



INFANTRY DIVISION OPERATIONS, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, FM 71-100-2, Military Manual

D. Kvasnicka, U.S. Army

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Field manual (FM) 71-100-2 is a “how to” guide for the employment of US light, airborne, and air assault infantry divisions in combat. It describes tactics and techniques for the conduct of combat operations and the integration and coordination of combat, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) functions.

Since the publication of the 1986 version of FM 100-5, the world and our Army have undergone significant changes. Our country has been involved in three key victories—Panama, the Gulf War, and the Cold War. Concurrently, the Army has undergone a force structure change, reducing the size of the Army and the number of forward deployed units geared to counter a Warsaw Pact invasion. These external and internal changes have caused us to modify how we as an Army think and conduct warfare.

Military doctrine presents fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces. Doctrine is authoritative, but not directive; descriptive, not prescriptive. It provides the distilled insights and wisdom gained from the Army’s collective experience with warfare. However, doctrine cannot replace clear thinking or alter a commander’s obligation to determine the proper course of action under the circumstances prevailing at the time of decision.

The five Army operations tenets are the basis for the development of all current US Army doctrine, tactics, and techniques. Success on the battlefield will depend on our ability to fight according to these tenets: initiative, agility, depth, synchronization, and versatility.

Initiative sets or changes the terms of battle by action. It is the effort to force the enemy to conform to our operational tempo and purpose while retaining our freedom of action. This will require commanders to understand the intent of their commanders two levels above—centralized planning but decentralized execution.

Agility is the ability to act faster than the enemy—a prerequisite for seizing and holding the initiative. Quickness permits the rapid concentration of combat power against the enemy’s vulnerabilities. It requires the commander to constantly read the battlefield, anticipate, make quick decisions, and act without hesitation. This may require committing forces quickly without complete information when situations are time-sensitive. Agility is both mental and physical flexibility—seeing and reacting rapidly to changing situations.

Depth is the extension of operations in time, space, resources, and purpose. The commander uses these factors in thinking in depth to forecast, anticipate likely events, and expand his freedom of action. He then applies them to arrange all available resources to attack the enemy simultaneously and sequentially throughout the depth of the battlefield.

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