

An **MOR** Digest

From *Dialog* (Federal Republic of Germany)



*Title photo courtesy L'Armee.*

# ***Mobile Defense***

Paul Carell

**A** CAMPAIGN has started in the Federal Republic against the defense concept of the Bundeswehr. The procurement of modern Leopard battle tanks is claimed to be too expensive and, what is more, unnecessary. The battle tank is said to be the classical offensive weapon system—a favorite of the former proponents of a strategy against the USSR. True defensive concepts, it is said, do not require offensive weapons: Reequipping the *Bundeswehr* with tanks makes Bonn's doctrine of detente dubious.



*Army News Features*

**Only a battle tank is capable of conducting a counterattack**



*Rheinatahl Sonderfertigung*

**90-millimeter gun tank destroyer**

The *Bundeswehr* has been organized to defend us right at the border. The 1970 white paper on the security of the Federal Republic states that:

*The security of the population of the Federal Republic can only be safeguarded by a defense starting at the border. That is why no Federal Government could ever abandon the principle of forward defense.*

### Defensive Doctrine

The former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Albert Schnetz, explained the defensive doctrine:

*The mission of the German Army within the strategy of flexible response is obvious: To, defend the Federal Republic and to protect the Federal territory from enemy penetration.*

This is a clear-cut strategic concept of defense. The unrestrictedly defensive character of the *Bundeswehr* is not only militarily relevant, but has internal and external political significance. The defensive doctrine is an important element of the policy of detente. No one should be suspicious of us and think that we want to attack anyone.

The white paper continues:

*Though capable of launching tactical counter-attacks, the Federal Armed Forces are unable to carry out largescale offensive operations. Both their combat units and their logistics organization are devised for defense.*

This article was translated and condensed from the original, published in DIALOG (Federal Republic of Germany) January 1971, under the title "Verteidigung mit offensiven Waffensystemen?" Copyright © 1971 by DIALOG.

The defensive doctrine is continued in the strategy of controlled, graduated, and flexible response. As General Schnetz has stated: "The fundamental idea of a strategy of adequate response is to meet possible aggression with only that force required to control the crisis."

This should serve to eliminate any doubt about roles and missions of the *Bundeswehr*. Nevertheless, again and again, investigations are undertaken in order to make quite sure that no one—not even a villainous general or politician—violates this vow to abstain from the offensive. One of the most recent contributions in this respect is the discussion now underway about battle tanks for the *Bundeswehr*. Does an army which purports to be defensive in nature still require battle tanks which are commonly considered offensive weapon systems? The argument runs:

*Battle tanks are the classical weapons of modern offense. Why should we have offensive weapon systems if we want to be defensive? Let us reduce the number of battle tanks.*

### Gun Tank Destroyers

As an alternative, the demand is made that larger numbers of the specifically defensive gun tank destroyers be procured for the *Bundeswehr*—more gun tank destroyers and fewer battle tanks because of the principle and because it is much cheaper.

A weekly magazine had this to say in November 1970:

*The army has a total of 3,300 battle tanks which are better suited for attack than for defense—1,838 Leopards costing \$300,000 each and 1,462 Pattons of U.S. origin which are to be replaced by Leopard II beginning in 1975. This follow-on model is to cost \$525,000 each. However, the army has only 1,086 tank destroyers which are the core*

## MOBILE DEFENSE

*of effective anti-tank operations and cost only \$175,000 to \$200,000 each. Anti-tank specialists feel that this expensive offensive-defensive mix at a ratio of 3: 1 serves only to satisfy prestige which the armored strategists in their World War II nostalgia feel they require, but not our security.*

Where does that leave the defensive doctrine, and what about economy? If

price, whereas the \$525,000 for the *Leopard II* is the 1972 price. A 1972 tank destroyer would have to incorporate a number of product improvements and would also cost between \$230,000 and \$260,000.

What is offensive, and what is defensive? A weapon or a weapon system by itself alone cannot be classified as either offensive or defensive. Only the structure of large units



*Wehr und Wirtschaft*

### **TOW antitank missile used by rifle units**

the *Bundeswehr* had, instead, 3,000 tank destroyers costing \$175,000 each, but only 1,000 *Leopard* battle tanks costing \$525,000 each, this would mean a saving of 700 million dollars, and that would be exactly the sum which the government in Bonn so urgently needs for its educational reform plans. Very impressive, indeed, but a miscalculation in every respect. For one thing, \$175,000 is the 1965 procurement

and their number and deployment will show whether they are geared for attack or for defense.

What is the answer as far as we are concerned? The Warsaw Pact has concentrated 13,500 battle tanks on the glaxis of the Federal Republic. They are organized in major armored units and could attack us without noticeable initial redeployment. Due to their

superiority in numbers, these tank armies could form strong concentrations and thrust through our defense system, penetrate deep into our rear, and cause the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's defensive front to collapse. There is no remedy against such concentrated operations. Any defense—even if deeply echeloned—would be without effect, however plentiful area fire weapons and tank destroyers might be. There is only one remedy: The employment of mobile armored units which, advancing in counterattacks under a strong fire screen, can destroy enemy tank units wherever they might have penetrated.

### **Counterattacks**

Counterattacks are essential. They are the focal element of a defensive battle against enemy armor. Only a battle tank with its fire control, day-and-night optics, and its balanced combination of firepower, mobility, and endurance is capable of conducting such a fight. Its capability of quickly changing the direction of fire by simply rotating the turret makes it vastly superior to the tank destroyer.

Defending our territory and recapturing lost terrain are unthinkable without counterattack, and counterattacks without battle tanks are impossible. There is only one alternative to a counterattack by battle tanks against a large enemy armored unit advancing deeply into our territory—the massive use of nuclear weapons. No arguments are needed to show that this alternative of detonating nuclear weapons on our own territory is completely unacceptable.

The battle tank used as a casemate vehicle is more expensive than a tank destroyer. The cheaper, agile, and accurate tank destroyer is as effective in a purely

defensive role as a tank, as long as it can operate from defilade and in terrain suitable for defense. It is an excellent weapon system, which is why, in the new army structure, those major units primarily geared for defense, such as rifle brigades and home defense units, will be equipped with tank destroyers instead of battle tanks.

But it is a dangerous error to assume that such units, however many gun tank destroyers they might have, would have a chance of success where the enemy has the advantage of terrain which favors mobility as does the North German Plain. Static area defense against major enemy armored units would require efforts in personnel, equipment, and weapons that are impossible for a nation of our size to realize. It would require a continuous defensive system of more than 1,200 miles in length, deeply echeloned and backed by heavily fortified strongholds. It would require human sacrifices which are out of proportion to a possible success.

### **No Substitute**

At the moment, there are no indications in either East or West of a follow-on weapon system for the battle tank. It is true that the limits of its effectiveness are becoming more and more obvious, at least in central Europe. The increasing density of buildings which limits intervisibility, the resultant decrease in combat ranges in spite of longer range artillery, the increased effectiveness of antitank weapons, and many other considerations make it necessary to look for new technological variants and new armor battle tactics.

The third dimension seems to offer the obvious solution. Armored helicopter gunships could be a way out. But this will be an evolutionary, not revolutionary,

## MOBILE DEFENSE

---

development. As of today, the battle tank is still the focal element of the defensive battle, the very heart of defense itself.

But defensive strategy is more than mere belief in the miraculous qualities of a type of combat or a weapon system.

Defensive strategy is, as General Schnez said:

*Overcoming military aggression without disproportionate escalation; the only*

*strategic concept, indeed the only way out of the infamous deadend road of major war: capitulation of nuclear annihilation.*

There is no ideal solution. But the words of Clausewitz, taught at military academies throughout the world, are still true: “The defense is the strongest form of war if it is a shield formed of skillfully delivered blows.”

Such blows can only be dealt by armored units—at least as of today.

## MILITARY REVIEW BINDERS

Are your back issues of the Military Review becoming dog-eared? Bind them in a sturdy, hard-covered binder.

- Holds 12 issues and the index.
- Gold lettering on maroon.
- \$4.15 plus 85 cents postage (\$1.10 to foreign countries).

Send check or money order to: Military Review Subscription Service, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027. Please include name, address, and Zip code.