

# OPERATIONAL PHASING: PHASE NAMES SHOULD BE DRIVEN BY ACTIVITY IN EACH PHASE

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Phasing an operation has for years seemed to be as difficult a subject to discuss as either religion or politics. People seem to develop an opinion and stay with it despite all arguments presented to the contrary. What follows is taken from Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (see figure at right).

P: Primary planning/execution emphasis

S: Secondary planning/execution emphasis

T: Tertiary planning/execution emphasis

## PHASE I: SHAPE

P: Stability S: Offense T: Defense

## PHASE II: DETER

P: Defense S: Offense T: Stability

## PHASE III: SEIZE INITIATIVE

P: Offense S: Defense T: Stability

## PHASE IV: DOMINATE

P: Offense S: Defense T: Stability

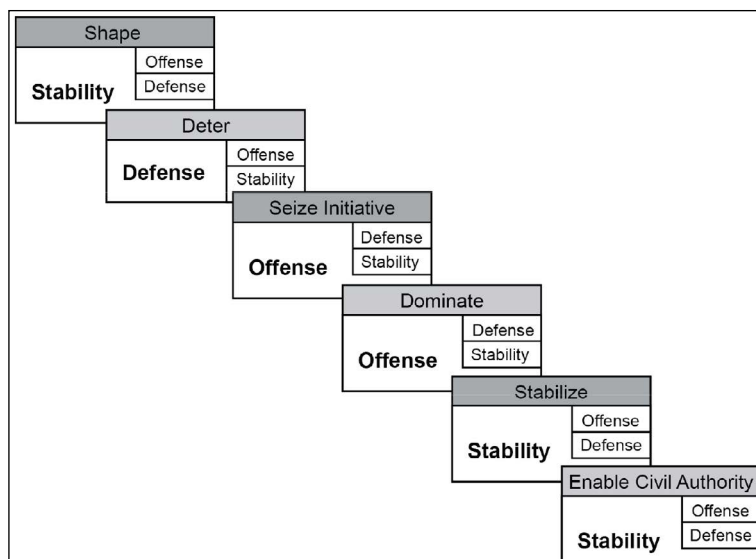
## PHASE V: STABILIZE

P: Stability S: Offense T: Defense

## PHASE VI: ENABLE CIVIL AUTHORITY

P: Stability S: Offense T: Defense

There has become a rather widespread belief that this example of phasing is a model to be followed despite the notation in paragraph 2-27 which states, "These phases are examples. An actual campaign may name and array phases differently." The name of each phase should be driven by the activity in that phase, and the emphasis on decisive action tasks (offense, defense, stability) will also be driven by what the planners intend to have occur in that phase. "**Deter, dominate, and seize the initiative**" may have clear meanings at the theater, corps, and division plans level, but once translated to brigade and below the meanings and intent of the higher echelon planners tend



Example of Combining the Elements of Decisive Action in a Notional Campaign

to become blurred. The ability to execute all three decisive action tasks at the same time is situation and echelon dependent. A corps or division can probably execute all of the tasks, to some degree, at the same time. Once we move to brigade combat team (BCT) and below, this becomes more difficult and unlikely. At echelons below division it is likely that the tertiary emphasis is being planned for but not executed at any given moment.

Prior to the attack on 9/11, G3 XVIII Airborne Corps developed a five-phased model for an operation requiring forced entry. I intend to use a slight modification of that model to discuss operational phasing.

### **Model**

PHASE I: DEPLOY/FORCED ENTRY

PHASE II: ATTACK TO RESTORE INTERNATIONAL BORDER

PHASE III: DEFEND INTERNATIONAL BORDER

PHASE IV: INTERNAL DEFENSE OF ATROPIA

PHASE V: REDEPLOY

### **General Scenario**

Atropia has been invaded by its neighbor Ariana. Arianan forces have occupied a significant portion of Atropia but have been attrited by coalition air forces and culminated. An Atropian security force is securing the coalition assembly areas and providing early warning of any Arianan attack. A corps-level formation of Arianan forces remains in Ariana and may or may not be committed into Atropia. There is a major river approximately half way to the international border from current coalition positions. The border region is ethnically mixed and the population has divided loyalties to both countries.

#### **PHASE I: DEPLOY/ OCCUPY ASSEMBLY AREAS**

P: Defense, S: Stability, T: Offense

#### **PHASE II: ATTACK TO SEIZE INITIAL OBJECTIVES AND RIVER CROSSING**

P: Offense, S: Defense, T: Stability

#### **PHASE III: ATTACK TO RESTORE INTERNATIONAL BORDER**

P: Offense, S: Defense, T: Stability

#### **PHASE IV: DEFEND INTERNATIONAL BORDER**

P: Defense, S: Offense, T: Stability

#### **PHASE V: INTERNAL DEFENSE OF ATROPIA**

P: Stability, S: Defense, T: Stability

#### **PHASE VI: REDEPLOY**

P: Defense, S: Stability, T: Defense

Next, the critical events for each phase will be added. The numbers represent a possible sequence of execution and not necessarily a priority of execution.

#### **PHASE I: DEPLOY/OCCUPY ASSEMBLY AREAS**

P: Defense, S: Stability, T: Offense

1. Occupy assembly area.
2. Establish perimeter defense.
3. Coordinate with maneuver enhancement brigade (MEB) for fires plan and base cluster defense.
4. Establish task organization to support river crossing and initial attack.

#### **PHASE II: ATTACK TO SEIZE INITIAL OBJECTIVES AND RIVER CROSSING**

P: Offense, S: Defense, T: Stability

5. Conduct forward passage of lines (FPOL) with Atropian security force.
6. Conduct zone recon to river.
7. Conduct area recon of crossing sites and initial objective.
8. Attack to river.

9. Conduct river crossing and seize initial objectives.
10. Defend bridgehead.

### **PHASE III: ATTACK TO RESTORE INTERNATIONAL BORDER**

P: Offense, S: Defense, T: Stability

11. Pass control of bridgehead to brigade engineer battalion (BEB).
12. Change task organization to remove bridging equipment from attacking formations.
13. Attack to restore international border.

### **PHASE IV: DEFEND INTERNATIONAL BORDER**

P: Defense, S: Offense, T: Stability

14. Establish area defense (forward) of international border.
15. Establish screen forward of BCT.
16. Establish obstacle plan for screen and Main Battle Area (MBA).
17. Establish a Forward Supply Point (FSP) for Class IV/V barrier material.
18. Establish BCT rear area with BEB in control.

### **PHASE V: INTERNAL DEFENSE OF ATROPIA**

P: Stability, S: Defense, T: Offense

19. Maintain screen of international border.
20. Divide BCT AO into battalion-sized AOs.
21. Defend key infrastructure.
22. Conduct assessments of population centers within AO.
23. Partner with Atropan security forces.
24. Conduct Search and Attack as necessary.

### **PHASE VI: REDEPLOY**

P: Defense, S: Stability, T: Offense

25. Turn over battalion AOs to Atropan forces.
26. Occupy assembly areas for redeployment.

You will notice that the six phases now contain 26 critical events and it could be easily a larger number with a little imagination. Especially in the operationally heavy phases (II, III, and IV depicted here), there is a tendency to take what are actually critical events and make them another phase. This makes the operation order (OPORD) more complex as each additional phase should require an additional sub-paragraph to the main paragraphs, changes to the task organization, and additional graphics. In most cases, the additional “phases” are unnecessary and clutter an already busy process. Per paragraph 4-41 in ADRP 3-0: “A change in phase usually involves a change of mission, task organization, or rules of engagement” Unfortunately, we appear to have strayed from this concept. The old FM 5-0 used to have a copy of a 4th ID operations order from WWII. It was 10 pages long. This was explained by stating that the division had been in combat continuously for three years and all the SOPs were understood. A 10-page division-level OPORD will probably never be seen again, but we can reduce the size and complexity of what is currently being written.

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