**Chapter 6**

# Exploitation

*The most important goal of our action is the destruction of the enemy
to the last limit of possibility*

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*Exploitation* is a type of offensive operation that usually follows a suc-
cessful attack and is designed to disorganize the enemy in depth
(FM 3-0). Commanders at all echelons exploit successful offensive actions.
Attacks that succeed in annihilating a defending enemy are rare. Failure
to aggressively exploit success at every turn may give the enemy time to
reconstitute an effective defense by shifting his forces or by regaining the
initiative through a counterattack. Therefore, every offensive operation
not restricted by higher authority or lack of resources should be followed
without delay by bold exploitation. The commander designs his exploita-
tion to maintain pressure on the enemy, compound and take advantage of
his disorganization, shatter his will to resist, and seize decisive or key
terrain.

6-1. Exploitation is the primary means of trans-
lating tactical success into operational advan-
tage. It reinforces enemy force disorganization and
confusion in the enemy's command and control
(C2) system caused by tactical defeat. It is an in-
tegral part of the concept of the offense. The psych-
ological effect of tactical defeat creates confusion
and apprehension throughout the enemy C2 structure and reduces the enemy's ability to react.
Exploitation takes advantage of this reduction in enemy capabilities to make
permanent what would be only a temporary tactical effect if exploitation were
not conducted. Exploitation may be decisive.

6-2. Those plan, prepare, and execute concepts introduced previously con-
tinue to apply during an exploitation. Assessment concepts described in
FM 6-0 and FM 6-22 also apply. The commander modifies these concepts as
necessary to reflect the specific existing factors of METT-TC.

6-3. Local exploitation by the committed force follows a successful attack. A unit conducts a local exploitation when it capitalizes on whatever tactical opportunities it creates in the course of accomplishing its assigned offensive mission. Whenever possible, the lead attacking unit transitions directly to the exploitation after accomplishing its mission in a local exploitation. If this is not feasible, the commander can pass fresh forces (follow and assume) into the lead. The commander acts quickly to capitalize on local successes. Although such local exploitations may appear insignificant, their cumulative effects can be decisive. Subordinate commanders, working within a higher commander's intent, can use their initiative to launch an exploitation. When a commander initiates a local exploitation, he informs his higher headquarters to keep that commander informed of his intentions. This prevents the inadvertent disruption of the higher echelon's battle or campaign and allows the higher headquarters to assess the possibility of general collapse and to direct the initiation of pursuit operations.

6-4. Conduct of a major exploitation is a specific contingency mission assigned to a large unit in anticipation of offensive success by another unit of equivalent size. Divisions and brigades are the echelons that conduct a major exploitation although a corps can conduct a major exploitation as part of a multicorps operation.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORCES

6-5. The forces conducting an attack are also the forces that initially exploit that attack's success. Typically, the commander does not assign a subordinate unit the mission of exploitation before starting a movement to contact (MTC) or an attack. The commander reorganizes his unit internally to reflect the existing factors of METT-TC when the opportunity to exploit success occurs. He uses fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) to conduct actions on contact. (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of actions on contact.) If a commander needs additional resources to support the exploitation, he requests them from the appropriate headquarters. The additional resources may include intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to help identify targets for attack, as well as attack helicopters and controlled munitions, such as the Army tactical missile system, to attack identified targets. Each exploitation force should be large enough to protect itself from those enemy forces it expects to encounter. It should also be a reasonably self-sufficient combined arms force capable of operations beyond the supporting range of the main body.

6-6. The units that create an opportunity to exploit should not be expected to perform the exploitation to an extended depth. If the commander plans to exploit with a specific subordinate unit, he must specify the degree of damage or risk to that force he is willing to accept in the course of the current operation. If the initially attacking units incur significant losses of combat power, the commander should replace them as soon as possible. When the exploiting force's combat power weakens because of fatigue, disorganization, or attrition, or when it must hold ground or resupply, the commander should continue the exploitation with a fresh force. In both cases, the replacement force should have a high degree of tactical mobility so it can conduct the exploitation.

6-7. The exploitation may be more effective if the commander can commit additional forces and assign them the task of either follow and support or follow and assume. The commander assigns follow and support missions to units designated to assist exploiting forces by relieving them of tasks that would slow their advances. The lead unit and any follow and assume or follow and support units exchange liaison teams to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities. Units designated to follow and assume conduct a forward passage of lines and replace the initial exploiting forces when they approach their culminating point. Normally, the next higher commander retains control of the forces performing the tasks of follow and support or follow and assume. (Appendix B expands the discussion of these tasks.) When possible, units assigned these tasks should possess mobility equal to that of the exploiting unit or receive additional engineers and transportation assets to provide the necessary mobility. Once organized, they are committed forces and should receive habitually associated artillery, air defense, engineer, and other combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) forces in accordance with the factors of METT-TC. In an exploitation operation projected to cross significant distances, the commander may attach elements of a follow and support unit to the exploiting force to ensure unity of command and effort.

6-8. Since an exploitation operation typically covers a wider front than an attacking force, fire support assets may find their supported elements operating outside normal supporting ranges. They must displace forward to ensure the continued provision of fires on and beyond enemy formations, which may cause some difficulty in supporting the exploiting force's flank elements. To provide the required support, these fire support units, as well as independently operating assets, can be attached to subordinate elements of the exploiting force. Otherwise, the commander can move additional reinforcing fire support units and systems forward to fill the void.

6-9. Responsive air defense coverage provides rapid transition to an exploitation without the loss of momentum. The commander plans on repositioning his air defense artillery assets to ensure this responsiveness. Adequate mobile air defense units should accompany exploiting forces. Air defense arrangements for the initial attack are likely to remain effective throughout the exploitation. However, when the commander extends his formations and assets to cover more area, the air defense coverage becomes less effective. The commander needs to consider the risks associated with moving out from under his air defense artillery umbrella. Alternatively, he can request adjustments in the air defense coverage of higher echelons. Counterair operations by the other services (USAF, USN, and USMC) may provide the desired degree of air defense protection. The commander can use available air interdiction and close air support by fixed-wing aircraft to augment or replace Army fire support assets during an exploitation.

6-10. The exploitation mission demands a force with a significant mobility advantage over the enemy. Attack helicopters and air assault assets may constitute a portion of the exploiting force's combat power. They are extremely useful in seizing defiles, crossing obstacles, and otherwise capitalizing on their mobility to attack and cut off disorganized enemy elements. They can also seize or control key terrain such as important river-crossing sites or vital enemy transportation nodes along the exploiting force's route of advance into

and through the enemy's rear area. The commander integrates combat engineers into the exploiting force to help breach obstacles; keep ground forces maneuvering, and provide countermobility protection to the flanks. Typical, problems that degrade an exploiting force's mobility are minefields and other obstacles. The commander also uses engineers to keep his supply routes open.

6-11. The commander retains only those reserves necessary to ensure his flexibility of operation, continued momentum in the advance, and likely enemy responses to the exploitation. (Chapter 5 discusses employment considerations for the reserve.)

## RECONNAISSANCE AND SECURITY

6-12. When a commander initiates an exploitation operation, the exact enemy situation may not be clearly known or understood. The commander establishes a reconnaissance force to gain and maintain enemy contact. He complements his reconnaissance effort with sensors and surveillance assets and intelligence products produced by adjacent, higher, and lower echelons to maintain his situational understanding of the strength, dispositions, capabilities, and intentions of all significant enemy elements within his area of interest. The commander normally emphasizes reconnaissance more than security operations when conducting an exploitation. Nevertheless, since the exploiting force moves independently, he addresses the security needs of that force.

6-13. The commander assigns the appropriate security missions to his designated security forces the same way he would for an MTC. (See Chapter 4.) An exploiting corps or division commander typically organizes his forward-most security element into a covering force to protect the main body's movement and develop the situation before he commits his main body. These security elements respond directly to him.

6-14. If an exploiting force is unable to resource a covering force for independent operations, it may use an advance guard in place of a covering force. This is typical for a brigade conducting an exploitation on its own. In some cases when the higher echelon (corps or division) creates a covering force, a brigade may still push out an advance guard behind the covering force. This normally occurs when subordinate units in an exploitation advance in multiple parallel columns.

## COMBAT SUPPORT AND COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

6-15. Combat support and combat service support arrangements must be extremely flexible during exploitation operations. In the conduct of exploitation operations directed against uncommitted enemy forces or in exploitation operations directed along diverging lines of advance, the commander commonly attaches CS and CSS units to the exploiting maneuver force. Alternatively, the support assets can follow the exploiting force in an echeloned manner along main supply routes (MSRs). Transportation and supplies to sustain the force become increasingly important as the exploitation progresses. As supply lines lengthen, the condition of lines of communications and the conduct of route and convoy security can become problems. The largest possible stocks of fuel, spare parts, and ammunition should accompany the force so that it does not lose momentum because of a lack of support. The exploitation effort may

be limited more by vehicle mechanical failures and the need for fuel than by combat losses or a lack of ammunition. Therefore, direct support maintenance support teams accompany the exploiting force to assess the problem and repair disabled vehicles within a limited time period or evacuate them to maintenance collection points for repair by general support maintenance units. The commander should consider using his utility and cargo helicopters to move critical supplies forward during the exploitation.

## CONTROL MEASURES

6-16. An exploitation uses fewer control measures than many other operations because of the uncertain enemy situation and the need to provide subordinate commanders with the maximum possible flexibility to take advantage of fleeting opportunities. (See Figure 6-1.) Planners develop graphic control measures as part of the planning process. The commander issues these control measures as part of the attack order to facilitate C2 when the force transitions to an exploitation.



**Figure 6-1. Exploitation Control Measures in a Contiguous AO**

6-17. A unit conducting an exploitation normally operates in the same area of operations (AO) it was assigned for the attack. The exploiting unit assigns subordinate units their own AOs. Boundaries between subordinate units may change often to take advantage of opportunities. Since an exploiting unit deploys both reconnaissance and security forces, the commander must rapidly adjust his boundaries as the exploiting force advances. The commander designates obstacle-restricted areas to prevent friendly obstacles from hindering the movement of the exploiting force. He designates obstacle zones on the flanks of the exploiting force's movement corridors to enhance his security. He uses phase lines and subsequent objectives to control the conduct of the exploitation. The commander uses objectives to orient the movement of exploiting forces. Although an exploitation may result in taking a terrain objective, the primary focus should be on destroying the enemy force. The commander may establish a limit of advance if he can anticipate a culminating

point or some other restriction, such as political considerations regarding an international border, which requires its establishment.

6-18. A commander normally employs permissive fire support control measures during an exploitation. A coordinated fire line (CFL) ensures rapid response. Movement of the CFL is particularly important to provide adequate support as the force continues to advance. Even if the culmination of the exploitation is not anticipated, establishing a forward boundary is important to facilitate operations beyond that boundary by a higher headquarters. The commander can use additional control measures, such as targets and checkpoints, as required.

## PLANNING AN EXPLOITATION

6-19. The commander's ability to deny the enemy options by proactive use of his battlefield operating systems is critical to a successful exploitation. He does this by arranging his battlefield operating systems within his opponent's time and space relationship in accordance with the factors of METT-TC.

6-20. The commander must plan for the decentralized execution of an exploitation. His commander's intent is especially important because subordinates must be able to exercise initiative in a rapidly changing, fluid situation. The commander must state the purpose of the exploitation, which may be to force the retrograde of enemy forces from an area, encircle enemy forces so they cannot withdraw, or destroy enemy artillery and other fire support systems. The intent must describe the desired end state. That intent will also determine his decisive and shaping operations and guide the designation of his main effort at any given point.

6-21. A clear commander's intent provides subordinates with guidance on how to integrate their operations into the overall operations of the higher headquarters. Only subordinates who can act quickly can seize all opportunities to damage the enemy or accelerate the tempo of operations. A commander should place minimal restrictions on his subordinates. These may include clear instructions regarding the seizure of key terrain and the size of enemy forces that may be bypassed. Reliable, secure communications between the exploiting force, the follow and support force, and the commander facilitate coordination that can maximize the impact of the exploitation. However, all subordinates should have a clear picture of the desired end state to conduct operations that support it, even if communications are lost.

6-22. Planning for an exploitation begins during the preparation phase of all offensive operations. To avoid losing critical time during the transition from an MTC or an attack to an exploitation, the commander tentatively identifies forces, objectives, and AOs for subordinate units before the offensive operation begins. When the opportunity to exploit occurs, brigade and higher-echelon commanders should initiate the exploitation, either as a branch of or a sequel to the existing operation. The commander's plan should attempt to avoid driving the enemy back in the direction of his own sustaining base.

6-23. During exploitation planning and execution, the commander balances the exploiting force's need for speed and momentum against its need for security as it begins to move beyond supporting range of the rest of the force.

The commander must be careful not to allow an exploiting force to move outside of his main body's supporting distance. Determining the supporting distance requires some knowledge of the enemy's remaining capabilities. Generally, the commander should approach exploitation planning with a sense of guarded optimism. It is an excellent opportunity to shatter enemy cohesion and gain a position of advantage over the enemy. However, the commander cannot allow the exploiting force to fall into an enemy trap where it could be drawn into a salient and destroyed in detail.

6-24. The exploitation may take the form of an MTC with a series of hasty attacks. The commander usually issues a series of FRAGOs that designate—

- Movement formation.
- The position of each major element of the exploiting force within that formation.
- Any required modifications to task organization.
- Bypass criteria.
- Revised or new control measures that assist with the maneuver, such as objectives, boundary changes, a limit of advance (LOA), and FSCM.



**Figure 6-2. Brigade Exploitation: Battalions in Column Formation**

6-25. Exploiting forces normally maneuver on a wide front and on at least two axes. The forces on each axis are capable of independent action, depending on the mobility of the force, the road net, and other aspects of the terrain. In some cases, rather than assigning subordinates their own AOs, the commander may designate a movement formation for his entire unit so he can concentrate all his combat power against a specific enemy element. In this case, the commander normally adopts a variation of the column, line, or vee formation. (Chapter 3 discusses combat formations.) (Figure 6-2 shows a brigade conduct an exploitation with its battalions in column.) Movement on parallel routes is preferred; however, the terrain and the enemy situation may force the exploiting force to advance in a column formation. Generally, using a column in the exploitation emphasizes flexibility at the expense of placing maximum firepower forward.

6-26. In exceptional circumstances, when the enemy is clearly incapable of effectively resisting, the commander can choose temporarily not to retain a reserve but commit all his forces to the exploitation. He may employ a line formation with two or more elements abreast without a reserve when the approach to the objective must be made on as wide a front as possible. For example, a commander could use this formation when attempting to secure crossing sites over a major river. (See Figure 6-3.) He could also employ this formation against sporadic and weakening resistance when the enemy lacks a significant counterattack capability or when the counterattack can be blocked by means other than employing the reserve. Despite the lack of a constituted reserve, other actions, such as the effective employment of massed indirect fires, can provide the commander with the flexibility usually provided by the reserve for influencing actions during an exploitation.
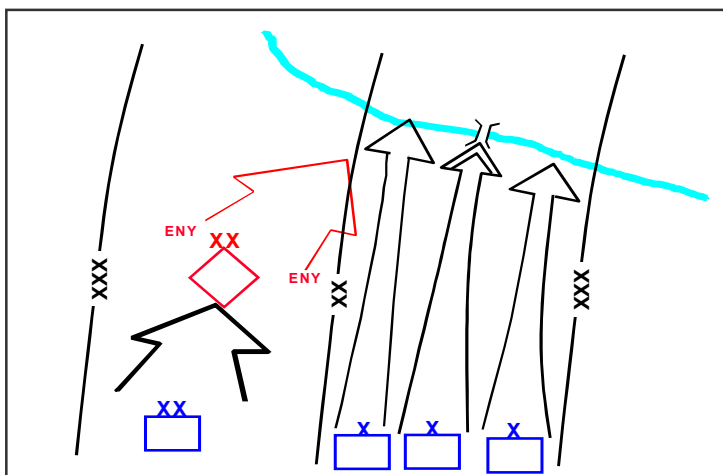


**Figure 6-3. Division Exploitation: Brigades Abreast, No Reserve**

6-27. A vee formation with two or more elements abreast and a reserve allows the unit to advance on a reasonably wide front with the bulk of the unit's direct firepower oriented forward. This configuration helps when creating gaps in the enemy's defenses. While the bulk of the unit is committed, the reserve is available to exploit the success of the attacking elements, assume the mission of the attacking elements, or counter enemy threats as they develop. (See Figure 6-4.)

6-28. Because of the need to rapidly transition from an attack to an exploitation, fire support planning for the exploitation must take place as part of the planning for the attack. The commander establishes links between his military intelligence, reconnaissance, attack aviation, field artillery, offensive information operations, and supporting fixed-wing assets to expedite the detection and delivery of effects against situationally dependant high-priority targets. He selects those targets regardless of their location within the enemy's defensive area to support the exploitation. During the exploitation, there is little time to revise target lists. Target considerations are similar in nature to those of an MTC. In addition, the exploitation requires a flexible, responsive, and redundant fire control net that must be planned in advance. Coordination with the echelon intelligence officer is critical as the situation develops

into exploitation. The exploiting force templates known enemy locations within its AO as danger areas and targets them.
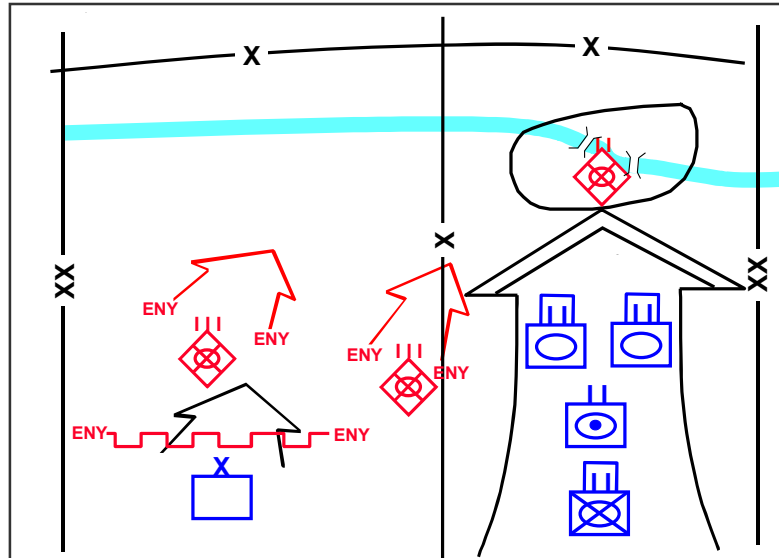


**Figure 6-4. Brigade Exploitation: Two Battalions Forward, One in Reserve**

6-29. The fire support plan includes allocating support for meeting engagements or hasty attacks that occur during the exploitation. The fire support coordinator plans targets beyond the projected locations of the exploiting maneuver force to shield the force from enemy counterattacks. He then addresses how to provide fire support to the force in its movement to the LOA and targets locations beyond the LOA to interdict the enemy's lines of communication (LOCs).

6-30. The commander plans for artillery displacement as an integral part of the exploitation. Artillery assets must displace at a pace that exceeds normal offensive operations, while maintaining the capability to provide accurate and lethal fires. The commander can normally plan on his forces using less ammunition during an exploitation than in an attack because fleeing enemy forces are normally not in prepared positions, and thus more vulnerable. The commander should also consider using close air support in the exploitation, especially to support those units moving beyond supporting range of the main body. Airborne forward air controllers can help identify and track high-payoff targets forward of the exploiting force.

6-31. The commander plans situational obstacles for each phase of the operation. For example, he plans in accordance with his rules of engagement to emplace scatterable minefields in those areas that could be used by an enemy counterattack force as his forces move forward.

6-32. The enemy may be willing to commit his aircraft against a friendly exploitation that endangers the viability of his defense, buying him time to prepare a defense while weakening the friendly force. The commander plans to move his air defense assets with priority of protection to the decisive operation. He also uses them to protect his lines of communication from enemy air

attack, thereby allowing his CS and CSS elements to keep pace with the operation. Planning must address how to rapidly resupply air defense missiles as they are used. It must also allow for adjustments in the priority of protection assigned to different elements during the exploitation.

6-33. The commander must anticipate the exploitation and ensure that his logistics plan supports the force all the way to the LOA. Planning for CSS in the exploitation includes designating future MSRs, logistics release points, unit maintenance collection points, casualty collection points, medical treatment facilities, ambulance exchange points , and the depositing of enemy prisoners of war. In sustaining the exploitation, petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) consumption and vehicle maintenance are primary concerns of CSS planners. A significant factor is that an exploiting force tends to travel on a broad front, which may necessitate designating one or more lateral MSRs to handle the dispersion. Logistics operations must be prepared to bound their CSS assets farther forward and move them more often than in an attack.

6-34. Selecting a flexible MSR is critical because it must be able to respond to changes in the direction of the exploitation. Maintaining the MSR is a responsibility of the force engineer. During planning, the commander must specifically address the control of logistics units and convoys. He calls them forward and redirects them as needed. He may have to plan for guides to assist their movement around bypassed enemy positions and obstacles. He may assign some combat elements from the reserve an "on-order" mission to conduct rear area security to help protect CSS elements or secure the MSR. The commander must also ensure adequate plans exist for controlling displaced civilians on the battlefield so that they do not interfere with follow-on maneuver, CS, and CSS assets. This is a critical function of civil-military operations.

## EXECUTING AN EXPLOITATION

6-35. Exploitation requires physical and mental aggressiveness to combat the friction of limited visibility, fatigue, bad weather, dangers of fratricide, and extended operations. It requires bold and aggressive reconnaissance, prompt use of firepower, and rapid employment of previously uncommitted units. Exploiting forces maneuver swiftly toward their objectives, sever escape routes, and strike at enemy command posts, communications nodes, reserves, artillery, and CS units to prevent the enemy from reorganizing an effective defense. Well supported by tactical air support, air cavalry, and attack helicopters, exploiting forces should be able to change direction on short notice.

6-36. To maintain sufficient forces to conduct an exploitation, the commander must ensure that his subordinates focus on his intent. They should not dissipate his combat power by seeking minor tactical successes or reducing inconsequential enemy forces. His aim is to reach the final objective with the maximum possible strength as rapidly as possible. The commander must provide his exploiting forces with mobile support, including air resupply, to move emergency lifts of POL and ammunition.

6-37. The transition from attack to exploitation may be so gradual that it is hardly distinguishable; it may also be abrupt. The abrupt transition may occur when a force uses massed quantities of precision munitions, achieves surprise, or overwhelms a much weaker enemy force. Normally, exploitation

occurs after the force secures its objective. With adequate support, the commander can launch the exploitation with his initial assault or at any time after that, depending on the effects of the fires and his desires.

6-38. Since the exploitation takes advantage of previous success, forces previously allocated toward attacking enemy forces normally continue their ongoing activities. These activities include—

- Attrition or defeat of enemy reserves prior to their commitment.
- Destruction of enemy countermobility assets prior to their employment on a friendly avenue of advance for the exploiting force.
- Disruption of enemy units attempting to reestablish a coherent defense.
- Disruption of enemy sustaining operations.

This assumes the commander has accurate intelligence data to target these enemy actions.

6-39. Generally, as one part of the attacking force finishes clearing an objective, the commander orders the remaining elements to exploit that success. To accomplish this with minimal confusion, the commander must know where each of his elements is and what combat formation each has adopted. If the commander has previously trained and rehearsed his force to change rapidly from one combat formation to another, to change missions, and to change the direction of advance, he can time the execution of such changes to maintain the initiative over an enemy.

6-40. The commander can also initiate an exploitation when he realizes that the enemy force is having difficulty maintaining its position or cohesion. Updated intelligence is crucial to the commander since it is difficult to accurately predict the exact conditions required to transition from an attack to an exploitation. Therefore, the commander and his subordinates watch the enemy's defenses for indications of disintegration that may signal the opportunity to transition to exploitation. Such indicators include—

- The threat or use of weapons of mass destruction by enemy forces, despite the probable US retaliation, may signal impending enemy collapse.
- Enemy reconnaissance intensifies.
- Rearward movement increases, especially by fire support and reserves.
- The enemy prepares to demolish or destroy his facilities, installations, equipment, and supply stockpiles.
- Various units intermix their vehicles and personnel in combat formations or march columns.
- Number of prisoners captured increases significantly.
- Enemy fire decreases in intensity and effectiveness.
- Fires increase in one or more individual sectors of the front that do not appear to be synchronized with the developing situation and at a time when the amount of defensive fires appears to be decreasing.
- Enemy resistance decreases considerably, or the enemy lacks any type of organized defense.
- Amount of abandoned enemy war materiel encountered increases significantly.

- Reports confirm the capture or absence of enemy leaders.
- Friendly forces overrun enemy artillery, C2 facilities, and supply points.
- Enemy units disintegrate and friendly companies and battalions can defeat enemy battalion- and brigade-size units, respectively.

In any case, the commander ruthlessly exploits vulnerable enemy forces after weighing and accommodating the risks.

## GAIN AND MAINTAIN ENEMY CONTACT

6-41. The exploiting force must gain and maintain contact with the enemy. This is a critical aspect of the exploitation since the enemy may be trying to break contact and distance himself from the friendly force to give him time to recover. After a successful attack, the exploiting force must perform aggressive reconnaissance to both its front and flanks. Mission and intent of exploitation determine how much enemy contact is required to maintain pressure on him, compound his disorganization, shatter his will, and seize key or decisive terrain. As discussed in Chapter 5, this reconnaissance effort must start almost immediately after an attacking unit secures its objective. If the commander has dedicated reconnaissance assets, he uses them to maintain enemy contact, observe the enemy's movements, and search for weakly defended enemy positions. If those assets are not available, other maneuver units perform those reconnaissance tasks. While maintaining contact with the enemy, the reconnaissance force tries to locate enemy reserves, uncommitted forces, and blocking positions. This effort helps the exploiting force avoid being led into ambushes as the enemy seeks to recover the initiative by counterattacking.

6-42. When the previously assigned offensive mission is accomplished, units at all echelons push out their reconnaissance and security forces to discover whether the opportunity exists to initiate an exploitation. At brigade and battalion echelons, these reconnaissance and security forces must gain and maintain enemy contact while remaining within the supporting range of their parent brigade or battalion.

6-43. The commander uses air reconnaissance to augment his ground reconnaissance. He can employ aerial sensors, such as JSTARS, air cavalry, and unmanned aerial vehicles in advance of ground maneuver reconnaissance. This allows aerial observation of named and targeted areas of interest that facilitate the unit's movement and cue the attack of high-payoff targets. Scout and attack helicopters can locate enemy positions and engage the enemy to disrupt his movement and preparations. Aviation assets surge to maintain constant contact with the enemy and keep pressure on him.

## DISRUPT THE ENEMY

6-44. Exploitation presumes the enemy has already been somewhat disrupted. An exploitation seeks to maintain or increase this disruption by preventing the enemy from effectively reconstituting his defenses. At the division and corps levels, the commander combines the effects of his operations against enemy reserves and uncommitted forces with the rapid maneuver of his close combat forces to maintain this disruption. Attack

helicopters can maneuver in front of exploiting ground maneuver forces to destroy high-payoff targets. The commander integrates available fixed-wing aircraft into his plan for attacking these targets. Rapid advances by the exploiting force keep the enemy force off balance and degrade his intelligence and surveillance capabilities, thus providing some security from attack. The commander uses all available resources to maintain pressure on the enemy, using both overwhelming combat power and asymmetric weapon systems. The commander never allows the enemy an opportunity to recover from the initial blow. The exploiting force's fire support system must deliver massed fires quickly to respond to any contingencies that arise during the exploitation.

## FIX THE ENEMY

6-45. An exploiting force has three goals in fixing an enemy force. First, it tries to break down the enemy's combined arms organization by fixing enemy units in positions out of supporting distance of each other. This allows the exploiting force to defeat the enemy in detail. Second, the commander attacks out-of-contact enemy forces before they can adversely affect the exploitation. By attacking these enemy forces, the commander seeks to fix them in their current positions or force them to move to locations where they can be harmlessly contained until the exploiting force or a follow and support force can engage and defeat them. Third, it achieves a specific targeting effect—such as causing 15-percent casualties—that disrupts the enemy commander's plan.

## MANEUVER

6-46. During an exploitation, the exploiting force maneuvers to maintain pressure on the enemy. The commander can use any heavy and mobile light forces, such as airborne and air assault elements, to secure terrain objectives or choke points critical to the advance and to cut enemy lines of escape. The commander takes advantage of available vertical envelopment capabilities. The exploiting force clears only enough of its AO to permit its advance. It cuts through enemy logistics units and LOCs to seize objectives vital to the enemy's defense. It attacks from the march to overrun weak enemy formations. In accordance with the bypass criteria, the exploiting force can contain and bypass those enemy pockets of resistance too small to jeopardize the mission while its commander reports these enemy forces to adjacent units, following units, and higher headquarters.

6-47. If an enemy unit is too strong for the leading elements of the exploiting force to overrun and destroy, succeeding elements of the force conduct a hasty attack based on the combat information provided by its leading elements. Such enemy forces are rarely attacked frontally. In almost all cases, the commander uses another form of maneuver to produce faster and better results with fewer casualties. While the exploiting force is seeking one or more assailable flanks, available fire support systems continue to engage the enemy to divert attention from the attempted envelopment and destroy as much enemy combat power as possible.

6-48. The exploiting force may face prepared belts of defensive positions in depth when it is exploiting the initial success of the attack. Therefore, the exploiting force must move rapidly to attack and destroy the enemy before he

can settle into his subsequent or supplemental positions. The more rapidly this can be done, the less likely it is that succeeding defensive lines will be fully prepared and the less effort it will take to penetrate each successive defensive position. The exploiting force repeats this process as many times as necessary until it breaks completely through the enemy's defenses.

6-49. The commander's primary concern when initiating an exploitation resulting from a successful attack is to shift his force into the appropriate combat formation and task-organize it with additional capabilities and resources to take advantage of a short window of opportunity. Assuming that the force accomplishes this with relative ease, he must control the formation as it moves and prevent its overextension. The commander must anticipate the enemy's reaction to his actions. The real danger to the exploiting force is not the immediate enemy but the enemy not yet engaged. Overextension is a risk inherent in exploitation. While the commander must be concerned with this, he must also guard against being overcautious.

6-50. Surrender appeals and ultimatums are particularly effective when directed against enemy units that have been surrounded, isolated, or bypassed. JP 3-53 and FM 3-05.30 detail the techniques for communicating with the enemy.

6-51. While the exploiting force is conducting its operations, the follow and support force, if available—
- Widens or secures the shoulders of a penetration.
- Destroys bypassed enemy units.
- Relieves supported units that have halted to contain enemy forces.
- Blocks the movement of enemy reinforcements.
- Opens and secures lines of communications.
- Guards prisoners, key areas, installations, and lines of communication.
- Controls dislocated civilians.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

6-52. Once the exploitation begins, forces move to attack enemy forces without any operational pauses. Exploitation continues around the clock so the enemy cannot escape the relentless offensive pressure. The exploiting force retains terrain only as necessary to accomplish its mission. The commander must be careful not to dissipate combat power to achieve minor tactical successes or to reduce small enemy forces. Once he reaches the LOA, the commander quickly shifts his attention to survivability and countermobility because of the possibility of an enemy counterattack.

6-53. At some point a unit conducting an exploitation reaches a culminating point or transitions to a pursuit. Culmination can occur for the variety of reasons, such as friendly losses or the enemy's commitment of his reserve. The commander, when he makes an assessment that his force is approaching culmination, should transition to another type of operation. On the other hand, a pursuit enables the commander to complete his destruction of the enemy.