

Offense

Note

The below information applies only to divisions, regiments and battalions. In normal terrain, companies and platoons always attack in a single echelon (on line), without a reserve. Only in severely restricted terrain would a company or platoon form more than one echelon (out of sheer lack of maneuver room and to avoid the entire unit being destroyed in a choke point).

Enemy Defense Preparedness

The OPFOR classifies enemy defenses as follows:

Unprepared Defense

Any defense with less than 8 hours of preparation time. In this case, the enemy has had time to emplace only part of his covering force, and preparation is probably limited to basic primary fighting positions for individual soldiers, crew-served weapons, fighting vehicles, and artillery.

Partially-Prepared Defense

Any defense between 8 hours and 48 hours of preparation time. Preparation level is normally somewhere between unprepared and prepared defenses.

Prepared Defense

Any defense with more than 48 hours of preparation time. In this stage of preparation, all defenses are in place and fully engineered. This can include: Completion of trench lines, including commo trenches; Construction of overhead cover for portions of the trench line, especially for weapons positions; Improved fighting positions for vehicles and artillery, normally by the units themselves rather than engineers; and construction of alternate fighting positions.

Attack Zones and Strike Sectors

Attack Zone

Attack zones are simply the frontage distance, or width, of the attacking unit. This varies with the mission, enemy defense, and general combat situation. For example, a MRD attacking an unprepared defense on a supporting axis would have a much wider attack zone than a similar unit attacking a prepared defense on a main axis (since the former unit is deployed with 4 regiments in the 1st echelon instead of 2)

Strike Sector

A strike sector is an avenue of main effort. This is the sector that the commander masses his forces and provides more armor and artillery support for the main attack. A unit in a strike sector normally has a narrower frontage than that of a supporting unit because the units are massed and are generally in a two-echelon formation.

Echelonment in the Offense

Single-Echelon Formation

The OPFOR is likely to use a Single-Echelon formation:

- When attacking an unprepared defense, or
- When attacking a partially-prepared defense lacking in depth, or
- If on the higher cdr's supporting axis, against any type of defense

In a Single-Echelon formation, most of the combat power is forward, with all of the maneuver subunits on line. This maximizes the firepower in the opening attack wave, creates a strong initial momentum, and gives the enemy little time to mount a counterattack. If the defense is shallow or unprepared and counterattacks are unlikely, the commander does not need as strong a force to deal with unexpected situations. A supporting-effort unit would use this because his mission is to destroy as much of the enemy as possible and protect the main-effort unit from a flanking counterattack. When attacking in a Single-Echelon formation, the commander always forms a Combined Arms Reserve so that he can still influence the battle and deal with unexpected situations.

A unit in Single-Echelon formation could have its subunits in single- or two-echelon formation, depending on the situation.

Two-Echelon Formation

The OPFOR is likely to use a Two-Echelon formation:

- When attacking against a prepared defense, or
- When attacking against a partially-prepared, in depth, defense, or
- If on the higher commander's main axis, against any type of defense

1st Echelon

In a Two-Echelon formation, the majority of the combat power is still forward in the first echelon, but it is more concentrated. The mission of the 1st-echelon is to destroy the enemy's forward defenses and achieve the commander's immediate mission. Most combat support assets (artillery, antitank, engineer, etc) will either be allocated to or directly supporting the attack of the 1st-echelon units.

2nd Echelon

Once the immediate mission is achieved, the commander will commit the 2nd echelon. The commander will give the 2nd-Echelon forces a specific mission, route of advance, and likely time and line of commitment. Missions could include: conducting pursuit; destroying bypassed enemy elements; defeating a counterattack; achieving the subsequent mission; and completing the missions of 1st-echelon units rendered combat-ineffective.

Echelonment in the Offense

Two-Echelon Formation (Con't)

A Two-Echelon formation allows the commander to have continual momentum against forces in a strong, deep defense. By having a 2nd echelon, the commander can exploit success with follow-on forces wherever it may appear.

A unit in Two-Echelon formation could have its subunits in single- or two-echelon formation, depending on the situation.

Reserves

Combined Arms Reserve

Divisions, regiments, and battalions form a Combined Arms Reserve (CAR) only if attacking in a single echelon. This force is directly subordinate to the commander, and is usually 1/9 of the total combat power of the parent unit (though it can be as large as 1/3, depending on the mission and combat situation). When formed, a CAR does not receive a specific mission, only a route and method of advance. As the battle unfolds, the commander will use the CAR as a contingency force to deal with tasks such as exploiting unexpected success, repelling counterattacks, and covering the flanks of the parent unit.

Anti-Tank Reserve

The commander employs the antitank reserve as a blocking force against an enemy counterattack during the offense, and it can also cover threatened areas and open flanks. It can be reinforced with engineering assets, usually in the form of a Mobile Obstacle Detachment (MOD).

Echelonment in the Offense

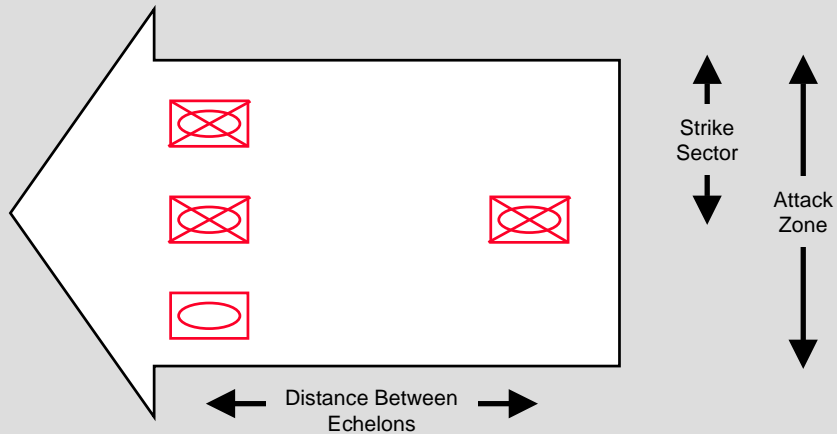
Summary

In short, a single-echelon force gives an excellent initial punch, but a two-echelon unit provides continued momentum.

In a situation where the enemy has not had the time nor resources to develop a strong and deep defense, it is unlikely that he would prove to be a very tough opponent. His counterattack, if any, would probably be weak, and most of his combat forces would be poorly dug-in. He would have insufficient time to lay an intricate obstacle barrier, or to devise an integrated fire-support plan. In this case, a good choice would be a single-echelon formation, since this allows most of your combat troops to engage simultaneously. The initial momentum is enormous. Since the threat of serious counterattack is diminished, the commander can probably accomplish his mission quickly.

Conversely, in an unclear situation, or against a defense that can easily pose the commander with unexpected situations, he would want a strong force to deal with such surprises. If all of his forces were forward, he would not have the assets available to quickly influence the battle. With a two-echelon formation, if a 1st-echelon unit has unexpected success in a certain area, the commander could follow-through with more forces to exploit that success. A two-echelon formation does not give the commander as much of a strong initial punch, but does give him CONTINUED momentum to accomplish his assigned mission

Distances in the Offense

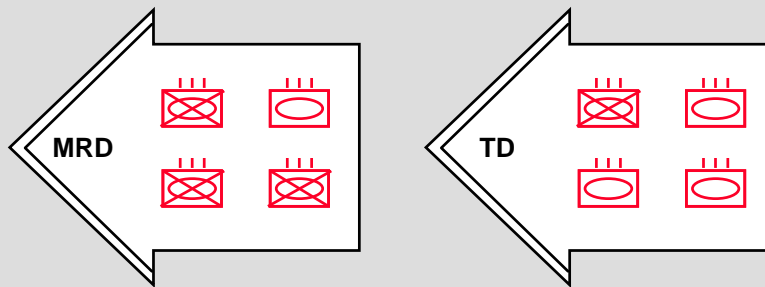


		Distance Between Echelons	Strike Sectors	Attack Zones
Division		15-30 km	4-18 km	15-25 km
Regiment		5-15 km	2-4 km	5-10 km
Battalion		1-3 km	400m - 1 km	up to 3 km
Company	MRC	None	None	400m - 1 km
	TC	None	None	400 - 800 m
Platoon	MRP	None	None	up to 300 m
	TP	None	None	100 - 200 m

Companies and platoons rarely attack in more than one echelon. A company will typically attack with all platoons on line, and a platoon will usually fight with vehicles on line. Also, since all vehicles are normally engaged at the same time, companies and platoons do not develop strike sectors.

Division in the Offense

Main Axis against a Prepared Defense



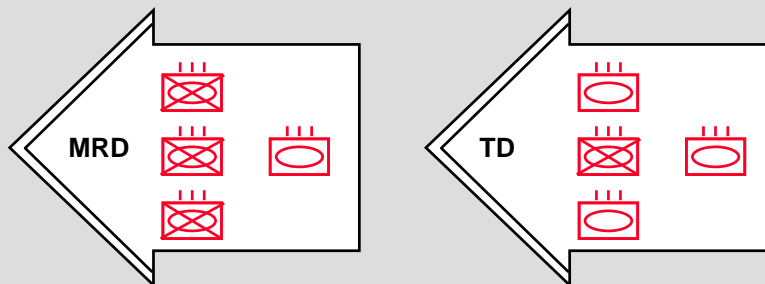
Against a prepared defense, a main-effort division will usually attack with two regiments forward, two back. This allows him maximum ability to influence the battle and exploit success.

The first echelon usually contains an MRR, even in tank units, since infantry forces are more balanced and better suited to penetrate a deep, prepared defense. The second echelon usually contains at least one regiment of the division type (MRR for an MRD, TR for a TD).

Supporting Axis against Prepared Defense

or

Main Axis against a Partially-Prepared Defense

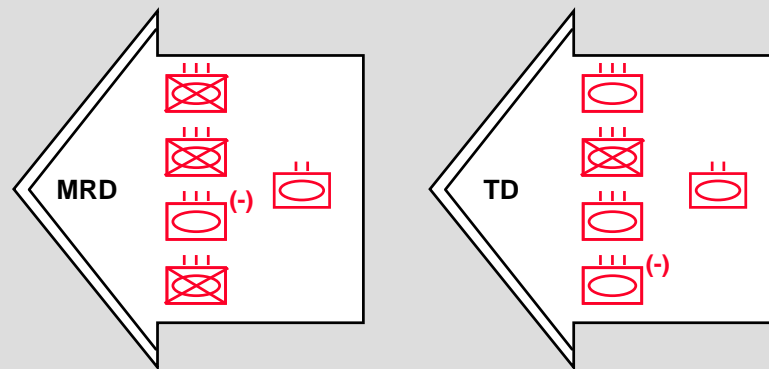


A supporting-effort division vs. a prepared defense will usually attack with three regiments forward, one regiment back. This gives him more initial firepower, while still retaining the ability to exploit success.

Against a partially-prepared defense, the OPFOR will still employ a two-echelon formation for the same reasons as above. The second echelon usually contains a tank rgt. (even in an MRD) for a more powerful follow-on force (the initial penetration has already occurred).

Division in the Offense

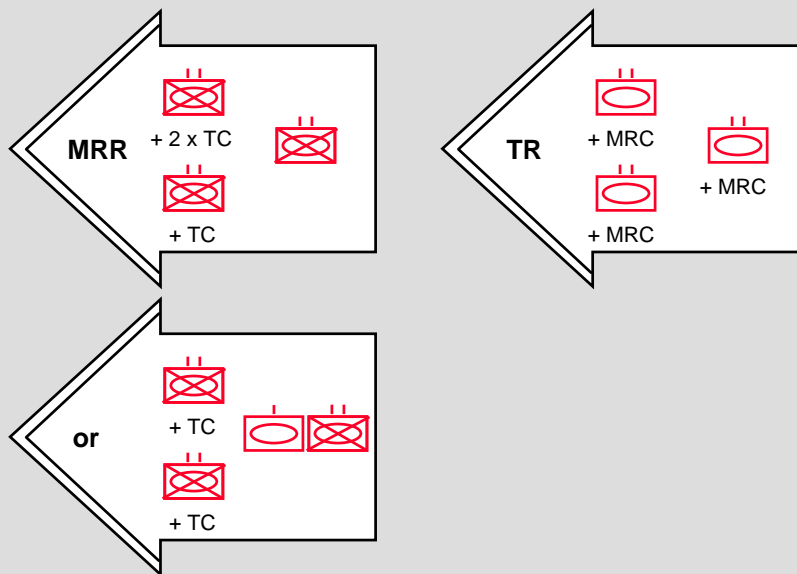
Supporting Axis against Partially-Prepared Defense
or
Any Axis against an Unprepared Defense



In this case, the OPFOR will normally form all of its maneuver regiments on line. This gives him maximum initial firepower and momentum. The commander will form a CAR, (MRB or TB) allowing him to still influence the battle and exploit success.

Regiment in the Offense

Main Axis or Against a Prepared Defense

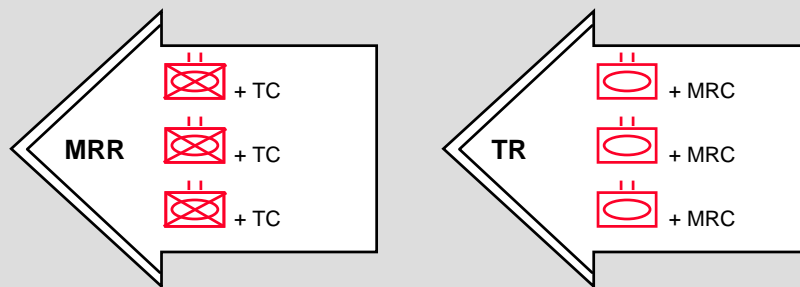


In a MRR attacking with two MRBs forward, the TB can be allocated to the 1st-echelon battalions (2 companies to the main-axis bn, 1 to the other). Alternately, each 1st-echelon bn can receive a tank company, with the third company and bn hq directly subordinate to the MRR Cdr.

A TR will normally attack with its MRB split among the TBs, each getting a MRC.

Regiment in the Offense

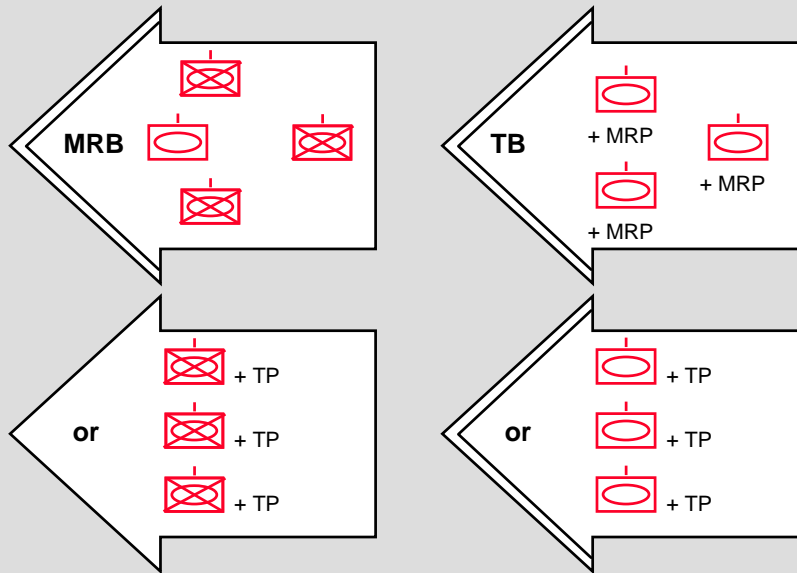
Main Axis
or
Against a Prepared Defense



Against a partially- or unprepared defense, a MRR will likely attack with three MRBs in a single echelon, each with a TC from the TR.

Likewise, a TR will normally attack with its three TRs in a single echelon, each with a MRC from the MRB.

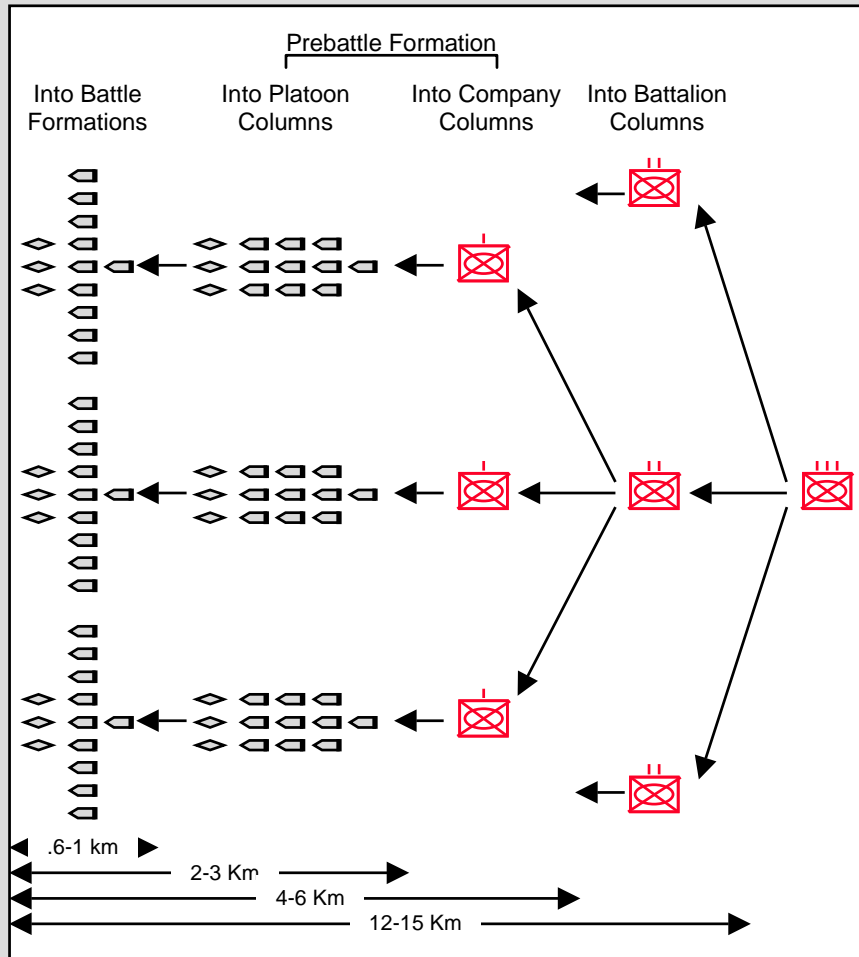
Battalion in the Offense



A MRB normally attacks in 2 echelons (a single echelon is used only in an attack against an unprepared defense). A TC attached to an MRB normally operates as a whole and leads the attack. In special situations (such as restrictive terrain, or when attacking in 1 echelon), tank platoons may be attached to the MRCs.

A tank bn normally also attacks in 2 echelons. However, a MRC attached to a TB is usually attached by platoon to the 1st-echelon TCs

Attack from the March



A MRR attacking from the march starts in **Regimental Columns**, meaning that all vehicles in the regiment are in a single line (or several lines as the terrain permits). This allows the whole column to move quickly.

The MRR breaks into **Battalion Columns** 12-15 Km from the line of contact. This means that all vehicles in each battalion are in a single line along the battalion's assigned march route.

Each MRB breaks into **Company Columns** 4-6 Km from the line of contact. Each MRC breaks into **Platoon Columns** 2-3 Km from the line of contact. When units assume company and platoon columns, this is called **Prebattle Formation**.

Each MRC assumes **battle formation** .6 - 1 Km from the line of contact. This means that all vehicles in each company are dispersed laterally into line formation.