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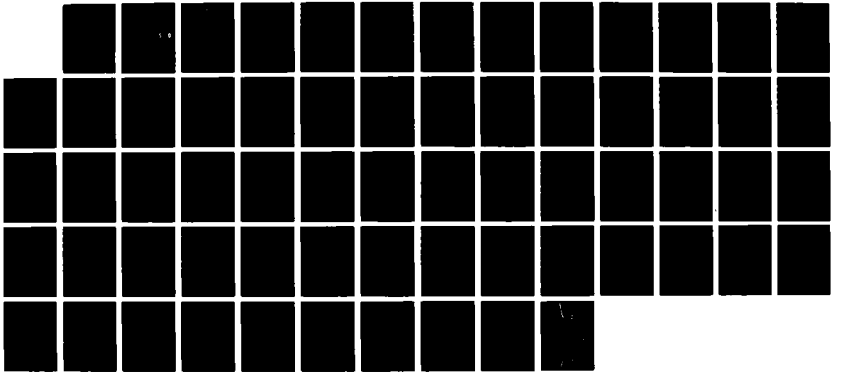

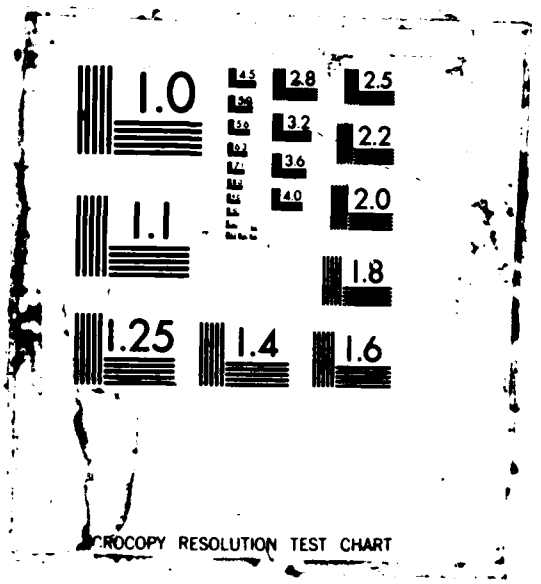
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THE PROBLEM OF WIDTH
-- DIVISION TACTICS IN THE DEFENSE OF AN EXTENDED FRONT --

by

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9 JANUARY 1987

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This monograph examines the problems of conducting a defense along a wide front. With the broad sectors assigned to some of our divisions in Europe and the huge frontages that divisions in contingency roles may be required to defend, this is a question that we need to address. This paper asks whether divisions should employ different tactics on wider fronts than along narrower ones, and concludes that the answer is yes.

The monograph begins by defining just what an extended front is -- a difcult task since the Army promulgates no doctrinally assigned frontages to its units. The definition basically suggests that an extended front leaves significant avenues of approach into one's sector unblocked by major maneuver forces. The paper next analyzes current US doctrine and comes to two conclusions. First, it seems that the Army is relatively uninterested in the issue and that

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The paper then examines five historical case studies to attempt to reach some conclusions about US doctrine and the problem of width. These cases are: the US 24th Infantry Division's defense of the Kum River line in Korea in July, 1950; the Japanese 107th Infantry Division's defense of western Manchuria in August, 1945; The US 28th Infantry Division's defense of the "Skyline Drive" during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II; US Task Force "Persecution's" defense of the Driniumor River line in July, 1944, and the US 2d Infantry Division's defense of the Naktong River line in September, 1950.

Following an analysis of the historical examples, the paper will then contrast US defensive doctrine with Soviet offensive methods. By comparing the two doctrines in the light of historical experience the paper will reach its conclusions.

The monograph ends by arguing that the prime imperative of defending along wide fronts is the delay of the Clausewitzian defensive culminating point. Rather than massing along expected avenues and seeking to gain the initiative early, the defender on a wide front should deploy his forces in a more balanced fashion and delay his counterattack or reserve commitment until he has forced the enemy to reveal his main effort. Along a broad front the defender may not be able to recover from maldeployment or from ill-timed commitment of reserves. Wide fronts are intolerant of error.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Second World War the width of frontage that the United States Army expects one of its division to hold has increased dramatically. At the National Training Center a single battalion today defends a frontage that in 1944 required a whole division. Divisions in Europe hold sectors that were once the responsibility of entire field armies.[1] With the increased lethality and range of their weapons systems, the improved mobility of their maneuver units, and the increased sophistication of their communications and fire control systems, today's divisions certainly possess the ability to defend far more terrain than their forbears. But how much more ground can they defend? And, more importantly, how should they approach a tactical situation where their frontage is greater than optimum? Should tactics change when units defend wide fronts? With the very wide sectors assigned some of our European divisions, and the potentially huge frontage that a division deployed to Southwest Asia must defend, these are issues that we must address. I will attempt to do just that by arguing in this monograph that divisions should do things differently when assigned wide fronts. In other words broad fronts demand special tactics.

I will begin by attempting briefly to define what an extended front for an American division is -- a rather difficult task as I will describe below. Following that I will relate what current United States doctrine has to say about the defense of wide fronts. My subsequent analysis of this doctrine will take two approaches. First, in order to

see how older methods compare with current guidance, I will examine five historical examples of divisions defending extended fronts with varying degrees of success . Next I will contrast our defensive doctrine with Soviet offensive methods. By comparing the two doctrines in the light of the historical case studies, I will come to some judgments about what perhaps are the most efficacious tactics for the defense of a wide front. These I will offer in the conclusion.

EXTENDED FRONT -- A DEFINITION

Defining just what an extended front for a US Army division is presents a difficult problem, for nowhere in current doctrine does the Army define exactly what it expects a division to defend. In fact, the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) specifically forbade the Army's Command and General Staff College from promulgating any definitive guidance in this respect. Apparently senior officers fear that such guidance will deflect officers away from the close analysis of factors such as the mission and the terrain when assigning sectors to forces, and lead them toward the mechanical assignment of set widths to units. [2] This is not a new attitude on the part of Army leaders. Not since World War Two has the Army offered recommended frontages for units larger than battalion size. Since 1972 the Army has not done so for <u>any</u> units.[3] Hence, one who analyzes problems of extended frontages must define for himself what an extended front is.

Such a definition must begin with a general concept. I believe that a unit defends along an extended front if, in order to contest the movement of significant enemy forces along some avenue of approach into

the rear of its sector, it must commit more than two-thirds of its maneuver elements forward. Three elements of this conceptional definition need further amplification. First, the requirement to commit more than two-thirds of the division's maneuver forces to main battle area or covering force positions would deprive the commander of a reserve of sufficient size to enable him to react to unforseen circumstances. Secondly, I would define as "significant" any enemy force of sufficient strength to threaten the cohesion of the defense. For a division, this would most likely be a regimental-sized unit (Although for a light infantry division defending against a heavy force, a smaller unit might suffice). Finally, by uncontested movement I mean the passage of a force through the main battle area without its being engaged by a major maneuver unit of the division.

Obviously then, if one accepts this concept, whether a division's front is extended depends not simply on the width of the sector, but also on the terrain within it and the type of enemy force that opposes the division. What constitutes an extended front in a jungle will be very different than that on the North German Plain. Further, a regimental avenue of approach for a light infantry force may not be one for a mechanized unit -- although as we shall see below, it is very dangerous to declare any area as "impassable" to any type of force.

This conceptual definition needs fleshing out, however. It is not enough to say simply that extension depends upon the terrain and the enemy. What thought process must a division commander go through in analyzing his sector's width? We can begin by saying that if, after establishing a covering force and maintaining an adequate reserve, the

division can block with a maneuver battalion every area through which the enemy can pass a deployed regiment (i.e., at least two battalions moving abreast), its sector is not extended and the division should employ normal tactics. The adjective, "every," is crucial. Again, as we shall see below, any terrain through which the enemy can pass a regiment is potentially threatening and must be considered. If, on the other hand, a gap exists along one or more regimental avenues of approach that is covered only by small units, screens, patrols, or indirect fires, then that division defends along an extended front and the commander ought to think about employing special tactics.

CURRENT US DOCTRINE

But what, if any, special tactics should that commander employ? Current US doctrine implies that a wide front presents no special problems. The latest heavy division field circular devotes exactly one sentence to the problem of width. In its section on "Organization of the Defense," FC 71-100 Armored and Mechanized Division Operations offers that, "Broad frontages force the commander to economize in some areas or to accept gaps."[4] Except for the suggestion that one is forced to accept gaps if the front is broad, the general thrust of current doctrine is that tactics are the same for any frontage. According to the manual, the commander "decides where to concentrate his effort and where to economize forces" in every situation.[5] Further, while suggesting that there is a continuum of defensive "options" ranging from "static" (terrain retention oriented) to "dynamic" (oriented on force destruction by fire and maneuver), FC 71-100 neglects to mention which

end of the continuum is best suited to wide fronts.[6] FC 71-101, the light infantry division manual, only suggests that on a broad front the division may have to practice economy of force in certain areas in order to maintain a reserve.[7] Further evidence of the lack of importance that the Army places on considerations of width is the fact that it is not a force design consideration. In the current unclassified divisional "operational concepts", although there is much discussion of the depth that a division needs to be able to see and to fight, there is nothing about widths of frontage that the divisions ought to be able to control.[8]

The Army's neglect of issues of width is not new. One may trace the gradual decline of emphasis on the impact of width on defensive tactics in Army manuals from 1944 to the present. In World War II regiments and battalions received doctrinal frontages from their respective manuals.[9] Divisions received no assigned frontages, but doctrine did suggest that sector widths varied "with the natural defensive strength of the various parts of the position, the relative importance of the sectors, the degree of control required, and the number and strength of units available."[10] By the early 1960's, however, neither the divisional nor the operational manuals proffered any guidance as to what sector widths should be. Manuals in the sixties only counseled the employment of mobile rather than area defense and the use of defense in depth for wide sectors. By the 1970's, not even this basic guidance appeared.[11] In 1986, students at the Command and General Staff College learned to assign defensive sectors to units entirely on the basis of what size high speed avenue of approach existed in that

sector. For instance, no matter how wide a certain sector might be, if it offered high speed access to a regiment, students assigned a battalion to defend it. As a result, infantry-poor Bradley Fighting vehicle battalions often received as much as fifteen kilometers of wooded terrain to defend.[12] No maximum, minimum, or ideal widths of battalion sectors have been promulgated since 1972.[13]

Why has the Army gotten away from offering <u>any</u> guidance regarding the assignment of sector widths? There are many good reasons. First, the amount of terrain that a unit can defend is so dependent upon the characteristics of that terrain that generalization is very difficult. In addition, any generalized guidance concerning frontage in "ideal" terrain often becomes translated at lower levels into dogma to be employed at all times. This the Army wants to avoid. Third, appropriate frontage is also very dependent on the nature and equipment of the enemy. The frontage that an infantry unit can hold against a Soviet tank regiment certainly differs from that which it can hold against guerrilla infiltrators. Finally, the nature of the battlefield itself has changed. The advent of nuclear weapons, the mechanization of infantry, and the introduction of airmobile formations and attack helicopters means that a linear battlefield no longer exists. Any discussion of sector widths seems to imply a linear thinking that all wish to avoid.[14]

But one suspects that there is another element operating here as well. As COL Robert Doughty noted in his brilliant Leavenworth Paper <u>The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-1976</u>, the post-Korean War focus of the Army on European defense accustomed officers to

thinking in terms of the broader frontages that divisions in Europe were forced to defend. Sector widths common in the Second World War and those recommended in contemporary manuals were much smaller than those USAREUR was required to hold.[15] With a fixed number of divisions and a fixed sector, guidance concerning what a division should hold became irrelevant -- indeed, senior leaders may have concluded that it would have been demoralizing to ask divisions to defend sectors that would almost certainly have been wider than one suggested in any manual. Today the situation has not changed. We do not have eighteen active divisions because we determined that that number was needed to accomplish our many missions, we simply have eighteen divisions and must make do. Sector widths are, in fact, a "given," and deciding upon optimum frontages may bring us more bad news than we wish to bear.

In any case, if broader frontages do not require that we do anything fundamentally different, the issue of optimum frontage becomes unimportant. If commanders always economize and take risks in certain sectors while on the defensive, then the width of sector simply determines how much economy of force they practice and how much risk they take. This seems to me to be the thrust of our current doctrine. Let us now examine what a doctrinal defense of a rather wide defensive sector might look like.

Map 1 depicts a notional division sector of seventy kilometers of what is fairly typical West German terrain. Expecting the main Soviet effort through the river valley on the left, the division G-2 can identify eight regimental high-speed avenues of approach and three more of battalion size into the sector. In order to cover all of the

avenues, the division would have to commit eight or nine battalions forward. Additionally, the wooded areas are cut by numerous trails and are easily penetrable if undefended. Thus this sector fits my definition of an extended front.

Current defensive doctrine stresses organizing the defense to block high speed avenues of approach into the sector and the early conduct of a counterattack to seize the initiative from the enemy.[16] The doctrinal solution to this problem would put the division's main effort on the left, the area which provides the best avenues into the division rear. The brigade placed there might be ordered to retain Hill 500 and conduct an elastic defense in the valley in order to create an assailable flank for the division reserve brigade to strike. The brigade on the right would receive an economy of force role in the more difficult terrain where the commander has decided to accept some risk. The division combat aviation brigade might be employed to strike enemy second echelon regiments in engagement areas selected near the expected area of main enemy effort. Finally, a two or three battalion-sized covering force might also be created to provide early warning and force the enemy to deploy.

If the Soviets, as our doctrine teaches us to expect, make the main effort along the most trafficable route, this scheme should work against an attack by two Soviet divisions. Against three or more divisions success becomes more doubtful, but we would hope that such a wide sector would not be assigned to a division likely to receive a major Soviet effort. Thus the defensive scheme rests to a great degree on good intelligence and proper anticipation.

But what if, as is often the case in war, there is little intelligence, or what there is of it is incorrectly analyzed? No commander should construct his plan so that success depends on the enemy's pursuing a certain course of action. But the necessity to economize and take risk when on a wide front requires that the plan be based to some degree on the enemy's probable action. Obviously there is a balance here that we must find. An analysis of some historical case studies may help us find that balance. Additionally it might suggest some techniques which in the past have been employed successfully on wide fronts.

CASE 1: THE KUM RIVER LINE, JULY, 1950

Following the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June, 1950, the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Far East Command, General Douglas MacArthur, called for the commitment of two or three divisions of his Japan-based Eighth Army to Korea to delay and eventually stop the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) offensive. MacArthur then planned to employ the superior US naval and amphibious capability to strike behind the flank of the enemy and defeat him. The 24th US Infantry Division was the first unit committed to the peninsula to halt the NKPA advance.[17]

After hurriedly shipping the division to Korea at the end of June, the Far East Command committed the unit to delay NKPA forces moving down the major highway from Seoul through Taejon to Pusan. Elements of the division committed early to forward delay positions barely slowed down the North Koreans and were badly bloodied in the process (especially the

division's 21st Infantry Regiment). The division commander, Major General William F. Dean, concluded that the Kum, the first major river in Korea south of the Han, offered the best position from which to stop the NKPA drive, if only briefly. Here was where Dean decided that the 24th would make its first stand as a division.

The 24th was in poor shape for the task. With just over 11,000 men, it could field six weak infantry battalions (in three regiments) and three two-battery artillery battalions to defend a frontage of 25 kilometers -- more if one counted the meandering river line. There were two obvious avenues of approach along the roads into the sector (see Map 2). The division had already learned, however, that North Korean infantry were not road bound and could move with facility through mountainous terrain to flank defending roadblocks. Thus the division could not block all potential avenues and could expect an attack just about anywhere along its front.

Knowing this, and knowing that he faced one communist division moving down each of the main roads, Dean placed one regiment on each road and kept the battered 21st Infantry in reserve. The regiments, expecting the main attacks to come down the roads, each massed one battalion at the road and held the other in reserve to counterattack any penetration. The 24th, in other words, comformed its defense to today's doctrine. It concentrated along the most likely avenues of assault and practiced economy of force elsewhere.

The two North Korean divisions advancing toward the 24th were not in good shape either. The 4th, advancing on the right, had suffered severely during the first three weeks of the war, and was down to about

5-6000 men, 20-30 tanks, and 45 artillery tubes -- little more than half strength. The 3rd Division, on the left, was in similar shape. Hence the attackers were not appreciably stronger than the defenders, nor did they have the advantage of overwhelming air support. The 24th, for all its weakness, should have been able to hold the river.

But not only were the North Koreans better soldiers, they practiced better tactics. After a careful reconnaissance of the American position, they planned to penetrate weak points or gaps in the line and establish road blocks in the American rear. The road blocks would hold off the American reserves while other forces would crush the Americans in forward positions with simultaneous attacks from all sides.

Opening the offensive with an attack on the 34th Infantry at 0800 on the 14th of July, the North Korean infantry penetrated undetected through the widely spread cavalry screen on the division left and moved quickly to the road south from Kongju. There they surprised and annihilated the 63d Field Artillery and then easily beat off a half-hearted counterattack by the 1st Battalion of the 34th. Hearing of the enemy force in its rear, the 3rd Battalion, under almost no pressure from the front, panicked and abandoned its positions. The survivors of the 34th, minus vehicles and heavy equipment, then fled through the mountains to American positions to the southeast. The NKPA 4th Division had needed only one of its regiments to collapse the American left flank.

Dean was dismayed by the rout of the 34th, but he was as yet not ready to commit the still demoralized 21st Infantry again to battle. Also, he could continue to block the main roads to Taejon by shifting a

reinforced company, named Task Force McGrail, to the vicinity of Sangwang-ni on the 15th. It was to no avail however, because on the 16th the North Koreans did to the 19th Infantry what they had done to the 34th two days earlier. Driving powerful columns through gaps into the rear of the US positions they routed the 19th as easily as they had the 34th. Once again, the first American units to know of NKPA troops in the US rear were the artillery and mortar units who were surprised and overwhelmed. Driven from the Kum River line, the 24th Division retreated to Taejon where it once again tried to make a stand, only to be defeated four days later by the North Koreans employing exactly the same tactics.

What can we learn from the experience of the 24th in 1950? First, a defense which is based on what the enemy <u>might</u> do may be unbalanced, in that it may not be able to react to what the enemy <u>does</u> do. Secondly, a defense which accepts gaps even in very rough terrain takes a significant risk. Enemy forces adept at reconnaissance and infiltration will find and exploit them quickly. Thirdly, the quickest way into the enemy's rear is usually not the high-speed avenue -- for these avenues are usually well defended. "Slo-go" terrain may provide the attacker with the best avenues. Fourthly, on wide frontages combat and combat service support units must be prepared to defend themselves against surprise ground attack. It will be practically impossible to prevent at least some infiltration. Finally, forces at the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) must be psychologically prepared to fight with enemy in their rear. They must not collapse and withdraw without

reason. As we will see below, all is not lost when the enemy is behind you.

CASE 2: MANCHURIA, AUGUST, 1945

The Soviet conquest of Manchuria in 1945 was a campaign that, until recently, had been almost forgotten in the west. Western interest in the operation developed only after Soviet military literature, newly interested in non-nuclear operations, began to pay it careful attention and to describe it as the highest form of development of Soviet operational art. Only then did the West seem to realize the magnitude of the Soviet accomplishment. In a few weeks' campaign fought over very difficult terrain the Red Army destroyed a stubbornly brave Japanese army of over a million men.[18]

But this campaign interests us not only because of what it has to say about the way the Soviets may conduct operations in the future, but also because we can learn from the way the Japanese attempted a defense of extended frontages against a Soviet attack. The Japanese rightly regarded the defense of all of Manchuria -- a huge salient surrounded on three sides by Soviet territory -- as an insuperable military problem. Their basic operational scheme was to delay the Soviet advance with a series of fortified positions built along the main communications routes from the border while forming a defensive line of manageable length in the interior. Unfortunately for the Japanese, the Soviets did not oblige them by advancing along the fortified main roads. Instead, they attacked along virtually <u>every</u> avenue of approach, outflanked the Japanese positions, and, moving far more rapidly than the Japanese

anticipated, collapsed the defenses before the Japanese could get set. An excellent tactical example of the failure of the Japanese scheme is the experience of their 107th Division, which defended a portion of western Manchuria against the attack of the Soviet 39th Army.

The 107th Division was positioned astride the major rail and communications line from Soviet occupied Outer Mongolia through the major city of Wuchakou into the center of Manchuria. As this part of Manchuria consists mostly of near-trackless desert, the Japanese considered the rail line and parallel road to be the only feasible avenue of approach into Manchuria from the west . Defending from the border, the 107th planned to delay the Russians along the rail line which traversed several gorges, and then hold for a considerable time at the Wuchakou fortified region (see Map 3). Although weak in anti-tank weapons, the division was "adequate" in manpower, and the staff felt confident that it could carry out its mission in the rough terrain around Wuchakou. Further, as late as the beginning of August the Japanese had not received any intelligence that the Soviets had massed significant forces opposite their portion of the front.[19]

The Soviet Trans-Baikal Front, which commanded Red forces opposite western Manchuria, surprised the Japanese three ways with their campaign plan. First, they massed a huge force of over 600,000 men and 2500 tanks in outer Mongolia almost without Japanese knowledge. Second, they did not make their main attack along the Wuchakou railway, but instead drove a tank army across the Greater Khingan Mountain Range to the south which the defenders thought all but impassable to major formations. Finally the diversionary force which attacked the 107th division, the

39th Army, did not come down the main approach at all, but instead flanked it in the desert high ground to the division's left.

The battle itself may be described quickly. Using the 124th Rifle Division as a diversion to attack down the expected route, the 39th Army sent the 5th Guards and 113th Rifle Corps around the Japanese division's left flank (see Map 3). The 5th Guards Corps, led by the 44th Tank Brigade acting as a forward detachment, enveloped the 107th's position and captured Solun after an epic desert march. The 113th Corps, led by the 61st Tank Division, did not even turn to invest Wuchakou, but continued to drive into Central Manchuria. Thus, the Japanese attempts at delay in Western Manchuria failed completely and they never were able to organize their interior defensive lines.

The 39th Army's performance in this engagement was brilliant and instructive. The Japanese had believed that they had blocked the only possible avenue of approach into Manchuria from the west, but the Russians had gone where everyone had said they could not. In doing so, they followed the true high speed avenue into the enemy rear. Importantly, this was not an isolated tactic. In nearly every sector the Red Army avoided the relatively strong border fortifications by bypassing them through terrain that the defenders thought untrafficable or passable only with difficulty. Impressively, they did it with astonishing speed, far more quickly than the Japanese could react, and often penetrated to the rear before the defenders knew what had happened. When making our defensive plans, we must remember that our Soviet counterparts study this campaign carefully.

CASE 3: THE SKYLINE DRIVE , DECEMBER, 1944

At the end of 1944 the Germans took advantage of a pause in the allied drive toward Germany to launch a major counterattack through the Ardennes Forest. The offensive had little chance of turning the tide of the war, but if more successful it could have dealt the western allies a serious operational reverse, and delayed for an extended period their drive into Germany. That it did not was in large measure the result of the stubborn defense conducted by the American troops defending the region. One of the units instrumental in delaying the German onslaught was the 28th Infantry Division, commanded by MG Norman G. Cota, whose courageous defense of the Skyline Drive in Luxembourg will represent our first look at a successful defense of an extended front.[20]

In late 1944, in order to concentrate forces for two major drives toward the Rhine, Omar Bradley, the commander of the American 12th Army Group took a "calculated risk,"[21] and left the portion of his front in the Ardennes Forest lightly defended. It was exceedingly rough terrain and not particularly suited for armored operations, especially in the winter. Besides, most believed that the Nazis were then incapable of mounting a major attack. Thus the American command gave the VIIIth Corps, responsible for the region, only three and two-thirds divisions to defend over ninety miles of front.[22] The VIIIth corps unit with the widest sector was the 28th, which held some 25 miles along the Our River. Struck by over seven German divisions, the 28th had no chance of stopping the attack, but it did hold the Germans up for two critical days, and their tactics merit our close attention.

The 28th Division's main line of resistance ran mostly along the high ground between the Our and Clerf Rivers. Though neither stream in itself presented a real obstacle, both ran through very deep and narrow valleys -- almost gorges -- with steep entrances and exits. Further, the soft, wet ground in the valleys and on the ridge confined vehicular traffic mainly to the roads. Thus the major avenues through the 28th's sector centered about the nine roads which traversed the ridge. The towns at the crossroads formed by these roads and the "Skyline Drive" running along the crest of the ridge, would be the key terrain of the engagement.

Responsible for over four times the sector "normally" assigned to a division in 1944, the 28th could not begin to attempt a conventional defense.[23] Holding only one infantry battalion and his attached 707th Tank Battalion in reserve, Cota placed three regiments in line, with his main effort placed in the northern sector of the 112th Infantry. The 112th's sector lay astride the Our (see Map 4) protecting the flank of the 106th Infantry Division which held a salient projecting into Germany at the Schnee Eifel. This the VIIIth Corps regarded as its most dangerous sector. With this in mind Cota assigned the 112th the relatively narrow front of about four miles. This left the other two regiments some 21 miles to cover. It is these two regiments, the 109th and 110th, with which we are most concerned.

Rather than concentrating their defenses on the more likely avenues, the two regiments placed their companies in strongpoints in towns spread almost evenly across the front. The strongpoints were not mutually supporting, but they did block all of the east-west roads

running through the sector. During the day the companies placed observation posts out to cover the ground between the positions.[24] In addition, the 109th Infantry, holding the smaller front, was able to keep one battalion in reserve. The 110th's 2d Battalion was the division reserve (see Map 4).

The attacking German Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies planned to push infantry across the Our just before daylight to clear the high ground along the Skyline drive, capture crossings over the Clerf, and protect engineers building bridges over the Our. By late afternoon the Germans hoped the bridges would be completed so three panzer divisions could race across both rivers and strike deeply into the American rear. Any significant delay would seriously hinder German chances of seizing crossings over the Meuse, the Panzer Army's major objective.

Things began to go badly for the Germans from the start. The infantry crossed the undefended river as planned, but took heavy casualties when striking the American strongpoints. Instead of bypassing the US positions, several of the inexperienced German infantry battalions stopped to fight. Other units that did bypass the Americans ran into stoutly defended field artillery positions. Lacking heavy weapons on the Our's west side, and short artillery ammunition, the Germans made little headway. By nightfall, although the bridges were completed, the Germans had not taken a single strongpoint and held no crossings over the Clerf.

Although his division had done well, things did not look good to Norman Cota on the afternoon of December 16. Suddenly struck all across his front by apparently superior forces, he took two decisions. He

refused early commitment of his reserve infantry battalion and committed his tanks piecemeal, sending one platoon to each threatened strongpoint. In a sense, the tactic was effective. In all but one case the tanks fought their way to the strongpoints, inflicting heavy casualties on the lightly armed German infantry along the way. Also, the Germans finally got some armor forward at around dusk, and the tank platoons were crucial to the defense against the last light assaults. The only strongpoint not reached by American armor, at Weiler, fell just after nightfall.

As the evening of the 16th wore on it became clear to Cota that a major, multi-division attack had struck his division with the main effort along the Dasburg-Clerveaux-Bastogne highway. Ordered by VIIIth Corps to hold in place, he decided to commit his remaining reserves, the 2d Battalion 110th Infantry(-) and the light tank company of the 707th, to a concentric attack toward Marnach on the 17th.

Cota, unfortunately, had waited too long. By the morning of the 17th the Germans had most of three panzer divisions across the Our, thus sealing the fate of the American units between the two rivers. They barely noticed Cota's feeble counterattack, practically annihilating the light armor company moving south along Skyline Drive and stopping the 2d Battalion near Reulers. Nevertheless, it took the Germans the rest of the day to reduce the strongpoints, drive to the Clerf, cross that second river, and clear Clerveaux. Thus the German panzers did not really get rolling until the third day of the offensive. Although the 28th suffered severely, the two days that they had gained enabled reinforcements to reach the vital road center at Bastogne.

Although driven from their positions, we must count the 28th Division's defense of the Skyline Drive successful. The system of strongpoints prevented the Germans from quickly penetrating at any one point. The narrow gaps between the positions permitted infiltration, but not of sufficient strength to threaten the cohesion of the defense quickly. Further, the artillery was obviously prepared to fight and did so quite well. Less praiseworthy was Cota's use of reserves. He clearly held the 2d Battalion out too long and degraded the effect of his armor by committing it piecemeal. A counterattack toward Marnach at midday on the 16th by the 2d Battalion, perhaps reinforced by two tank companies, might have carried all the way to the Our, disrupted the bridge-building efforts, and stalled the German offensive at the start line. Dividing his armor provided him only short term gain. Nevertheless, the 28th's defense provides us a major clue as to what an effective defense of an extended front might look like.

CASE 4: THE DRINIUMOR COVERING FORCE, JULY, 1944

Thus far in our analysis of operations on extended fronts we have examined Korean mountains, Chinese deserts, and European woodlands. In our fourth case we will shift terrain to the jungles of New Guinea, and shift from an analysis of heavier units to that of light infantry. For forty-five days in 1944 Japanese and American infantry fought a desperate battle in dense jungle armed with nothing larger than 105mm howitzers. Interestingly enough, as we shall see, techniques for defending wide fronts successfully will remain generally the same despite great changes in arena and equipment.[25]

In April, 1944, General Douglas MacArthur, commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, accomplished "one of the most brilliant" operational strokes of World War II.[26] By landing LTG Walter Krueger's 6th Army at Hollandia he cut off the entire Japanese Eighteenth Army, and won the New Guinea campaign without ever engaging most of the defending forces. In order to provide adequate air support to the Hollandia Operation, MacArthur also needed to secure two airfields near the village of Aitape, east of Hollandia and close to major forces of the surrounded Eighteenth Army. The American "Persecution Task Force," eventually built around the XIth Corps,[27] received the mission of capturing the airfields and defending them against anticipated counterattacks from the cut-off Japanese. Task Force Headquarters, commanded during the battle by MG Charles P. Hall of XIth Corps[28], decided to defend the airfields by establishing a tight perimeter around the airfields and beachhead and a covering force line along the Driniumor River about seventeen miles eastward. In addition to the normal missions of a covering force[29], the troops at the river would also fulfill the requirement to protect the airfields by keeping Japanese artillery and infiltraters at a distance. Thus the "covering forces" would hold their position rather longer than usual for such detachments.

Upon hearing of the landing, LTG Adachi Hatazo, commander of the Japanese Eighteenth Army, immediately set about making plans to attack the American forces to his west. Although composed of three divisions of excellent infantry, Adachi's force possessed limited offensive potential. Badly battered by over a year of combat with the Allies, and

ravaged by New Guinea's debilitating climate, Adachi's force should not have been able to maneuver at all. It is a testament to the courage and endurance of the Japanese soldiery that the Eighteenth Army managed to mass five regiments (albeit weak ones) opposite the Driniumor position by 10 July. The Japanese plan of attack was simple. Knowing that the American line was held thinly, Adachi concentrated three regiments to pierce the center of the US position, roll up the rest of it, and then drive with his force directly toward the airfield defenses. Although ambitious considering the condition of the Japanese troops, the plan nearly worked.

On the 10th the "Persecution Covering Force," under the command of BG Clarence A. Martin, consisted of two regiments totaling five battalions[30]. Under 6th Army orders two of the battalions were conducting reconnaissances in force to the west -- thus, only three were left to defend the river line over seven miles long. This gave each battalion over thrice the frontage doctrinally allotted to an infantry battalion in 1944.[31] Further, as the entire line was in the jungle, there were no real avenues of approach upon which to concentrate efforts (or there was one big one, depending upon how one looks at it). There was no dominating terrain from which to observe artillery fire. And, except for the fact that it might be easier for the enemy to attack nearer the coast, there was no most likely direction from which to expect attack. Finally, the line was seven miles long only because that was where the Americans chose to end it. The covering force right flank remained unprotected.[32]

General Martin chose to defend at the river's edge and placed his battalions in a thin line from the coast to the village of Afua (see Map 5). The river was fordable in most places, but by placing their heavier weapons at the shallower sections, the rifle companies could cover well the likely crossing points. Additionally, the stony river bed provided the defenders good fields of fire. But because two battalions had reconnoitered forward there was no force reserve, and since the line was so long the defensive positions had little depth. Martin was not at all happy with his situation, and his uneasiness would be reflected in his handling of the battle.

The Japanese attacked at 2350 hours on the 10th and, having massed three regiments against E Company, 128th Infantry, broke through quickly. Because of their mass, however, they took unusually severe casualties from American artillery. These losses, coupled with the rough terrain, made it difficult for them to exploit their initial success. They never did manage to roll up the US line, and the American units not near the point of breakthrough were left untouched.

Without reserves and with his center pierced, Martin proceeded to do what most commanders would under similar circumstances -- he retreated to his second delay position, the X-ray River some four miles to the rear. With some difficulty he got his command into position on the new river by nightfall on the 11th. The Sixth Army commander, however, did not believe that a withdrawal was necessary. Having learned the condition of the Eighteenth Armies troops from intercepted Japanese radio traffic, he wrongly believed that they were incapable of major offensive action.[33] Replacing Martin with MG William H. Gill,

commander of the 32d Division, Krueger ordered the Task Force to reoccupy the Driniumor position forthwith. For the wrong reasons he ordered the covering forces to practice the tactics that would win them the battle.

Having received two battalions of reinforcements from Persecution TF,[34] Gill launched a two pronged counterattack on the 13th which would drive toward the two ends of the original position and then turn inward to link up and reestablish it. Gill realized that this maneuver would leave a significant force in his rear.

Missing most of the Japanese forces Gill's troops easily gained the river and then fought to link up. The American maneuver had an interesting result -- it placed the main infantry units of both sides in each other's rear. This placed the attacking Japanese at the disadvantage, however. With so large a force in their rear they could not press the attack on Aitape, especially since they were separated from their artillery. Additionally, once the Americans restored the river line, which they did on the 18th, the Japanese could supply their troops only with great difficulty. The Americans, on the other hand, could resupply by air if necessary. The situation left the Japanese little choice but to turn and attempt to destroy the US positions from the rear. The Americans, of course, had organized for all-around defense, and the result was that the Japanese battered themselves senseless against the US units possessed of greatly superior firepower. By the 31st, enough US reinforcements had arrived to enable the Americans to go over to the attack and the river battle ended.[35]

Once again, as at Skyline Drive, we see that a thinly held extended line that accepts no major gaps, but continues to fight when infiltrated or otherwise penetrated, can slow or stop the attack of a superior enemy. Whether it slows the enemy as at the Skyline, or stops him as at the Driniumor, depends on the correlation of forces and the speed with which the defenders are reinforced.

CASE 5: THE NAKTONG RIVER LINE, SEPTEMBER, 1950

For our final historical case study we return to Korea and the desperate American defense of the Pusan Perimeter in the late summer of 1950.[36] At the end of August the US Eighth Army had stabilized a front running roughly along the Naktong River. The North Koreans, however, still retained the initiative and planned to launch one final offensive to drive the UN forces into the sea. Launching a general assault with their twelve infantry divisions all along the UN front on September 1, they decided to make their main effort with their I Corps of four reinforced divisions in the vicinity of Yongsan, the sector of the line held by the 2d US Infantry Division, recently arrived from the United States and commanded by MG Lawrence B. Keiser.

Inserted into the line on August 24th, the 2d Infantry Division was responsible for some 45 kilometers of front along the meandering river. The road nets suggested that four major avenues of approach traversed the 2d's sector, each capable of supporting a North Korean division. But in addition to the roads, the mountainous terrain offered several more avenues to the hardy NKPA infantry. Having lost two of his

rifle battalions to other divisions, Keiser had only one tank and seven infantry battalions to hold this extended front.

Unlike General Dean at the Kum, Keiser did not concentrate his defenses along the major avenues of approach. Instead, he retained one battalion of infantry and part of his tank battalion in reserve and spread his three rifle regiments, each of two battalions, in a thin line of company positions on the key pieces of high ground overlooking the river (see Map 5). He did weight his defense somewhat by giving his center 23rd Regiment a smaller front, which enabled that unit to hold one of its battalions in reserve. The other two regiments could only hold out one company. As at the Skyline Drive, the company positions were not all mutually supporting, but large units could not infiltrate quickly between them.

Also as at Skyline Drive, the enemy attacked in overwhelming numbers. At 2330 hours on August 31 two divisions attacked the sector of the 9th Infantry while a division each struck the 38th and 23rd. In the 9th Regiment's sector A and B companies held initially, but the NKPA 9th Division, reinforced by artillery and two tank battalions, overran C Company, brushed aside the counterattacking E Company, and by noon was within a few miles of Yongsan. The 4th Division followed the 9th later in the day. Farther north, the NKPA 2d Division drove the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry two miles off the river, scattered the regimental command post, and infiltrated strong elements almost to Changnyong. Opposite the 38th Infantry, the North Korean 10th Division did not press its attack with much vigor, and throughout the battle this sector would present little threat.

The inactivity of the 10th Division was fortunate for the Americans, for the rest of the front was in crisis. Nevertheless, this time the American soldiers did not panic and their commanders reacted coolly. In the south, Keiser moved the 2d Engineer and 72d Tank Battalions and the 2d Reconnaissance Troop to defend Yongsan. These units, reinforced by elements from the 9th Regiment that had come back in good order from the river, stopped the 9th and 4th NKPA Divisions for two days, long enough for US Eighth Army reserves to arrive and counterattack. Near Changnyong, Keiser ordered the 1st of the 23rd to break out and make contact with the 3/38th Infantry of division reserve attacking to relieve it. At this point something interesting happened. The commander of 1/23rd Infantry, LTC Claire Hutchin, requested that his unit be left in position to obstruct the movement of North Korean reinforcements and supplies. This "stay-behind" tactic seemed to work. Unable to get artillery, tanks, and reinforcements forward, the North Korean 2d Division's drive stalled. In three days the 3/38th Infantry fought through to relieve the 1st of the 23rd. Also by that time, the 1st Marine Brigade out of Army reserve had arrived and the 2d US Division began driving the North Koreans back to the river.

Why did the 2d Division succeed in the defense of an extended front while others had failed? In the first place, the North Koreans were not given the opportunity, as they were on the Kum, to drive unimpeded into the division rear. They first had to break through a lightly held but nearly continuous front and then push their way past local reserves. This gave time for the positioning of division reserves and eventually the arrival of Army reserves. Secondly, as at the Driniumor, forces

which continued to fight after being bypassed tended to interrupt the momentum of the enemy drive and bring it more quickly to its culminating point. Coincidentally, during this same battle, the US 25th Division, just to the south of the 2d, employed these same tactics with equally successful results. Finally, the defense remained relatively balanced. Keiser did not mistakenly concentrate forces in a sector he thought the enemy might use. He read the battle and remained in control of it.

CASE STUDY CONCLUSIONS

We can draw several common conclusions from these case studies. The first and perhaps most important is that the defender must remain balanced. He must not over-commit forces to one sector, or he may end up like the boxer who placed all his weight on his left foot and was knocked down by a blow from his right. This is especially important on wide fronts, where recovering from maldeployment is more difficult. On a broad front, if you have placed your forces on the left and the enemy attacks on the right, your position will be overthrown before you can recover.

The second lesson relates to the first. It is extremely dangerous to accept major gaps along your front. Doing so may result in the enemy being in your rear before you are aware of it. We must remember that the North Koreans were able to penetrate gaps during the day undetected despite total UN command of the air. That the enemy will try to find and exploit these gaps should be assumed. The avenue of approach that can be traversed the fastest is the one that is undefended, regardless (almost) of the terrain within it.

Two connected points make up the third lesson. First, a line of strongpoints or battle positions, not necessarily mutually supporting, but positioned not too far apart, seems to have been an effective tactic for identifying, slowing, and canalizing attacks. Second, these should be sited for all-around defense, because bypassed forces holding key positions in the attacker's rear often disrupt his momentum. "Stay-behind" tactics often work, and opportunities for their employment abound on extended fronts.

Fourth, on extended fronts everybody is a combat soldier. A porous front line is to be expected, and combat support and combat service support troops must be ready to fight.

Finally, and rather obviously, reserves are crucial when defending extended fronts. On a wide front the defense will almost always be pierced, and the commander must have forces to commit to halt the breakthrough. One will not have the time, even if he is able, to disengage forces and move them linearly across a wide sector.

SOVIET OFFENSIVE TACTICS

Before using historical evidence to recommend tactics for the defense of an extended front, we must examine one more subject. How do our principal adversaries plan to conduct offensive operations?

The essence of Soviet offensive tactics and operations is the combination of speed, mass, and surprise. Fearing that a lengthy conventional conflict might escalate to nuclear exchange, and recognizing the west's greater economic power, the Soviets want to win their wars quickly. Hence, the Soviets stress massing for a rapid

breakthrough of enemy defenses, followed by high rates of advance by ground forces making bold, deep thrusts into the enemy's rear. The Manchurian Campaign of 1945 being the best example, they wish to strike fast, hard, and deep, in order to paralyze the enemy and overthrow his defenses before they are set.[37]

Another important feature of Soviet offensive tactics is the use of "fire strikes" to achieve breakthroughs. Airstrikes, nuclear attacks, and artillery neutralize enemy defenses and provide the holes for armor to exploit.[38] There is no subtlty to their mechanized and armor attacks. They have maximized their formations for speed of movement and not for fighting through intact defenses. If enemy defenders shoot up their vulnerable attack formations, it is because the artillery failed to do its job.[39] Artillery is the combat arm of decision in the Soviet army.

Once the artillery has blasted a hole in the forward enemy defenses, the Soviets are concerned with maintaining the momentum of their advance. To insure maintenance of the momentum they attack in echeloned assault formations. Recognizing that modern defenses are conducted in depth, they anticipate that their forward elements will be consumed fighting through the defensive areas. Key to the maintenance of forward momentum is the replacement of one assault echelon by another when the first begins to falter. The number of echelons that they employ depends upon the depth of the defense. The deeper the defense, the more echelons they believe that they will need.[40]

In recent years Soviet military literature has paid increasing attention to the employment of formations for disruption and

exploitation. At the tactical level these units are called forward detachments. Usually a subunit of a first echelon force, a forward detachment "may attempt to strike deep into the forward enemy defensive area before enemy defenses are fully organized and solidified." At the operational level the Soviets plan to employ "operational maneuver groups" (OMG"S), which may be formed as part of the plan to be committed deep to seize a critical objective, or created during an operation to exploit opportunities. OMG's are normally committed early in an operation, usually before the commitment of the second echelon. The important role played by these forces in Soviet offensive doctrine underscores their concern with speed and preemption.[41]

Finally, Soviet planning is tightly centralized. Stressing the need for unified planning at all levels, Soviet guidance to subordinate commanders is far more prescriptive than that given their western counterparts. This concern with adherence to the plan has led many in the west to conclude that Soviet offensive tactics and operations are rigid, unimaginative, and predictable.[42] As the Japanese discovered in Manchuria, this reasoning is dangerously self-deluding. The Russians attempted nothing like the rigid, two echelon attack down the major avenues that the Japanese expected.[43] As COL David Glantz points out, the Soviets excell at camouflage, surprise, and deception.[44] Their tactical manuals stress the need for avoiding the "telegraphing of their punches." Taktika specifically warns against concentrating forces in the area of attack beforehand.[45] During every major offensive in the last two years of World War II, the Soviets deceived the Germans regarding the location and timing of their attacks.[46] We have no reason

to expect, despite all of our sophisticated acquisition technologies, that the Soviets will not be able to deceive us in the future.

Related to this issue is the Soviet view of terrain. US Army defensive doctrine, reacting to the tremendous Soviet concern with speed of advance and momentum, has stressed the concentration of forces on "high speed avenues of approach" into the defensive sector. This, to my mind, represents a fundamental misreading of Soviet intentions. According to the Soviets, "The ground, as an element in the combat situation, plays a neutral role with respect to the opposing sides."[47] They search for the quickest route into the enemy's rear -- this is usually <u>not</u> along the most trafficable terrain. As a Soviet general recently wrote

> In the Great Fatherland War the main blow was often aimed at the weakest, most vulnerable spot in the enemy's defenses. We regarded as weak spots...those sectors which he considered to be difficult of access from a tactical point of view. These sectors he held with the minimum quantities of men and equipment. An attack on such a sector was a complete surprise for the enemy:... our forces gained tremendous advantages, despite the fact that they were attacking over difficult terrain.[48]

They stress the importance of reconnaissance and infiltration (something at which they excelled in World War II). They will find and exploit gaps that we leave in rough terrain. To them, there is no such thing as terrain which favors the defense -- terrain is neutral.

So how might the Soviets attack a US division defending on a broad front? We may first posit that since a division defending a great width is necessarily weak and shallowly deployed across its front, a Soviet Army would probably employ one echelon plus a reserve. Hence, in a four

division army, at least three would be forward. Soviet doctrine assigns armies in the offense between sixty and 100 kilometers of frontage, and if we assume that a US division defending an extended front faces a secondary effort (if it does not, all we can hope to do is delay), then the notional division defending 70 kilometers discussed earlier in the paper would face something over two divisions in its sector. We can also expect the Soviets to select a point to breakthrough and mass artillery and maneuver forces at the last possible moment to achieve it. Terrain will not be the major consideration in their selection of a breakthrough point. They will reconnoiter carefully to find a weak spot, and then try to penetrate there -- perhaps leading with a forward detachment through a gap. We can also expect feints and other attempts at deception to mislead us as to the point of attack and precipitate the commitment of our reserves to the wrong spot.

Thus, they might attack in the following fashion against the doctrinal defense on p.9. After a careful reconnaissance, they would begin with a diversionary attack using one division in the valley on the left. The intent here would be to draw away the defender's reserves from the true main effort. Since the Americans think this is what the Soviets will do anyway, the diversion will probably work. Concentrating at the last possible moment one and one-third (or more) divisions on their left, they would then attempt a breakthrough in the rough terrain there. Before the concentration they might send a forward detachment through a forest trail or lightly defended area to strike deep. The ensuing rapid breakthrough would lead the army to commit its reserve through the gap and the US defense would be unhinged. The result would

be what we witnessed in Manchuria and along the Kum -- the breaking of an unbalanced defense.

CONCLUSION

So what may we conclude about the problem of defending an extended front? Should one's tactics change? I would argue that the answer is yes. Whereas on a more normal front the commander may adhere to current doctrine by attempting to concentrate his forces on the more likely avenues and striving for early defeat of the attacking force, the defender on a wide front cannot. I am not arguing that he should not try to anticipate the location of the enemy's main effort and thicken some areas; rather, I submit that his prime concern must not be with concentration, risk taking, and early seizure of the initiative, but with maintaining his balance and commiting his reserves prematurely. As the Japanese in Manchuria and the 24th Division along the Kum discovered, the consequences of maldeployment or ill-advised commitment of reserves are too great. Once committed to the wrong area, the defender may not be able to recover. The importance of this principle is magnified by the Soviet penchant for surprise and deception.

In order to maintain his balance the commander must first have good intelligence. An accurate picture of the battlefield is crucial to making the proper decisions about where and when to position forces or commit reserves. Secondly, he must be able to delay the decision so that he has time to acquire enough information to make the right one. This represents a major departure from current doctrine. Our contemporary manuals call for the defender to take every opportunity to

wrest the initiative early from the attacker. On a wide front the defender may have to forfeit the initiative intentionally during the early part of the battle, in order to read the situation accurately and maintain his balance until the time for commitment arrives. The Soviets, as their doctrine implies and history confirms, are good at denying the defender both time and intelligence. Thus, a doctrine for the defence of wide frontages must search for techniques that maintain balance, provide the commander good information, and enable him to delay the decision to commit reserves.

In effect, the thrust of my argument is that the prime imperative of the successful defense of an extended front is to delay what Clausewitz calls the defensive culminating point, or the time when the defender no longer accrues an advantage from waiting and must act.[49] Like a basketball player defending against a two-on-one break, the defender must attempt to force his opponent to commit first. If the defender commits before the attackers, then the latter may simply shift the ball to another avenue and drive for the score. The defender of a broad front must delay his decision so as to insure that his decision to commit is the right one, and he must remain balanced, prepared to react in any direction, until that point.

The last three case studies provide us with a way to accomplish this. In all three successful cases the defenders established a thin line of company positions or strongpoints spread almost evenly across the divisional front. Rather than block one avenue and take risk in another, the successful defenders placed forces along them all. This hard outer crust at the edge of the MBA forced the enemy to mass to

rupture the line, and thus helped to identify the main effort, to canalize and delay the enemy's attacks, and to give the commander the time and information to take appropriate actions. Local reserves then could be committed to plug gaps, block penetrations, or failing both, at least serve to provide the commander with more information as to the extent of the breakthrough. If local reserves did not suffice, commitment of divisional reserves followed. If these were not strong enough, the division needed outside help. In all cases, rapid or surprise penetrations were avoided, and decisions could be made on the basis of good information.

The suggestion that the defense of a wide front should begin with the establishment a thin line of strongpoints across the forward edge of the battle area will be controversial, as it smacks of appropriately discredited linear defenses. But although the formation appears linear at first glance, I do not propose the conduct of a linear battle. The initial linearity will not forfeit agility and depth. When there is sufficient room in the battle area for the conduct of a mobile defense, the "strongpoints" can become "battle positions" and units may fall back in elastic fashion when faced by superior forces. Alternately, strongpoints may provide us with a different kind of depth by holding when bypassed if the battle area is shallow, or if the defenders are not very mobile. This latter tactic may be appropriate for light infantry in Europe.[50] Finally, the enemy will be defeated in the depth of the area by the movement of the reserve. However the defense is executed, the idea is initially to present as near a continuous front as possible at the FEBA in order to avoid surprise penetrations. Holding some areas

while screening others is dangerous, as screens cannot fight for intelligence and may be driven in without providing the commander with the information he needs to make the correct decisions.

Additionally, reserves at all levels are vital to the success of a unit defending along a wide front. Preventing penetration will be impossible, and the commander must have forces with which to conduct counterattacks (preferably), block breakthroughs, or simply move forward to gain contact and develop the situation. The mission of the reserves will depend upon the strength of the enemy attack. Whatever their mission, piecemeal commitment should be avoided in most cases. As General Cota discovered, piecemeal commitment provides only temporary local gain. One must discover the enemy's main effort and commit reserves there. Further, the wider the front, the harder it will be to maintain reserves. The historical evidence seems to suggest that if the situation prohibits reserves at both division and brigade levels, maintenance of divisional reserves should receive priority. As the Kum experience demonstrates, accepting major gaps is more dangerous than not having reserves at regimental/brigade level.

But if history serves to provide us with the above conclusions, it offers little as to the use of the new and powerful weapons that modern technology provides the division -- namely, attack helicopters and multiple-launch rocket systems with sub-munitions. One must include an analysis of the use of these devastating weapons in any discussion of modern tactics. Happily, the inherent flexibility and range of these systems aid materially in the solution to the problem of extended fronts. Once the commander commits his ground maneuver reserve to the

battle he can rarely recall it. These new systems, on the other hand, permit him to apply significant combat power to one avenue and still maintain the ability to recall it and apply it elsewhere. Thus, the commander can use these weapons to block penetrations without irrevocably committing himself. Almost as importantly, MLRS in the counter-battery role may be decisive in blunting enemy "fire strikes," upon which he depends so heavily. Finally, as a maneuver force, helicopters can develop the situation and provide the commander with important information. Hence, MLRS and aviation serve well to delay the culminating point of the defense.

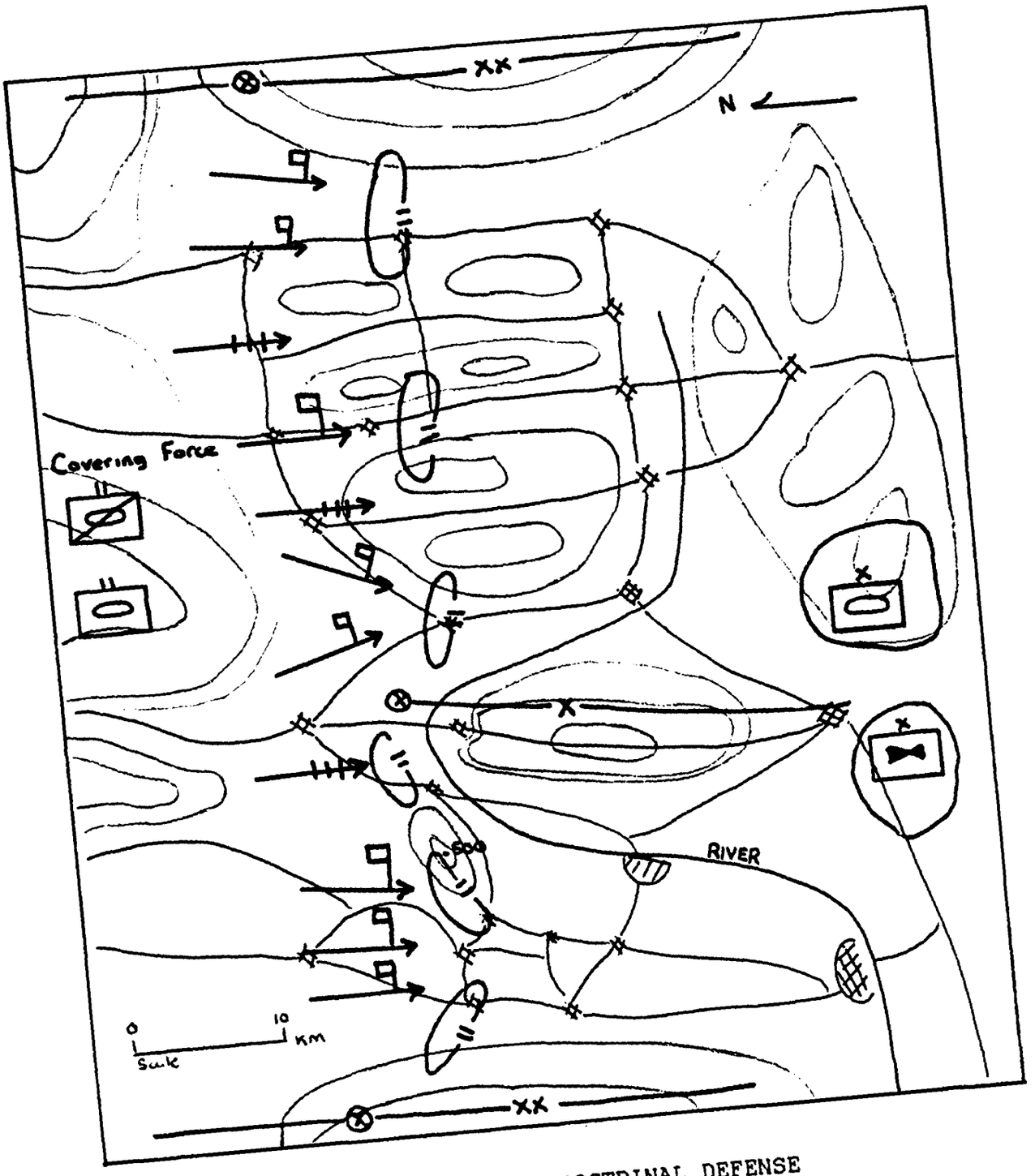
This analysis suggests a different approach to the divisional defense discussed above. Instead of constructing our efforts around what we believe is the most likely avenue, we should arrange our forces in a more balanced fashion. The defense should begin with a two battalion covering force that screens the division front and provides us with early warning. Along the approximate FEBA trace we would deploy company strongpoints as depicted on Map 7. Note that forces are positioned along every major avenue, with only minor gaps. The mission of these units would be to force the enemy to mass to penetrate us, and to delay and canalize his movements. As our sector is shallow, we would have bypassed units stay in place in most cases. The brigade reserves will counterattack major penetrations and block minor ones. The strong division reserve would consist of one ground maneuver brigade and the Combat Aviation Brigade. The latter, along with MLRS, would be committed early to block penetrations, or even to support strongpoints in order to gain us time to discover the main effort. Once we discerned

the enemy's main attack we would commit our ground reserve, supported by aviation and MLRS, to defeat it. The conduct of deep operations would depend on the situation, but a heavily stressed broad front may demand the commitment of all of our assets to the close-in fight.

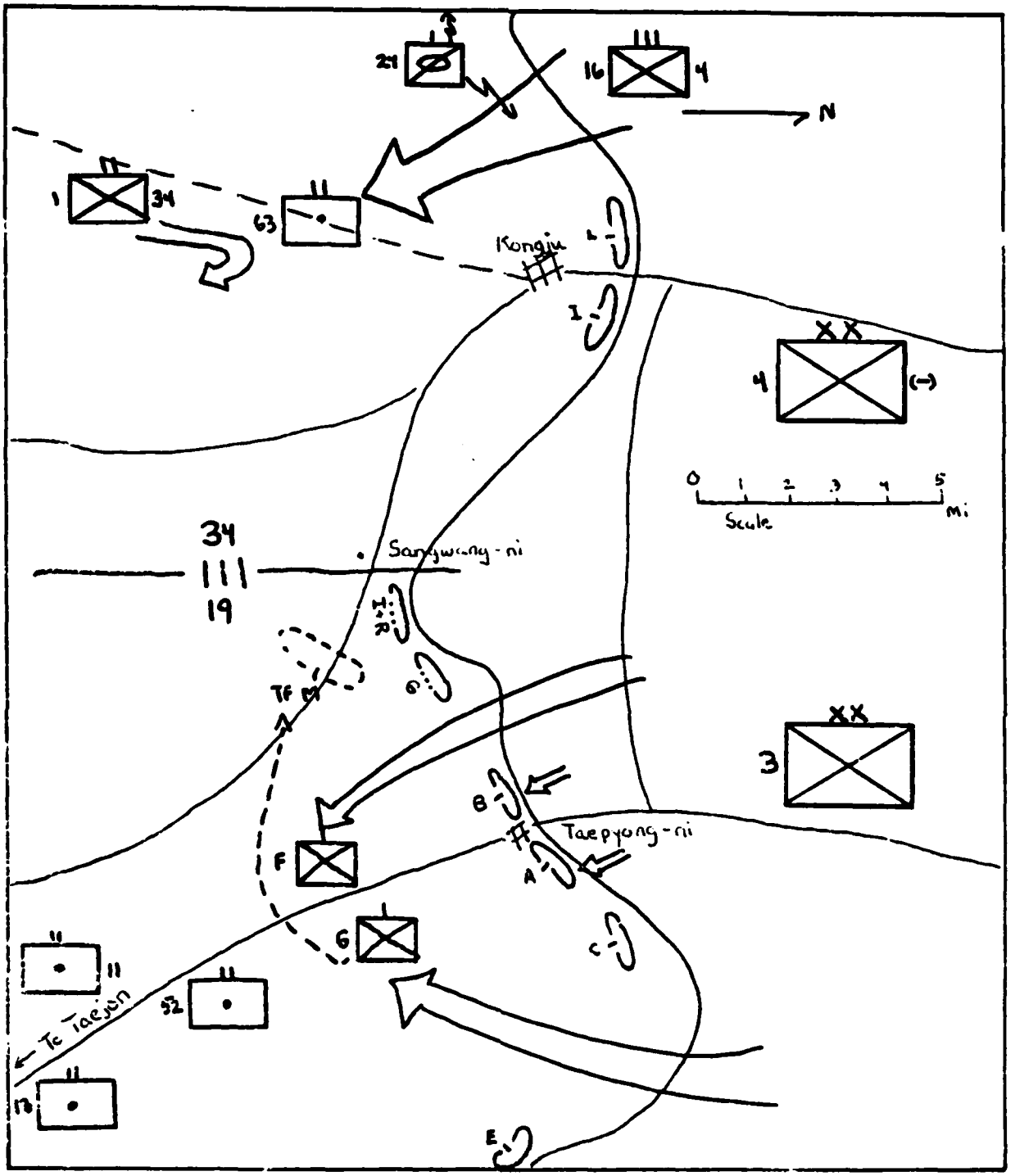
This concept permits us to defeat an enemy attack of two-plus divisions regardless of where they struck. A Soviet feint to our left, as described above, could be contained by local reserves, MLRS, and the CAB. Just as importantly, the stronger defense all across the front would provide us much more information about the attack on our right than we would have had with only a screen in that sector. Should the enemy strike with three divisions or more, the intelligence provided by that most reliable source, ground combat action, would enable the Corps commander to make an informed decision. Our stronger defense on the right would also provide him with the time he needs to react that a rapid penetration of an economy of force area would not.

It seems, then, that divisions ought to do things differently when their front is extended. But the difference is more one of conceptual approach than of tactical principle. The doctrine that urges concentration along likely avenues of approach, risk taking in other areas, and <u>early</u> seizure of the initiative is inappropriate on a broad front against an enemy excellent at concealing his intentions. We cannot simply take more risk and accept more gaps on a broad front than we do on a narrower one. On fronts that are extended we must be more concerned with balance, and we must delay our defensive culminating point. We must obtain information about the battle that is good enough.

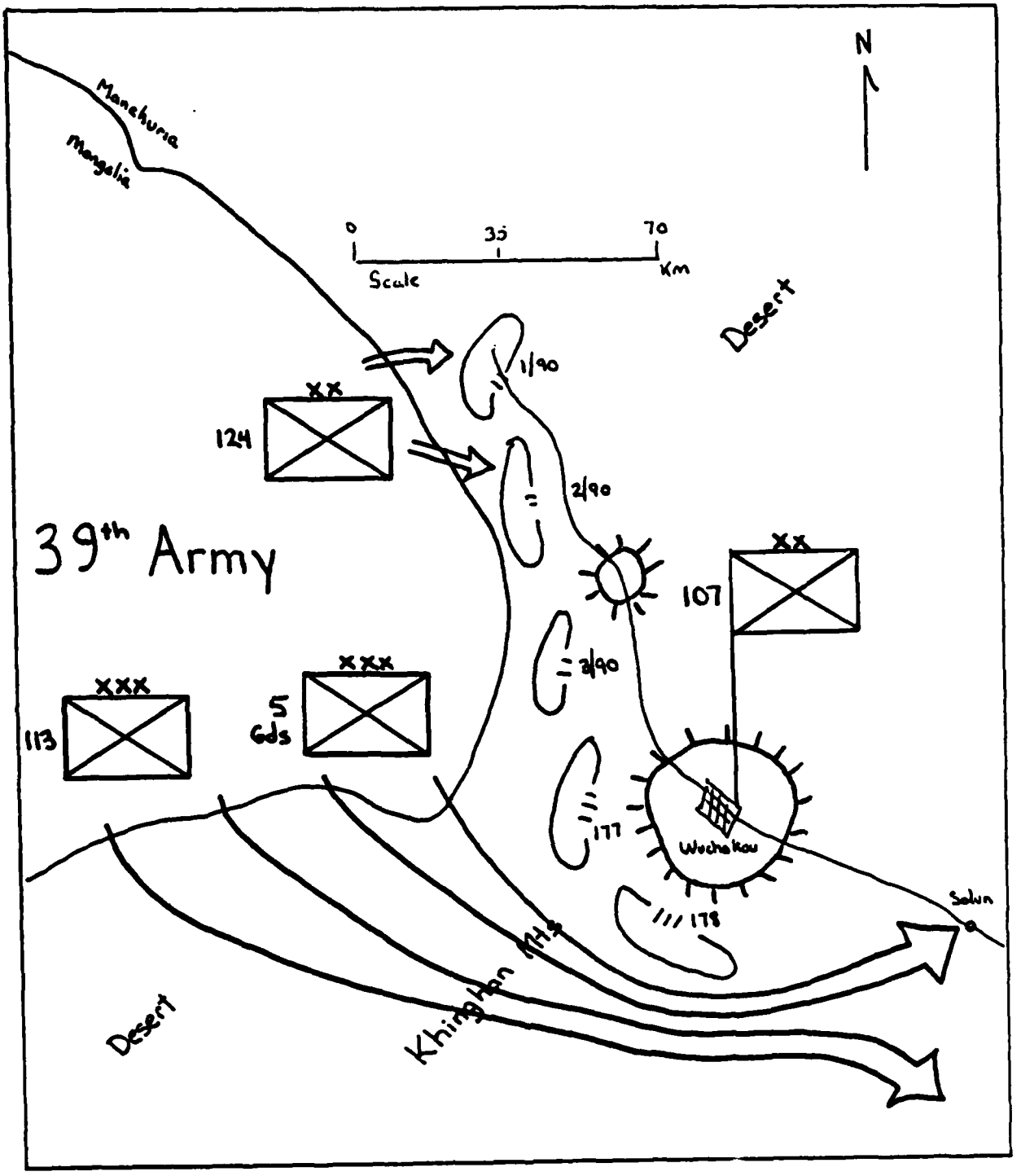
so that when we do act, we do the right thing. Wide fronts are intolerant of error.



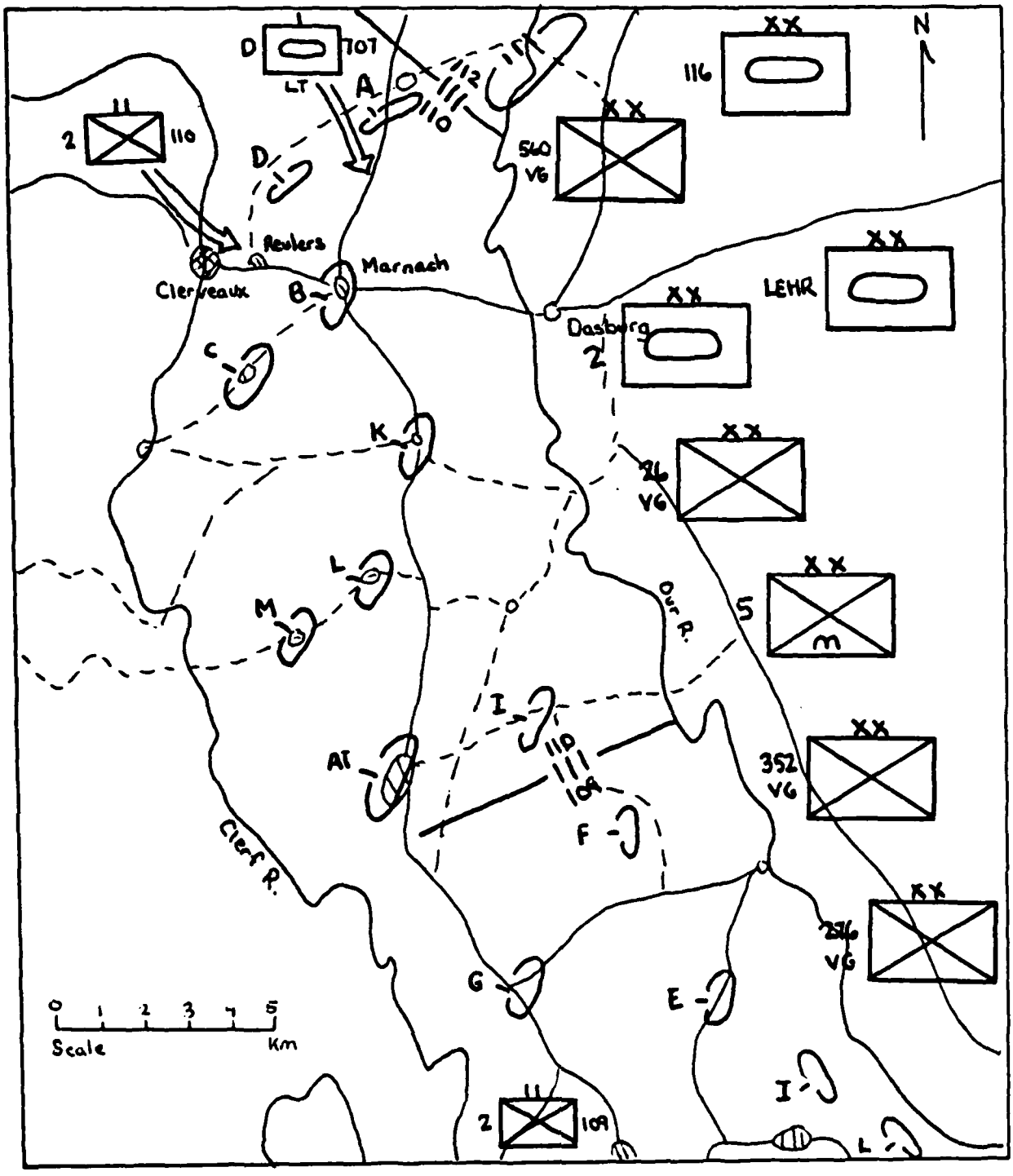
MAP 1: NOTIONAL DOCTRINAL DEFENSE



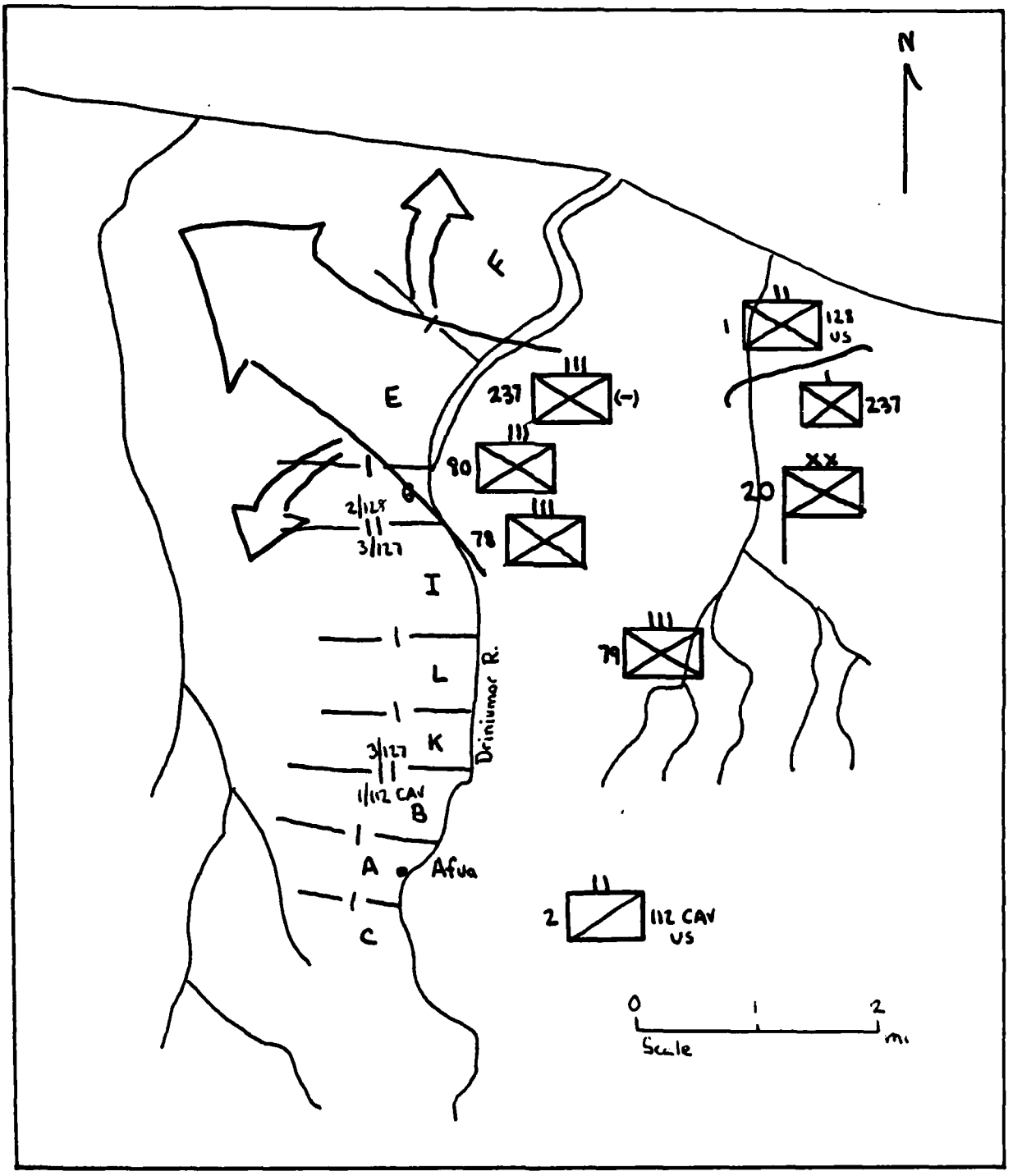
MAP 2: THE KUM RIVER BATTLE



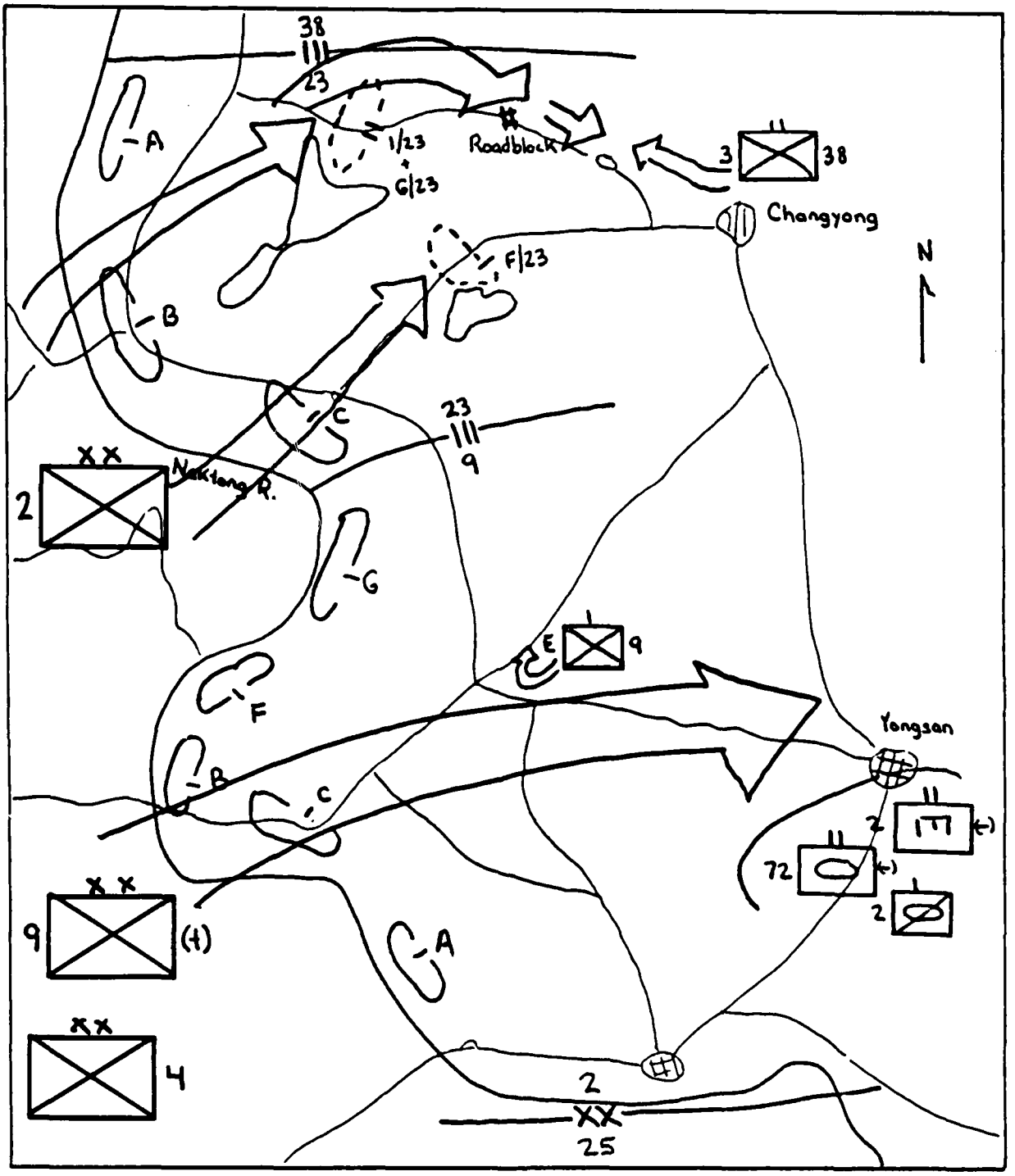
MAP 3: THE 107TH DIVISION'S DEFENSE



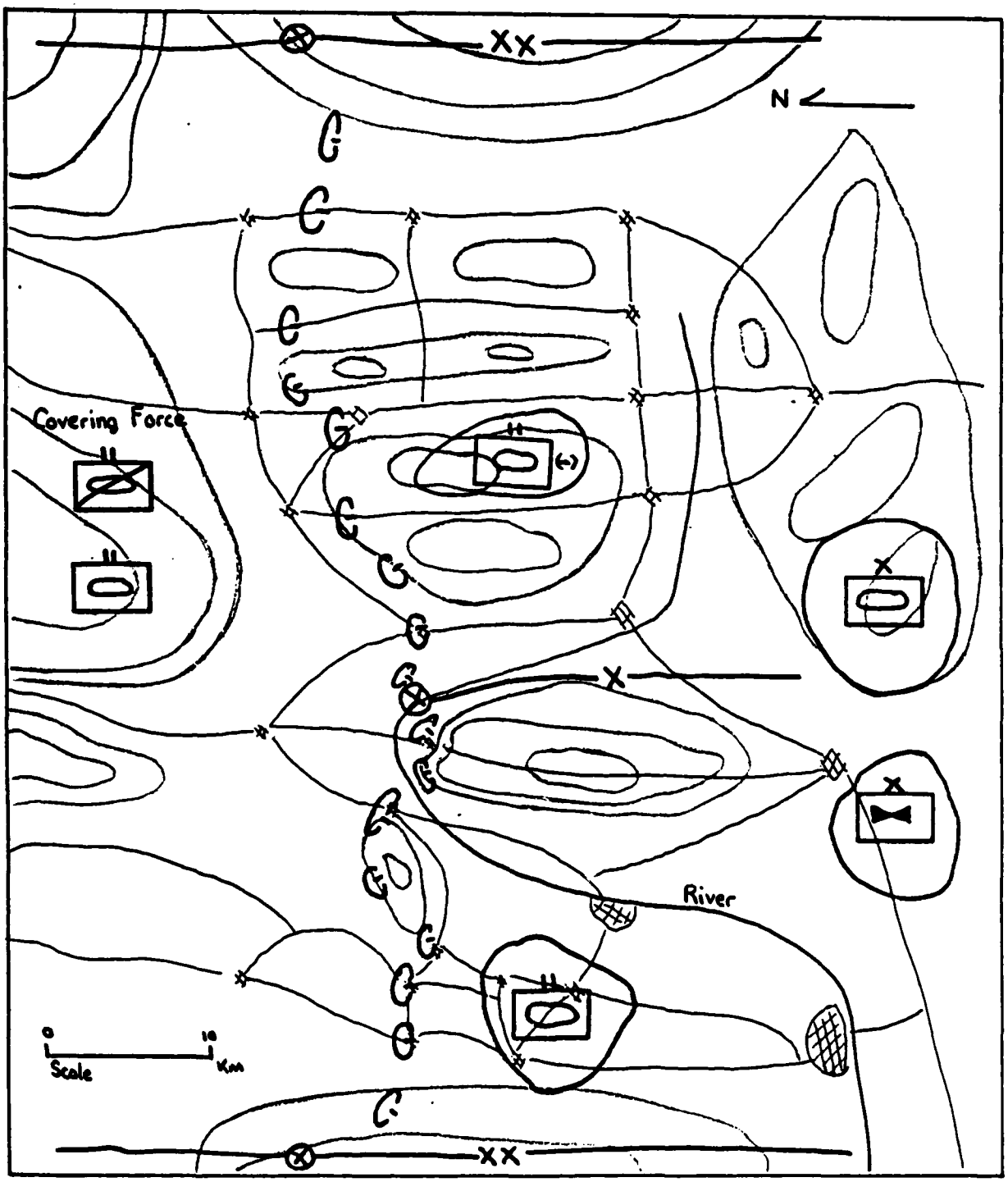
MAP 4: THE SKYLINE DRIVE BATTLE



MAP 5: THE DRINIUMOR RIVER BATTLE



MAP 6: THE NAKTONG RIVER BATTLE



MAP 7: SUGGESTED DEFENSE OF A WIDE FRONT

MAP SOURCES

Map 2: Roy E. Appleman, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (Washington, DC, 1961), maps 6, and 7.

Map 3: David M. Glantz, August Storm: Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1983), map 6-1.

Map 4: Hugh M. Cole, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge (Washington, DC, 1965), maps IV and V.

Map 5: Edward J. Drea, Defending the Driniumor: Covering Force Operations in New Guinea, 1944 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1984), map 17.

Map 6: Appleman, map VIII.

ENDNOTES

[1]In a National Training Center rotation witnessed by the author, one Mechanized infantry battalion defended a fifteen kilometer sector. During World War II, a division with two of its three regiments in the line defended 9,140 meters of frontage in open terrain. See War Department, FM 7-40, The Infantry Regiment (Washington, D>C>, 1944). During the Battle of France in May, 1940, the French 1st Army defended approximately 48 kilometers of frontage -- which is the approximate frontage assigned to a division in most US Army Command and General Staff College exercises. See Department of History, US Military Academy, Campaign Atlas to the Second World War (West Point, N.Y., 1981), p.11.

[2]The TRADOC prohibition and the reason for it come from an interview with LTC Jeffries, Center for Army Tactics, US Army Command and General Staff College, conducted on 3 October, 1986.

[3]The last published figures were in Department of the Army, ROTC Manual No. 145-60: Theory and Dynamics of Tactical Operations (Washington, D.C., 1972), p.433.

[4]US Army Command and General Staff College, FC 71-100: Armored and Mechanized Division Operations (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1984), p.6-4.

[5]Ibid., p.6-6.

[6]Ibid., p.6-7.

[7]US Army Command and General Staff College, FC 71-101: Light Infantry Division Operations (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1984), p.6-21.

[8]US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Operational Concept for High Technology Light Division (Ft. Leavenworth Ks., 1981).

[9]See War Department, FM 7-20: Infantry Rifle Battalion (Washington, D.C., 1944), and FM 7-40: The Infantry Regiment (Washington, D.C., 1944).

[10]War Department, FM 100-5: Field Service Regulations, Operations (Washington, D.C., 1944), p.594.

[11]Department of the Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington, D.C., 1976), and Department of the Army, FM 61-100: The Division (Washington, D.C., 1968, and 1965), and Department of the Army, FM 71-2: The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force (Washingtin, D.C., 1977).

[12]From the author's experience as a member of the Class of 1986.

[13]Interview with LTC Jeffries.

[14]The Director of the US Army School for Advanced Military Studies, COL Richard H. Sinnreich, for example, discourages lineal thinking and often refers to the "bad old days" when we used to talk about defensive lines and main lines of resistance.

[15]MAJ Robert A. Doughty, The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1979), p.24.

[16]Department of the Army, FM 100-5: Operations (Washington, D.C., 1986), p.129.

[17]The following narrative is taken mainly from Roy E. Appleman, South to the Naktong North to the Yalu (Washington, D.C., 1961), pp. 121-145.

[18]The following narrative is taken mainly from LTC David M. Glantz. August Storm: The Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive in Manchuria (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1983), and Glantz, August Storm: Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945 (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1983).

[19]The Japanese staff's view comes from Ibid., p. 141. The 107th Division was the westernmost unit in Japan's Kwantung Army. It was responsible for the security of some 10,000 square miles of Manchuria. Its border responsibility was approximately 200 kilometers. It defended an extended sector by any definition. For the overall Japanese scheme, see Glantz, August Storm: The Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive in Manchuria, cited above, pp. 25-38.

[20]The following narrative is taken mainly from Hugh M. Cole, The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge (Washington, D.C., 1965), pp. 173-227, and Charles B. MacDonald, A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge (New York, 1985) pp. 275-290.

[21]A good explanation of Bradley's "calculated risk", and the reasons for it may be found in Omar Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York, 1951), pp. 453-456.

[22]The three divisions were the 4th, 28th, and 106th Infantry. Two Combat Commands (A&R) of the 9th Armored were also in the corps. The other Combat Command was attached to the neighboring Vth Corps.

[23]As noted above in note one, a division with two regiments forward in open terrain could doctrinally defend 10,000 yards, or 9,140 meters. The Germans attacked the 28th with thirteen regiments forward, and probably could have fitted more into the sector. Thus, the 28th could not have blocked all regimental avenues even if it placed all of its battalions alomg its MLR.

[24]Unfortunately, the 28th withdrew these positions at night, thus forfeiting supremacy of patrolling to the Germans. This was typical of

the poor state of training for night combat of the US Army in World War II.

[25]The following narrative taken mainly from Edward J. Drea, Defending the Driniumor: Covering Force Operations in New Guinea, 1944 (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks., 1984), and Robert Ross Smith, The Approach to the Philippines (Washington, D.C., 1953), pp. 103-205.

[26]R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History: from 3500B.C. to the present (New York, 1986), p. 1173.

[27]The composition of Persecution Task Force changed many times. It began as the 163d and 127th Regimental Combat teams, and was reinforced to include the 32d Infantry Division, the 103d and 169th Infantry and 112th Cavalry Regiments.

[28]The original commander of the TF was BG Jens A. Doe. MG William H. Gill, commander of the 32d Infantry Division, took over from him as the size of the TF grew.. Gill was followed by Hall.

[29]Covering force doctrine in 1944 called for such detachments to "provide time for the main force to prepare itself for combat, to deceive the enemy as to the actual location of the main battle position, to force the enemy to deploy early, and to provide a deeper view of the terrain over which the attacker would advance." See Drea, p. 23.

[30]These battalions were 1/128th, 2/128th, 3/127th Infantry, and 1/112th and 2/112th Cavalry.

[31]This distance was 914 m. See War Department, FM 7-20: Infantry Rifle Battalion (Washington, D.C., 1944).

[32]Counting avenues of approach in the jungle is difficult. But since the Japanese concentrated three regiments against approximately one-quarter of the TF front, we can assume that twelve avenues led into the US position -- not counting avenues around the south flank of the line. Thus, this fits my extended front definition.

[33]Information gained from "ULTRA," the Top Secret analysis of decrypted Japanese coded traffic was released only down to the level of Army commander in the Pacific. Thus, Krueger had a much more accurate intelligence picture than did Martin. See Drea, pp. 31-41.

[34]These were the 1/124 and 3/124 Infantry.

[35]Reinforcing units were the 2/127th and 2/169th Infantry.

[36]The following narrative is taken mainly from Appleman, pp. 443-487.

[37]Taken from a lecture given by COL Ghulam Wardak, of the Army of Afghanistan to the School of Advanced Military Studies, 24 October, 1986, and from Department of the Army, FM 100-2-1: The Soviet Army: Operations and Tactics (Washington, D.C., 1894) pp. 4-1 to 4-9.

[38]They always include provisions for operations under nuclear conditions in their planning. Wardak lecture.

[39]V.G. Reznichenko, Taktika (Moscow,1984) p. 104.

[40]FM 100-2-1, pp. 4-6 to 4-7.

[41]Ibid., p. 4-7.

[42]See especially F.W. von Mellenthin and R.H.S. Stolfi with E. Sobik, NATO Under Attack: Why the Western Alliance Can Fight Outnumbered and Win in Central Europe Without Nuclear Weapons (Durham, N.C., 1984.).

[43]Jacob W. Krupp, et al., Historical Analysis of the Use of Mobile Forces by Russia and the USSR (College Station, Tx., 1985), p.433.

[44]See LTC David M. Glantz, From the Don to the Dnepr: A Study of Soviet Offensive Operations, Dec. 1942-Aug.1943 (Ft. Leavenworth Ks., ungated).

[45]Reznichenko, p. 73.

[46]Glantz, Ibid.

[47]Reznichenko, p. 78.

[48]A.I. Radzievsky, Proryv (Voenizdat, 1979), p. 167, quoted in P.H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York, 1983.), p. 148.

[49]Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J., 19760, p. 383.

[50]Such "stay-behind" units would not necessarily simply hold their positions, but might take some offensive action. Hence, although the initial formation of this recommended defense is linear, I in no way envisage conducting a linear fight, nor do I suggest forfeiting mobility or agility.

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