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**RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPLEMENTING AN APPROACH  
TO DEFENSE COMBAT PLANNING BY THE NATIONAL GUARD FORCES OF UKRAINE**

*Defensive combat is one of the main types of combined arms combat, which can be organized and conducted both by the forces and means of a separate unit and by the combined efforts of different branches and types of troops.*

*The advantage in defensive combat is formed and consists in creating conditions under which the enemy will not be able to continue advancing and (or) will suffer excessive losses during an attempt to break through.*

*It is necessary to simultaneously calculate a significant number of indicators and criteria for the effectiveness of building defense, which should take into account: the most competent organization of defensive positions and their engineering equipment; use of terrain advantages: heights, natural obstacles, forest areas, deliberate blockages and destruction; information advantage: control over communications, obtaining intelligence data by all available means, organization of close interaction, active cooperation with the local population; high mobility of reserves, rapid response to breakthroughs by maneuvering forces and means; organizing fire ambushes in weak points of the enemy's battle formation or conducting short-term counterattacks; carrying out measures to maximally exhaust the enemy; careful planning, and others.*

*In order to provide greater independence for the performance of the combat mission of organizing defense, other units may be added or allocated to support the main forces.*

*The added units (forces), firepower shall be temporarily subordinate to the commander of the main unit and shall perform the tasks assigned by him. Their withdrawal from subordination shall be carried out on the instructions of the senior command.*

*The supporting units shall remain subordinate to their direct superiors and shall perform the tasks assigned by them, as well as the tasks assigned by the commander of the supported forces, within the resources (team) allocated to him.*

*In order to improve and increase the efficiency of the defensive battle planning process by the command bodies, an approach was proposed that takes into account the distribution of available forces and means according to the most important combat tasks using the developed table.*

*The developed approach can allow the commander and the command body to make a rational decision on the*

*organization of the defensive battle and the formation of the most effective battle formation, as well as to more clearly see possible gaps if they are allowed during planning.*

**Keywords:** *defensive battle; planning of defensive battle; distribution of forces and means; main combat tasks.*

**Statement of the Problem.** At 03:40 local time on 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation (RF) launched a full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory. Under the false name “special military operation” (SMO), the adversary began a large-scale war. The war began with a broad-front air–ground offensive operation. Massive missile-artillery and aviation strikes were conducted against military targets, their command centers, and critical infrastructure, while mechanized and tank units breached Ukraine’s state border.

To repel the attack by RF forces with overwhelming superiority, units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), National Guard of Ukraine (NGU), State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU), National Police of Ukraine (NPU), Security Service of Ukraine (SSU), and other law-enforcement agencies were mobilized. The local population also took active part, both directly and on a volunteer basis.

In the initial phase of the war, the adversary held a significant advantage in manpower; mechanized units—infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), armored personnel carriers (APCs), infantry mobility vehicles (IMVs); tanks; artillery; and aviation. On certain days, the initiative remained one-sided. RF and some Western countries’ forecasts were highly pessimistic for Ukraine. However, as became clear later, numerical superiority does not always guarantee a swift victory.

Thus, the adversary, exploiting its considerable advantage, penetrated the state border, advanced deep into the country, and deployed a wide front. At that time, Ukraine’s defense could not withstand the overwhelming assault. Yet the determination, dedication, and perseverance of all units of the security and defense sector reversed the course of events.

Accordingly, attention must be paid to improving the defense-battle planning process by command authorities, taking into account the distribution of available forces and assets.

**Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.** Currently, the primary guiding documents regulating planning and conduct of defensive combat by units and formations are the Combat Statutes [1–3]. More

up-to-date draft Combat Statutes have been developed [4; 5], but they have not yet been officially implemented for troop guidance.

In each of the listed documents [1–5], the main sections titled “Defensive Combat” and their annexes contain textual provisions on organizing and conducting defensive combat. However, these statutes present all information as prose articles and do not include illustrative examples of force and asset allocation for the most characteristic combat tasks in defensive operations.

Domestic scholars who are recognized experts in military science [6–15] have highlighted fundamental principles for improving combat conduct, including defensive operations. They address capability analyses and prospective approaches to defense planning, but they do not offer concrete planning models that allocate forces and assets according to the primary missions of each unit in defense.

Allied doctrines available in the public domain—NATO doctrines [16–19] – outline approaches to planning defensive operations; yet their examples of force and asset allocation for typical missions are scattered and lack clarity.

It may therefore be concluded that neither the principal domestic guiding documents nor publicly accessible NATO doctrines provide a unified, clearly articulated methodology for planning defensive combat using a tailored allocation of forces and assets to the most relevant combat tasks.

**The purpose of this article** is to develop an approach and formulate recommendations to the management bodies of the NGU units regarding increasing the efficiency of the defensive battle planning process with the distribution of available forces and means for the most likely combat missions.

**Presentation of the Main Material.** According to the Combat Statutes, defensive combat is one of the primary types of combined-arms combat and has four main objectives [1; 2]:

– repelling the enemy’s offensive; – Inflicting maximum losses on the enemy; – Holding important terrain areas (lines, objectives); – Creating favorable conditions for transition to offensive operations or other actions.

– depending on numerous conditions and factors, a unit may conduct positional or maneuver defense. The

transition to defense may be deliberate or forced, in the absence of or upon immediate contact with the enemy.

According to current guiding documents, the following typical linear–spatial indicators are accepted for organizing defense by AFU units and NGU operational formations:

A squad in defensive combat holds a fighting position up to 100 m on the front and may be emplaced in a single trench.

A standard organizational – staff platoon defends a strongpoint with up to 400 m frontage and up to 300 m depth.

A mechanized company in defensive combat holds a company strongpoint. The width of the company strongpoint for a standard organizational–staff structure may be 1–1.5 km in frontage and up to 1 km in depth.

A battalion is assigned a defense sector. A battalion’s defense sector may be 3–5 km on the front and up to 3 km in depth.

A brigade is assigned a defense zone 10–15 km in frontage and 10–15 km in depth.

Depending on the situation, the enemy’s strength and assets, and terrain, the frontage and depth of the defense deployment may vary. However, tactical interaction and fire support among all elements of the

battle formation, dispersed dispositions, and the ability to maneuver by forces and fires must be ensured [1; 2; 5].

The battle formation in defensive combat is typically built in one or two echelons and may include the following system components: artillery; air defense (AD); strongpoints and fire positions; direct-fire assets; engineer obstacles; and, at the commander’s discretion, additional elements may be formed: mobile obstacle detachments; counter-landing, anti-tank, general-arms, and/or other types of reserves.

A standard organizational–staff structure at the brigade level, a variant of which is shown in Figure 1, and at the battalion level includes the command element (headquarters), combat units, and support units.

For headquarters operations, brigade command posts are deployed, and at the battalion, company, and platoon levels, command-and-observation posts (COPs) are established.

To grant greater autonomy in accomplishing the defensive mission, other units may be attached or allocated in support of the main defensive forces.

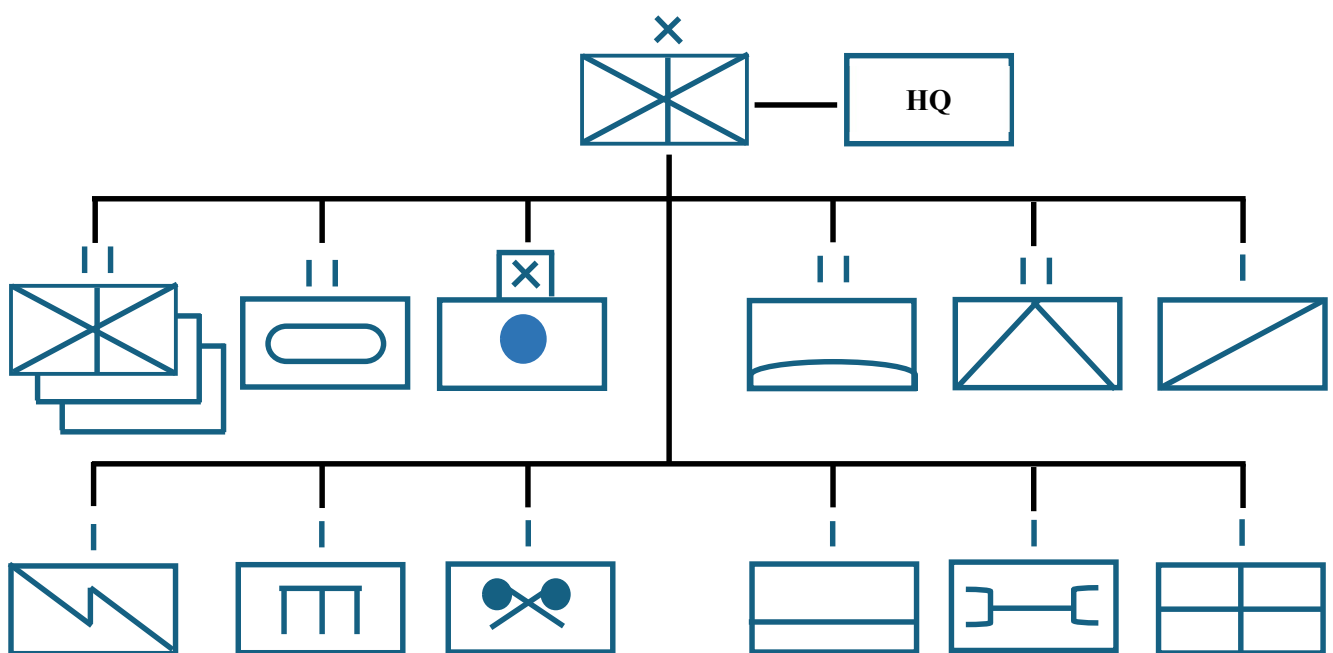


Figure 1. Sample organizational–staff structure of a brigade Source: developed by the authors based on [5]

**Attached units (forces) and fire assets** are temporarily placed under the operational control of the parent unit commander and execute assigned tasks. Their release from subordination is effected upon orders from higher command.

**Supporting units** remain under the command of their direct superiors while performing both their designated missions and tasks requested by the supported force commander within allocated resources (tasking allocation).

**Units that may be attached or provide support to main forces include:**

- Infantry
- Mechanized
- Armored (tank)
- Artillery
- Air Defense (AA)
- Army Aviation (helicopters and/or fixed-wing aircraft)
  - Anti-Tank Weapons (ATW)
  - Military Intelligence
  - Electronic Warfare/Signals Intelligence (EW/SIGINT)
    - Communications
    - Electronic Warfare (EW)
    - Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) / Unmanned Aerial Complexes (UAC)
      - Combat Engineers
      - Nuclear, Chemical, Biological Defense (NBC)
      - Medical
      - Repair and Recovery
      - Logistics (LOG)

**Conclusions (based on analysis of key doctrinal documents [1; 2; 5]):**

The analysis of requirements and provisions from primary governing documents [1; 2; 5] leads to the conclusion that when organizing defensive operations, inexperienced commanders face the following challenges:

- The material is presented concisely without supplemental explanations;
- Excessive textual information complicates spatial awareness and hinders comprehensive understanding of defensive battle organization;
- Relying solely on doctrinal articles makes it difficult for commanders to account for all potential tasks of each combat formation element that might be created for defensive operations.

Therefore, we propose combining two approaches simultaneously – in accordance with both domestic regulatory documents [1; 2; 5] and NATO doctrines [16-19] – for organizing defensive operations.

Given the number of potential combat formation elements in defensive operations that may be created, along with attached and supporting forces and assets, it becomes particularly challenging to effectively communicate the commander's intent to all subordinate personnel. To address this issue and improve command staff operations, we propose implementing a methodology for allocating available forces and assets according to their designated missions.

A sample of such a distribution is shown in Table 1.

In Table 1, the allocation of forces and assets for defensive combat planning is presented systematically and clearly, taking into account the main combat tasks:

- The "FIND" task (detection forces) is represented by: row 1, columns 1 (military intelligence), 2 (electronic warfare), 3 (use of UAVs and UCAVs).
- The "FIX" task (fixation forces) is represented by: row 2, columns 1 (towed artillery), 2 (wheeled self-propelled artillery), 3 (tracked self-propelled artillery), 4 (rocket artillery); row 3, columns 1 (missile troops), 2 (use of strike UAVs and UCAVs of various types), 3 (army aviation helicopters), 4 (army aviation fixed-wing aircraft).

Table 1

## Variant of force and asset allocation for defensive combat planning

No.	Tasks		1	2	3	4
1	FIND	Detection forces				
2	FIX	Fixation forces				
3						
4	STRIKE	Destruction forces				
5						
6	SHIELD	Protection forces				
7						
8	SUPPORT	Support forces				
9						
10	RESERVE	Reserve forces				

*Developed by the authors based on data from [1, 2, 5, 16–19]*

– The "STRIKE" task (destruction forces) is represented by: row 4, columns 1 (tanks), 2 (IFVs), 3 (APCs), 4 (armored mobility vehicles); row 5, column 1 (infantry).

– The "SHIELD" task (protection forces) is represented by: row 6, columns 1 (anti-tank weapons),

2 (air defense), 3 (engineer-sapper units), 4 (CBRN defense); row 7, column 1 (electronic warfare).

– The "SUPPORT" task (support forces) is represented by: row 8, columns 1 (medical), 2 (repair and technical), 3 (transport), 4 (resupply of ammunition); row 9, columns 1 (materiel-technical

support), 2 (fuel and lubricants), 3 (food supplies), 4 (communications).

– The "RESERVE" task (reserve) can be represented by various force-and-asset options. One key requirement for the reserve is mobility, so it is often formed as a composite unit consisting primarily of combat vehicles—for example, row 10, columns 1 (tank), 2 (IFV), 3 (APC), 4 (armored mobility vehicle). These vehicles can operate independently or with an embarked infantry detachment, either inside the vehicle or “mounted.”

### Conclusions and prospects for further research.

Effective defense relies on a well-orchestrated combination of tactical, operational, and strategic measures. Key elements include not only material-technical support and force strength, but also creativity in using the terrain, adaptability to combat conditions, and the ability to act preemptively.

Therefore, the force-and-asset allocation by task in Table 1 allows a commander to visually identify, assess, and make an informed decision on organizing defensive combat and establishing an effective battle formation.

Each element within that formation is assigned its corresponding combat mission. This makes it possible to immediately spot any gaps in available forces, assets, or tasks that may have been overlooked.

In our view, this approach is highly illustrative, covers the principal missions of troops in defensive combat, and could be adopted by NGU command authorities and other security agencies directly engaged in combined-arms operations.

Future research should focus on analyzing and developing recommendations for NGU command authorities to improve offensive combat planning and organization, drawing on domestic experience and NATO best practices.

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