MacArthur's invasion at Inchon was a classic turning movement. Amphibious, airborne, and air assault forces are uniquely valuable for conducting turning movements. However, because they will have to fight beyond supporting distance of other ground forces, they will require heavy and continuous air and/or naval support.

INFLTRATION

Infiltration is another means of reaching the enemy's rear without fighting through prepared defenses. It is the covert movement of all or part of the attacking force through enemy lines to a favorable position in their rear. Successful infiltration requires above all the avoidance of detection and engagement. Since that requirement limits the size and strength of the infiltrating force, infiltration can rarely defeat the defense by itself, but rather is normally used in conjunction with some other form of maneuver.

Infiltration is most feasible in rough terrain and reduced visibility, or in areas poorly covered by observation and fire. It may be used to attack lightly defended positions, or stronger positions from flank
and rear; secure key terrain in support of the main effort; or disrupt enemy rear operations.

**PENETRATION**

Penetration is used when enemy flanks are not assailable and when time does not permit some other form of maneuver. It attempts to rupture enemy defenses on a narrow front and thereby create both assailable flanks and access to the enemy's
Penetrations typically comprise three stages: initial rupture of enemy positions, roll-up of the flanks on either side of the gap, and exploitation to secure deep objectives. Because the penetration is itself vulnerable to flank attack, especially in its early stages, penetrating forces must move rapidly, and follow-on forces must be close behind to secure and widen the shoulders. Fire support must concentrate on suppressing enemy defenses quickly, then shift to protect the flanks of the attack.

Penetration may be attempted on one or several axes depending on the forces available. When feasible, multiple penetrations are desirable, since they disperse the enemy’s fires and complicate commitment of his reserves.

FRONTAL ATTACK

A frontal attack strikes the enemy across a wide front and over the most direct approaches. For deliberate attacks, it is the...
least economical form of maneuver, since it exposes the attacker to the concentrated fire of the defender while simultaneously limiting the effectiveness of the attacker’s own fires.

As the simplest form of maneuver, however, the frontal attack is useful for overwhelming light defenses, covering forces, or disorganized enemy forces. It is often the best form of maneuver for a hasty attack or meeting engagement in which speed and simplicity are paramount, or for exploiting the effects of nuclear or chemical fires. Frontal attack may also be used during exploitation or pursuit, and by subordinate elements of a large formation conducting an envelopment or penetration.

Like many aspects of war, the forms of maneuver have seen little change in modern history. They are understood by potential adversaries as well as by American soldiers. Offensive success will therefore depend less on the choice of forms than on their creative combination and, especially, on the skill and audacity with which they are executed.

OFFENSIVE FRAMEWORK

A simple, complete concept of operation is the basis of all tactical offensive actions. The concept should permit rapid transition between offensive phases.

Corps and divisions make use of five complementary elements in fighting their offensive battles:

- A main attack with supporting attacks as required.
- Reserve operations in support of the attack.
- A reconnaissance and security operation forward and to the flanks and rear of main and supporting attacks.
- A continuous deep operation in vital parts of the zone of attack.
- Rear area operations necessary to maintain offensive momentum.

While some deep and rear activities conducted by higher echelons affect, and must therefore be coordinated with, brigade and subordinate units, the latter normally do not conduct separate deep and rear operations. These echelons, however, look for and anticipate enemy uncommitted forces which may affect accomplishment of the mission. They also provide all around security to include protection of logistic trains in the rear.

The commander organizes elements of the offensive framework for complementary functions in the conduct of his attack. In the close operation, reconnaissance and security forces—covering forces and advance, flank, or rear guards—locate the enemy and find gaps in his defenses, protect the force from surprise, develop the situation, and give the commander time and space in which to react to the enemy. The main and supporting efforts maneuver around or through enemy defenses to occupy objectives that permit the defeat of defending forces.

Reserves are positioned to weight the main effort. They exploit success, reinforce or maintain momentum, deal with enemy counterattacks, provide security, complete the destruction of enemy forces, secure deep objectives, or open the next phase of a campaign or major operation by seizing objectives beyond the defended area.

Deep operations isolate enemy defenses, disorganize enemy reserves, disrupt enemy support, and complicate the reconstitution of the defense during withdrawal.