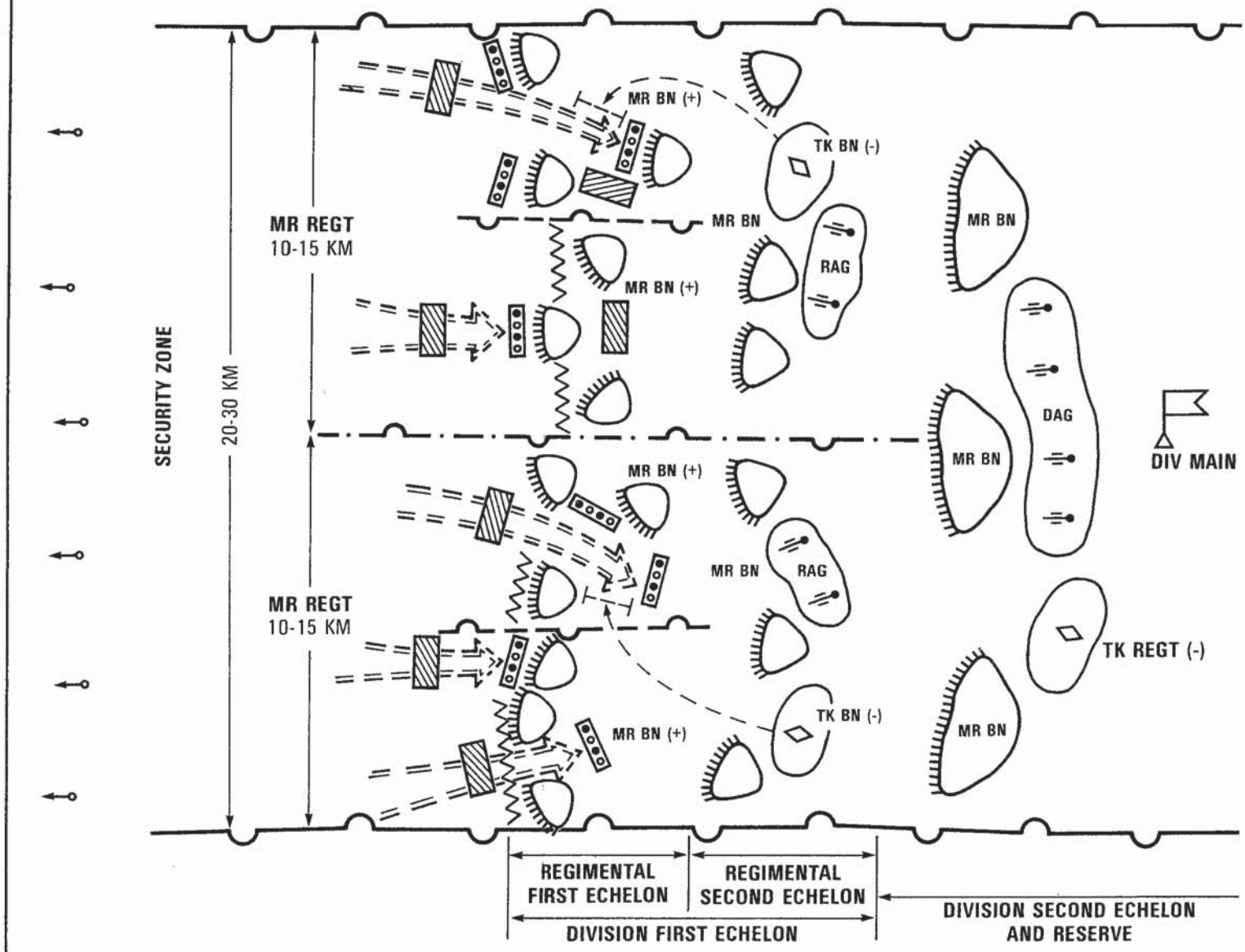
Defense of a Motorized Rifle Division, Variant



Shown above is a simplified diagram of the defense of a motorized rifle division. Not all details or weapons are shown, but the primary elements found in the division and its regimental echelons are typical.

Regimental-level Defense

A regiment may be used in the first or second echelon of the division defenses. As part of a division's first echelon, its mission is to prevent penetration of the main defenses by repulsing enemy assaults with intense fire and counterattacks by its reserve. When given the mission to defend in the division's second echelon, a regiment attempts to defeat any enemy penetration of the division's first echelon.

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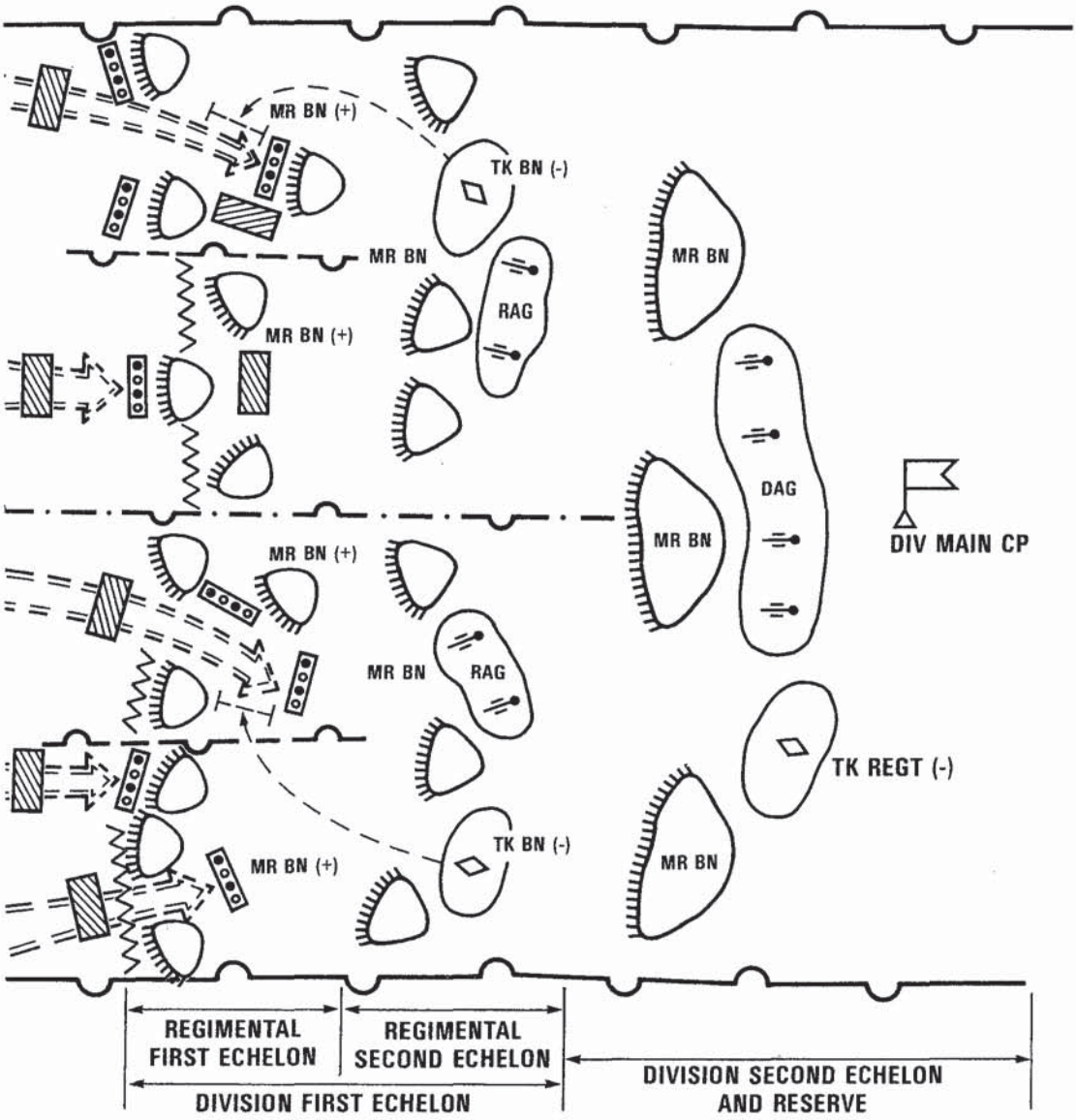

(SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM. NOT ALL DETAILS OR WEAPONS SHOWN.)

NOTES:

1. Main defensive area is organized into two echelons and a reserve:
   - First echelon inflicts enemy losses, forcing him to concentrate and canalize him into fire sacks.
   - Second echelon's mission is to destroy enemy or reinforce/replace first echelon.
2. In a motorized rifle division a tank regiment acts as the main counterattack force.
3. The security zone is comprised from elements of the division's second echelon.
4. Detailed and coordinated fire plan is developed for fire support.

LEGEND:

- Preplanned artillery concentration
- Mixed minefield (antipersonnel and antitank)
- Barrier
- Probable enemy avenue of approach

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Regimental subunits normally are dispersed so that a single low-yield nuclear strike can destroy no more than one company. Dispersion is also limited to insure the stability of the defense and to maintain the capability to mass fires. The defensive frontage for a regiment is normally 10 to 15 kilometers. The depth may vary from 7 to 10 kilometers.

A regimental reserve normally is positioned near the regiment's second echelon. It is usually of company size and tank heavy. Its mission is to conduct counterattacks against an enemy penetration.

A regimental antitank reserve normally is formed from the antitank missile battery (found only in motorized rifle regiments), the engineer company,

and either a tank or motorized rifle platoon. The engineer company probably operates as a mobile obstacle detachment to emplace hasty minefields and obstacles. The antitank reserve occupies an assembly area generally near the regimental command post.

A regiment in the division first echelon has its command post centrally located between its first and second echelons. A regimental command observation point may be established in the area of one of the subordinate battalions. Regimental logistic units and the rear area command post are positioned to the rear of the regimental second echelon. Communications are established between the command and observation posts. Wire is the primary mode, supplemented by messengers, pyrotechnic signals, and radio.

The division commander is responsible for security forward of the FEBA. The regiment is responsible for local security in front of the defensive positions of its first echelon battalions. When time and terrain limit establishment of a security echelon by division, regiments in the first echelon organize combat outposts. Each first echelon battalion places a reinforced motorized rifle platoon forward, across the main expected enemy avenue of approach into the battalion defensive area. The reconnaissance company of the first echelon regiment performs screening and reconnaissance activity in front of the combat outposts. Each battalion organizes its own observation and listening posts.

Battalion-level Defense

After receiving the mission from his regimental commander, a battalion commander begins organizing his assigned sector. The regimental order is as complete as possible. As a minimum, it contains the battalion's mission, trace of the FEBA, and battalion boundaries.

In a hasty defense, there may be no time for the regimental commander to issue an order with detailed supplementary instructions. Consequently, the motorized rifle battalion commander is allowed more initiative and flexibility in organizing his defensive position in this situation. The battalion initially consolidates on the terrain it occupies or attempts to seize critical terrain favorable for the defense. In contrast, organization of a prepared defense is centrally planned by the regiment.

A typical battalion defensive area is 3 to 5 kilometers wide and up to 2 kilometers deep. A battalion usually defends with companies in a single echelon. Single echelon deployment permits the greatest concentration of firepower but it also reduces defense in depth. When a battalion defends on a narrow frontage and/or greater depth is required, it may deploy in two echelons, with two companies in its first echelon and one in its second echelon. Reserves are located behind the second echelon. The distance between the first and second echelons can be up to 2 kilometers.

A company occupies a strongpoint 500 to 1000 meters in width and up to 500 meters in depth. Normally, all three platoons of a company defend in one echelon. (See diagrams on pages 6-8 and 6-9.)

Artillery, tanks, engineers, and chemical defense troops attached to a battalion may be allocated to the companies. This allocation depends on the number and types of attachments received by the battalion and the importance of the sectors the companies are defending. Although artillery may be assigned to the companies for direct fire support, artillery is usually positioned to provide the best fire support for the entire battalion.

The battalion commander positions a small reserve (normally a platoon) where it can most rapidly and effectively stabilize the defense in the event of an enemy penetration. Key terrain and likely enemy avenues of attack are factors in determining where the battalion reserve will be positioned. Reaction time for a mounted reserve is based on speeds of 20 to 30 kilometers per hour in daytime and 15 to 20 kilometers per hour at night.

The mortar battery of a motorized rifle battalion is deployed in accordance with the overall fire plan and is positioned to provide close-in fires for the company strongpoints.

The battalion's rear service elements are located in covered and concealed positions within the battalion area. Rear service elements are responsible for their own security and should change locations frequently to avoid destruction from enemy air and artillery fire.

Defensive fires are centrally organized and are planned as far forward of the FEBA as possible. Fires are concentrated on avenues of approach using a series of designated fire lines. The distance between these lines is 400 to 600 meters on high-speed avenues. The distance is less on less-likely avenues of approach because of a probable slower rate of advance. Artillery fire is used to separate attacking infantry from their tanks approximately 200 to 400 meters from the FEBA. Final protective fires are planned within 100 meters of the FEBA, with concentrations to halt the advance of enemy forces that have penetrated the defenses.

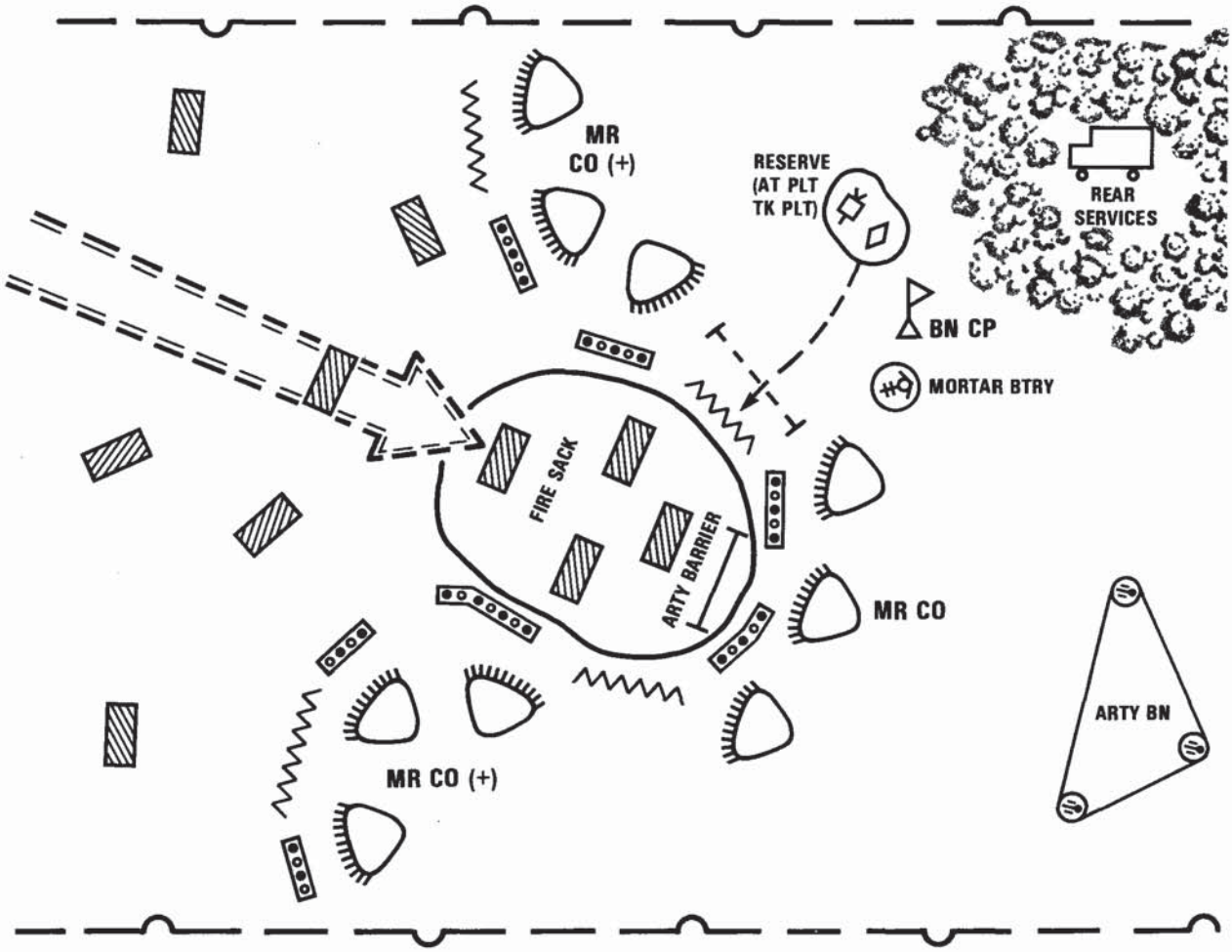
Antitank defenses are organized to engage enemy tanks at an effective range up to 3 kilometers forward of the FEBA. Normal distance between tanks and antitank weapons in defensive positions is about 100 meters. On open terrain, there may be up to 200

meters between tanks in defensive positions. The terrain is a dominant factor in positioning tanks and antitank weapons. Each tank and antitank weapon has a primary and secondary sector of fire as well as primary and alternate positions.

Barrier plans and the system of fire complement each other. Both antitank and antipersonnel minefields are laid forward of the FEBA and throughout the depth of defensive positions. Antitank obstacles are covered by direct and indirect fires. Shown below is an example of a typical defense by a reinforced motorized rifle battalion.

The Soviets constantly emphasize that the defense is a temporary form of combat that makes the transition to the offense easier. This transition can be made, however, only when each level of command is able to counterattack. The Soviets stress that counterattacks should be made when the enemy attack is stalled and he is unable to secure the terrain seized and to bring his reserves forward.

Typical Defense by a Motorized Rifle Battalion (Reinforced)



NOTE: A battalion usually defends in a single echelon, in an area 3 to 5 kilometers wide and up to 2 kilometers deep. When defending a narrow frontage or if greater depth is required, it may deploy in two echelons as above. Distance between echelons can be up to 500 meters in depth. Reserves are located behind the second echelon.

LEGEND:

- Mixed minefield (antipersonnel and antitank)
- Barrier
- Preplanned artillery concentration
- Probable enemy avenue of approach

Each level of command is prepared to conduct a counterattack. If the enemy's forces and fires overwhelm the Soviets' first echelon defenses and prevent them from conducting a counterattack, subunits hold their position, strike the enemy with all available fires, and create sufficient resistance for a counterattack by forces of the next higher command. As the enemy advances into the depths of the Soviet defense, he advances on positions that have been better prepared; and he encounters progressively larger, more powerful (primarily tank-heavy) second echelon formations, which act as counterattack forces.

As previously discussed, the Soviets emphasize dispersion into company-sized strongpoints, while maintaining mutual fire support as a defense against tactical nuclear weapons. By forming company strongpoints, adequate maneuver space is created to shift forces and to counterattack once the enemy's main attack is determined. The strongpoint is usually centered on the platoon in the second main trench.

A Motorized Rifle Company Strong Point