Section
10

DEFENSE

Key Points

1 Characteristics of the Defense

2 Sequence of the Defense

3 Planning Considerations

4 Engagement Area Development

5 Occupying and Preparing Defensive Positions

6 Defensive Techniques

7 Fighting and Survivability Positions

8 Retrograde

He who stays on the defensive does not make war, he endures it.

Field Marshal Colmar Baron von der Goltz

From P. Tsouras, editor, *The Greenhill Book of Military Quotations*

Introduction

In sports, playing good defense is as important as playing good offense. The other team is going to have the ball, control the serve, or be at bat sometimes. The defenders try to disrupt their opponents' offensive strategy to prevent them from scoring. The team whose defense is as potent as its offense often has a powerful advantage.

So it is in war. The US Army always plans to take the offensive. When attacked, Army units—beginning with squads and platoons—conduct defensive operations to regain the initiative, keep the enemy reacting, and prevent enemy forces from carrying out their own plan.

In today's Contemporary Operating Environment, where the "front line" may be anywhere and at anytime, squads and platoons must understand defensive techniques so well they can implement them at a moment's notice. The aim is always to regroup as necessary and carry the fight to the enemy.

The Soldiers of the 101st Airborne and other units demonstrated the principles of defense when they held on in a desperate situation in Belgium during Christmas 1944.

The Battle of the Bulge

In December 1944 the German Army launched its last major offensive on the Western Front [in Europe], sending massive infantry and armor formations into a lightly held sector of the Allied line in Belgium. American units were overrun. Thousands of green troops, sent to that sector because it was quiet, were captured. For two desperate weeks the Allies fought to check the enemy advance. The 101st Airborne Division was sent to the town of Bastogne. The Germans needed to control the crossroads there to move equipment to the front; the 101st was there to stop them.

Outnumbered, surrounded, low on ammunition, out of medical supplies, and with wounded piling up, the 101st, elements of the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions, and a tank destroyer battalion fought off repeated attacks through some of the coldest weather Europe had seen in 50 years. Wounded men froze to death in their foxholes. Paratroopers fought tanks. Nonetheless, when the German commander demanded American surrender, BG Anthony C. McAuliffe, acting division commander, sent a one-word reply: "Nuts."

The Americans held. By the time the Allies regained control of the area and pushed the Germans back, Hitler's "Thousand Year Reich" had fewer than four months remaining.

Characteristics of the Defense

When you're planning for the defense as a platoon leader, you'll want to take the following characteristics of the defense into consideration:

- Preparation
- Security
- Disruption
- Massing effects
- Flexibility.

To ensure the success of the defense, you must understand the characteristics of the defense and apply troop leading procedures (TLP) during planning, preparation, and execution of any operation.

Preparation

The friendly defender arrives in the battle area before the enemy attacker. As the defender, your platoon must take advantage by making the most of preparations for combat in the time available. By thoroughly analyzing the factors of METT-TC, you gain an understanding of the tactical situation and identify potential friendly and enemy weaknesses.

By arriving in the battle area first, your platoon has the advantage of preparing the terrain before the engagement. Through the proper selection of terrain and reinforcing obstacles, you can direct the energy of the enemy's attack into terrain you choose. Take advantage of this by making the most thorough preparations that time allows while always continuing to improve your defenses—security measures, engagement areas, and survivability positions. Preparing the ground includes plans for fires and movement; counterattack plans; and readying positions, routes, obstacles, logistics, and command and control (C2) facilities.

Your platoon must exploit every aspect of terrain and weather to its advantage. In the defense, as in the attack, terrain is valuable only if possessing or controlling it gives you an advantage. In developing a defensive plan, take account of key terrain and attempt to visualize and cover with fire all possible enemy avenues of approach into your sector. Seek to defend on terrain that maximizes effective fire, cover, concealment, movement, and surprise.

Assume that the enemy is observing your defensive preparations. To hinder the enemy's intelligence effort, establish security forces to conduct counter reconnaissance and deceive the enemy about the exact location of your main defenses.

Security

The goals of your platoon's security efforts are normally tied to the company's efforts. These efforts include providing early warning, destroying enemy reconnaissance units, and impeding and harassing elements of the enemy main body. Your platoon will typically continue its security mission until directed to displace.

Disruption

Defensive plans vary with the circumstances, but all defensive concepts of the operation aim at disrupting the enemy attacker's timing and synchronization. Counterattacks, indirect fires, obstacles, and the retention of key terrain prevent the enemy from concentrating his strength against selected portions of your platoon's defense. Destroying enemy command and control vehicles disrupts the enemy synchronization and flexibility. Separating enemy units from one another allows you to defeat them piecemeal.

Massing Effects

Your platoon must mass the overwhelming effects of combat power at the decisive place and time if it is to succeed. Your must obtain a local advantage at points of decision. Offensive action may be a means of gaining this advantage. Remember that *massing* refers to combat power and its effects—not just numbers of Soldiers and weapons systems.

Flexibility

Flexibility derives from sound preparation and effective command and control. It results from a detailed analysis of the factors of METT-TC, an understanding of your unit's purpose, and aggressive reconnaissance and surveillance. Your platoon must be agile enough to counter or avoid the enemy attacker's blows and then strike back effectively. For example, supplementary positions on a secondary avenue of approach may provide your platoon additional flexibility. Immediate transitions from defense to offense are difficult. To ease this transition, think through and plan for actions your platoon may need to take, and then rehearse them in a prioritized sequence based on time available.

Sequence of the Defense

As part of a larger element, your platoon conducts defensive operations in a sequence of integrated and overlapping phases. You implement the sequence of the defense as follows:

- Reconnaissance, security operations, and enemy preparatory fires
- Occupation
- Approach of the enemy main attack
- Enemy assault
- Counterattack
- Consolidation and reorganization.

Reconnaissance, Security Operations, and Enemy Preparatory Fires

Security forces must protect friendly forces in the main battle area (MBA) and allow them to prepare for the defense. The goals of a security force include providing early warning, destroying enemy reconnaissance elements (as possible), and disrupting enemy forward detachments or advance guard elements. Your platoon may be attached to a larger element or remain with the parent company to conduct counter-reconnaissance. Additionally, your platoon may conduct security operations as part of the company defensive plan—conducting patrols or manning observation post(s) (OP) to observe named area(s) of interest (NAI).

Your platoon may also be required to provide guides to a passing friendly security force and may be tasked to close the passage lanes. The passage could be for friendly forces entering or departing the security zone, and may include logistics units supporting the security forces. Your platoon, as part of a larger force, may also play a role in shaping the battlefield. The battalion or brigade combat team commander may position the company to deny likely enemy attack corridors. This will enhance flexibility and force enemy elements into friendly engagement areas.

When not conducting security or preparation tasks, your platoon will normally occupy dug-in positions with overhead cover to avoid possible enemy artillery preparatory fires.

Occupation

The occupation phase of the defense includes moving to the defensive location. A quartering party under company control normally leads this movement to clear the defensive position and prepare it for occupation. Your platoon plans, reconnoiters, and then occupies the defensive position. The battalion establishes security forces, while the remaining forces prepare the defense. To gain as much time as possible for planning, occupying, and preparing the defense, you and your Soldiers must understand your duties and responsibilities, including priorities of work (covered in the warning order [WARNO] or by a unit tactical standing operating procedure [TSOP]).

You occupy and prepare the defense site as you conduct TLP and develop the engagement area (if required). Your platoon occupies defensive positions in accordance with the company commander's plan and the results of your platoon's reconnaissance. To ensure an effective and efficient occupation, the reconnaissance element marks the friendly positions. You then enter these tentative positions on the operational graphics. Each squad moves in or is led in by a guide to its marker. Once in position, each squad leader checks the position location. As your platoon occupies its positions, you position each squad to ensure it locates in accordance with the tentative plan. If you note discrepancies between the squads' actual positions and your plan, make the corrections. Place security out in front of the platoon. You must personally walk the fighting positions to ensure that everyone understands the plan and that the following are in accordance with the plan:

- Weapons orientation and general sectors of fire
- Crew-served weapons positions
- Rifle squads' positions in relation to each other.

Each squad leader ensures he or she knows your location and that of the platoon sergeant for command and control purposes, and knows the location of the casualty collection point. Your platoon may be required to assist engineers in constructing tactical obstacles in your sector. All leaders must know where these obstacles are so they can tie them into their fire plans.

When the occupation is complete, subordinate leaders can begin to develop their sector sketches based on the basic fire plan developed during your reconnaissance. You improve positions when the direct fire plan is finalized and proofed. In addition to establishing your platoon's primary positions, you and your subordinate leaders normally plan to prepare and occupy alternate, supplementary, and subsequent positions. You do this in accordance with the company order. The platoon and company reserve need to know the location of these positions. You take into account the following tactical considerations for these positions.

Alternate Positions

Each alternate position:

sector of fire

a defined area that must be covered by the fire of individual or crew-served weapons or a unit's weapons

- covers the same avenue of approach or **sector of fire** as the primary position
- is located slightly to the front, flank, or rear of the primary position
- is positioned forward of the primary defensive positions during limited visibility operations
- is normally employed to supplement or support positions with weapons of limited range, such as infantry squad positions
- is also used as an alternate position to fall back to if the original position is rendered ineffective, or as a position for Soldiers to rest or perform maintenance.

Supplementary Positions

A supplementary position covers an avenue of approach or sector of fire different from those covered by the primary position. You occupy it based on specific enemy actions.

Subsequent Positions

A subsequent position covers the same avenue of approach or sector of fire as the primary position. You locate such positions in depth through the defensive area and occupy them based on specific enemy actions or as part of higher headquarters' scheme of maneuver.

Approach of the Enemy Main Attack

As the enemy main attack begins, the brigade combat team and higher headquarters engage the enemy at long range using indirect fires, electronic warfare, Army attack aviation, and close air support (CAS). The goal is to use these assets and disrupting obstacles to shape the battlefield, slow the enemy's advance, and break up his formations, leaving him more susceptible to the effects of crew-served weapons. As the enemy's main body approaches the battalion engagement area, the battalion may initiate indirect fires and order CAS to weaken the enemy through attrition. At the same time, the brigade combat team's effort shifts to second-echelon forces, depending on the commander's plan. Based on an event stated in the company commander's order, your platoon will cease security patrols and bring OPs back into the defense at a predetermined time. You may shift positions in response to enemy actions or other tactical factors.

Enemy Assault

During an enemy assault, attacking enemy forces attempt to fix and finish friendly forces. Their mission will be similar to those in your own offensive operations: destroy forces, seize terrain, and penetrate friendly defenses to pass follow-on forces through. In executing the defense, friendly forces will mass the effects of fires to destroy the assaulting enemy. You must determine if your platoon can destroy the enemy from your assigned positions.

Fighting From Assigned Positions

If your platoon can destroy the enemy from its assigned positions, it continues to fight the defense.

Meanwhile, you continue to call for indirect fires as the enemy approaches. Your platoon begins to engage the enemy at your weapon systems' maximum effective range. You should attempt to mass fires and initiate them simultaneously to achieve maximum weapons effects. Indirect fires and obstacles integrated with direct fires should disrupt the enemy's formations, channel him toward engagement areas (EAs), prevent or severely limit his ability to observe the location of friendly positions, and destroy him as he attempts to breach tactical and/or protective obstacles. If there is no enlisted tactical air controller (ETAC) available, you or another forward observer must be prepared to give final guidance to attack aviation if it's available and committed in your area of operations.

Leaders control fires using standard commands, pyrotechnics, and other prearranged signals. Your platoon increases the intensity of its fires as the enemy closes within range of additional friendly weapons. Squad leaders and team leaders work to achieve a sustained rate of fire from their positions by having buddy teams engage the enemy so both Soldiers are not reloading their weapons at the same time. To control and distribute fires, you should consider:

- the range to the enemy
- engagement criteria (what to fire at, when to fire [triggers], and why)
- the most dangerous or closest enemy targets
- shifting to concentrate direct fires either independently or as directed by higher headquarters
- your platoon's ability to engage dismounted enemy with enfilading, grazing fires
- whether your platoon's shoulder-launched munitions (SLM) and close-combat missile system (CCMS) can achieve flank shots against enemy vehicles.

When the enemy closes on your platoon's protective wire, machine guns fire along interlocking principal direction(s) of fire (PDF) or final protective line(s) (FPL) as you previously planned and designated. Other weapons fire at their designated PDFs. Grenadiers engage the enemy with grenade launchers in dead space or as the enemy attempts to breach protective wire. As platoon leader, you request final protective fire (FPF) if it is assigned in support of your positions.

Your platoon continues to defend until it repels the enemy or is ordered to disengage.

Fighting From Other Than Assigned Positions

If your platoon cannot destroy the enemy from its assigned positions, report the situation to your company commander and continue to engage the enemy. Reposition the platoon (or squads of the platoon) when directed by the commander in order to:

- continue fires into the platoon engagement area
- occupy supplementary or alternate positions
- reinforce other parts of the company
- counterattack locally to retake lost fighting positions
- withdraw from an indefensible position using fire and movement to break contact.

> ***Note:*** **Do not move your platoon out of position if this will destroy the integrity of the company defense. Thoroughly rehearse all movements and actions to reposition your squads and the platoon.**

Counterattack

As the enemy's momentum is slowed or stopped, friendly forces may counterattack. You launch a counterattack to seize the initiative from the enemy or to completely halt his attack. In some cases, the purpose of the counterattack will be mainly defensive (for example, to reestablish the forward edge of the battle area [FEBA] or to restore control of the area). Your platoon may participate in the counterattack as a base-of-fire element or as the counterattack force. This counterattack could be planned ahead of time, or you might conduct it during the battle when opportunities to seize the initiative present themselves.

Consolidation and Reorganization

Your platoon secures its sector and reestablishes the defense by repositioning its forces, destroying enemy elements, treating and evacuating casualties, processing enemy prisoners of war (EPWs), and reestablishing obstacles. The platoon conducts all necessary sustainment functions, such as cross-leveling ammunition and weapons, as it prepares to continue defending. Squad and team leaders provide liquid, ammunition, casualty, and equipment (LACE) reports to you, the platoon leader. You reestablish the platoon chain of command, consolidate squad LACE reports, and provide the platoon report to your company commander. Your platoon sergeant coordinates for resupply and supervises the execution of the casualty and EPW evacuation plan. The platoon continues to repair or improve positions, quickly reestablishes observation posts, and resumes security patrolling as directed.

Consolidation includes organizing and strengthening a position so you can continue to use it against the enemy. Platoon consolidation requirements include:

- adjusting other positions to maintain mutual support
- reoccupying and repairing positions and preparing for renewed enemy attack
- relocating selected weapons to alternate positions if leaders believe the enemy may have pinpointed them during the initial attack
- repairing any damaged obstacles and replacing any Claymore mines
- reestablishing security and communications.

Reorganization includes shifting your internal resources within a degraded unit to increase its level of combat effectiveness. Platoon reorganization requirements include:

- manning key weapons as necessary
- providing first aid and preparing wounded Soldiers for evacuation (CASEVAC)
- redistributing ammunition and supplies
- processing and evacuating EPWs.

Planning Considerations

The Army warfighting functions incorporate a list of critical tactical activities as a structure for leaders to prepare and execute the defense. Your ability to synchronize and coordinate these warfighting functions are critical for your platoon's success.

Movement and Maneuver

Your platoon can mass fires at critical points on the battlefield to effectively engage the enemy in the engagement area by positioning its weapons effectively. You must maximize the strengths of your platoon's weapons systems while minimizing their exposure to enemy observation and fires.

Mobility refers to your ability to reposition your forces or commit reserve forces. The company commander's priorities may specify that you improve some routes to support such operations. *Countermobility* channels the enemy into the engagement area as it limits enemy forces' ability to maneuver and enhances the effectiveness of your direct and indirect fires.

Depth and Dispersion

Dispersing your positions laterally and in depth helps protect your force from enemy observation and fires. You should establish platoon positions to allow sufficient maneuver space within each position for in-depth placement of crew-served weapons systems and infantry squads. Position your infantry fighting positions to allow for massing of direct fires at critical points on the battlefield, as well as to provide overlapping fire in front of other fighting positions. Although the factors of METT-TC ultimately determine the placement of weapons systems and unit positions, the following also apply:

- Infantry squads can conduct antiarmor fires in depth with CCMS, which have a maximum range of 2,000 meters
- Infantry squads can retain or deny key terrain if employed in strongpoints or protected positions
- Infantry squads can protect obstacles or flank positions that are tied into severely restrictive terrain.

Flank Positions

Flank positions enable a defending friendly force to bring direct fires to bear on an attacking force. An effective flank position provides the friendly defender with a larger, more vulnerable enemy target while leaving the attacker unsure of the defender's location. Major considerations for successfully employing a flank position are your ability to secure the flank and your ability to achieve surprise by remaining undetected. Effective control of direct fire and fratricide-avoidance measures are critical considerations when you employ flank positions.

Mobility

During defensive preparations, mobility focuses initially on your ability to resupply, CASEVAC, reposition, and on the rearward and forward passage of your forces, supplies, and equipment. Once your defensive preparations are complete, your mobility focus shifts to routes toward alternate, supplementary, or subsequent positions. Your company commander will establish the priority of mobility effort within the company.

Countermobility

To be successful in the defense, you must integrate obstacles into both your direct and indirect fire plans. You design or employ a tactical obstacle to disrupt, fix, turn, or block the enemy's movement. Your platoon will construct tactical obstacles when your company commander directs.

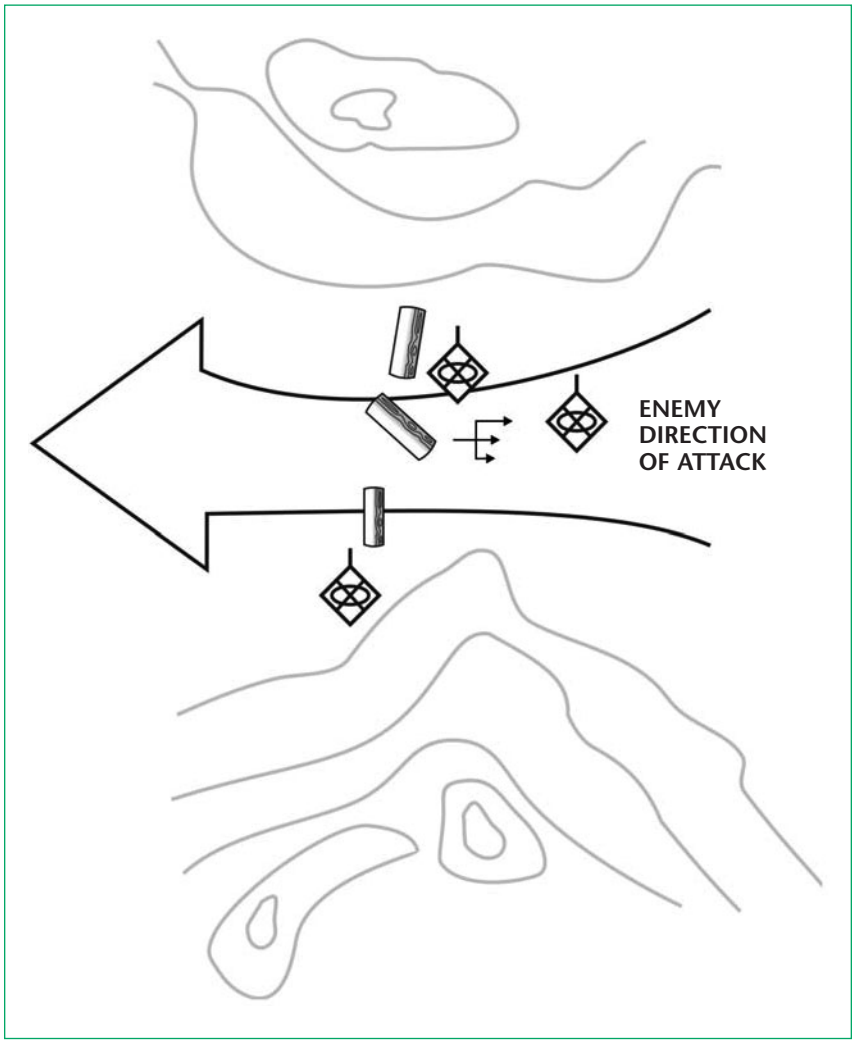

Figure 10.1 Disrupt Obstacle Effect

Disrupting Effects

Disrupting effects involve a combination of fires and obstacles to impede the enemy's attack in several ways, including breaking up his formations, interrupting his tempo, and causing early commitment of breaching assets. These effects are often the product of situational obstacles such as scatterable mines. You normally use them forward within engagement areas or in support of your forward positions within your defensive sector. Normally, you plan only indirect fires and long-range direct fires in support of disrupting obstacles (Figure 10.1).

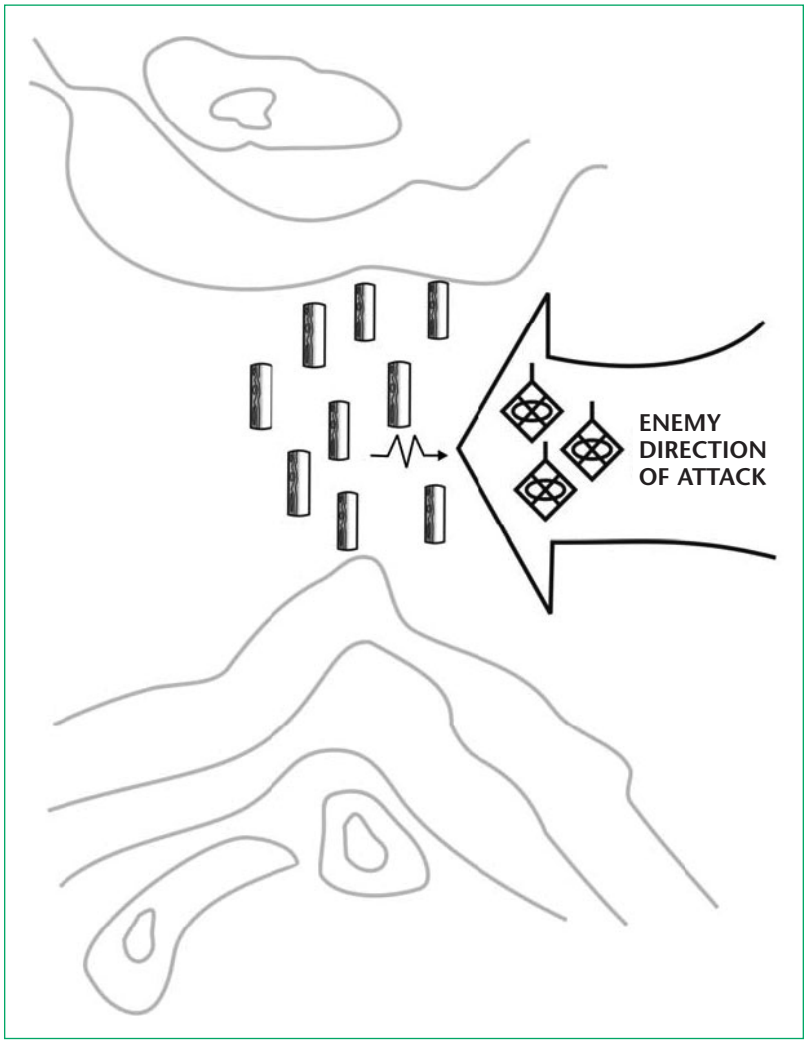

Figure 10.2 Fix Obstacle Effect

Fixing Effects

Fixing effects use a combination of fires and obstacles to slow or temporarily stop an attacker within a specified area, normally an engagement area (Figure 10.2). The defending unit can then focus on defeating the enemy by using indirect fires to fix him in the engagement area while direct fires inflict maximum casualties and damage. If necessary, you can reposition your forces using the additional time gained as a result of fixing the enemy. To fully achieve the fixing effect, you should integrate direct and/or indirect fires with the obstacles. Your company commander must specify the size of the enemy unit to be fixed.

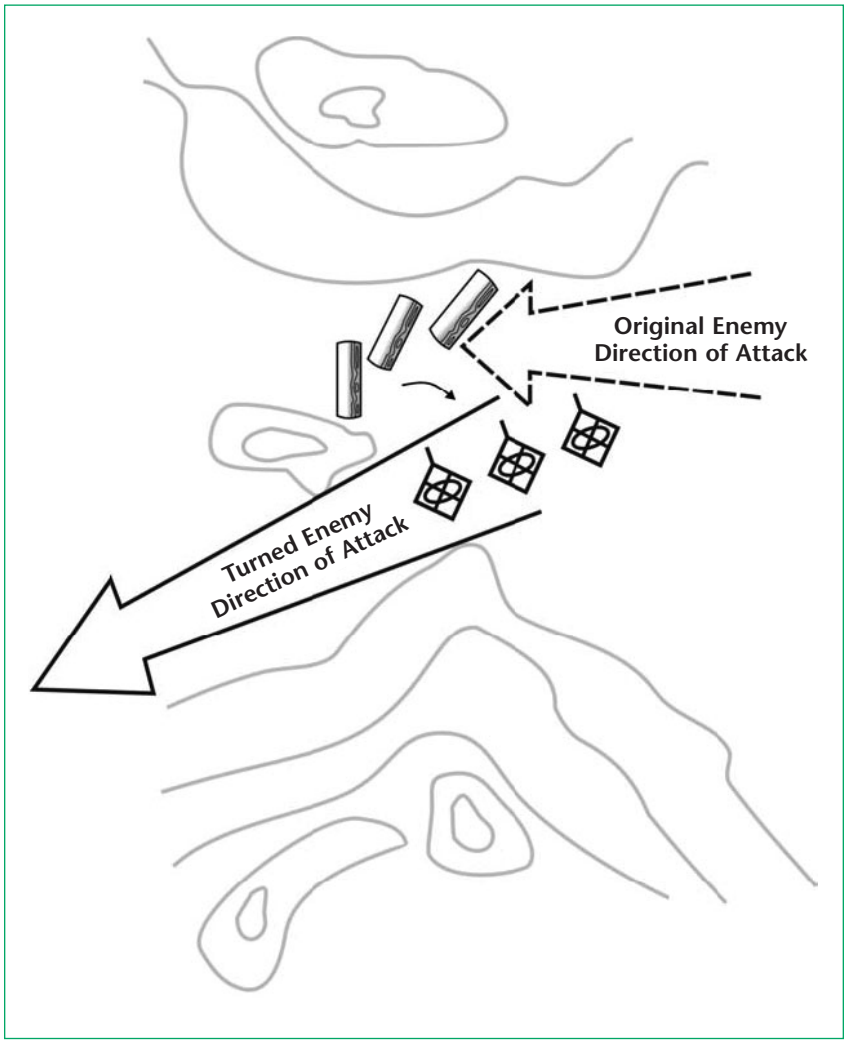

Figure 10.3 Turn Obstacle Effect

Turning Effects

Turning effects (Figure 10.3) use the combination of direct and indirect fires and obstacles to support the company commander's scheme of maneuver in several ways, including:

- diverting the enemy into an engagement area and exposing his flanks when he makes the turn
- diverting an enemy formation from one avenue of approach to another
- denying the enemy the ability to mass his forces on a flank of the friendly force.

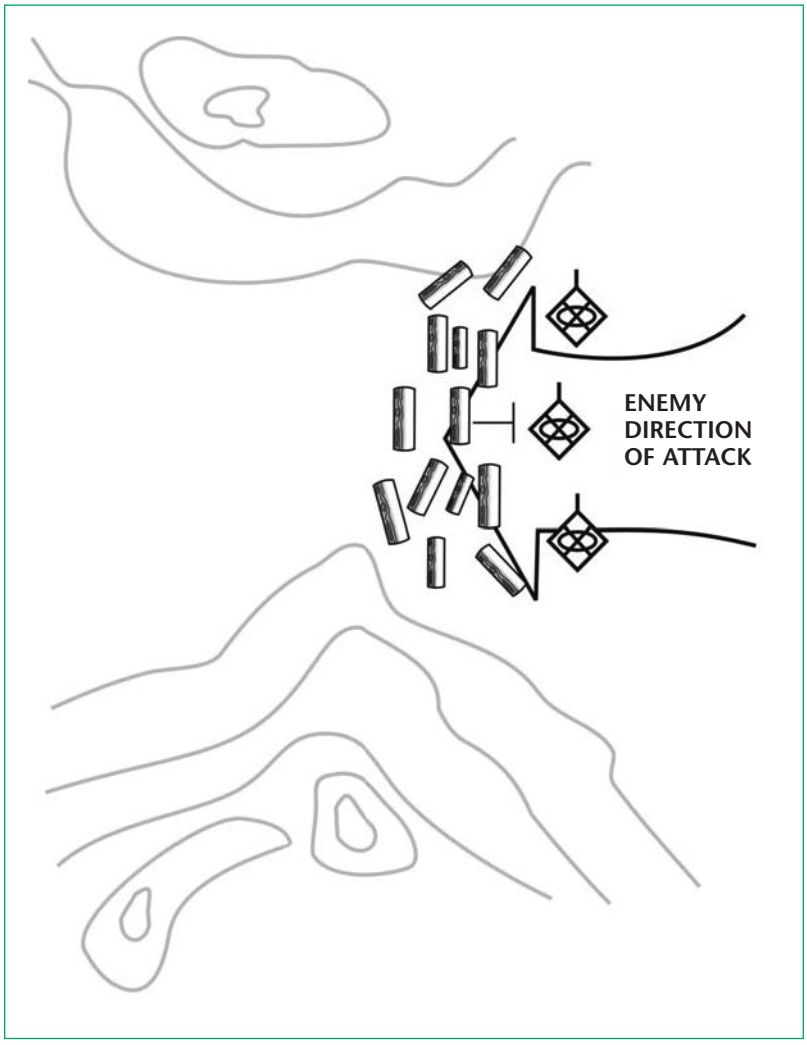

Figure 10.4 Block Obstacle Effect

Blocking Effects

Blocking effects use the combination of direct and indirect fires and obstacles to stop an attacker along a specific avenue of approach (Figure 10.4). You orient your fires to achieve blocking effects primarily to prevent the enemy from maneuvering. Because they require the most extensive engineer effort of any type of obstacle, you employ blocking effects only at critical choke points on the battlefield. You anchor blocking obstacles on both sides using existing obstacles (severely restrictive terrain). Your direct and indirect fires must cover the obstacles to achieve the full blocking effect. Your company commander must clearly specify the size of the enemy force that he or she intends to block.

Displacement and Disengagement Planning

Displacement and *disengagement* are key control measures that allow your platoon to retain its operational flexibility and tactical agility. The ultimate goals of displacement and disengagement are to enable your platoon to maintain the standoff range of your CCMS and to avoid the enemy fixing or decisively engaging you.

Considerations

While displacement and disengagement are valuable tactical tools, they can be extremely difficult to execute in the face of a rapidly advancing enemy force. In fact, displacement in contact poses great problems. You must therefore plan for it thoroughly before the operation and rehearse moving to alternate and supplementary positions if time permits. Even then, you must carefully evaluate the situation whenever displacement in contact becomes necessary to ensure it is feasible. You must also ensure that it will not result in unacceptable personnel or equipment losses. Consider several important factors in displacement planning:

- The enemy situation (for example, an enemy attack with a battalion-sized element may prevent your platoon from disengaging)
- Higher headquarters' disengagement criteria
- Availability of friendly direct fire to facilitate disengagement by suppressing or disrupting the enemy
- Availability of cover and concealment, indirect fires, and smoke to assist disengagement
- Obstacle integration, including situational obstacles
- Positioning of forces on terrain (such as **reverse slopes** or natural obstacles) that provides an advantage to the disengaging elements
- Identification of displacement routes and times that disengagement and/or displacement will take place
- The size of the friendly force available to engage the enemy in support of your displacing unit.

reverse slope

any slope that descends away from the enemy

Disengagement Criteria

Disengagement criteria dictate the circumstances under which your platoon will displace to alternate, supplementary, or subsequent defensive positions. You link these criteria to a specific enemy action (such as one motorized rifle platoon advancing past Phase Line Delta) or to the situation of friendly units. For example, they may depend on whether a friendly overwatch element or artillery unit can engage the enemy. You develop disengagement criteria during the planning process based on the unique conditions of a specific situation. They should not be part of the platoon's SOP.

Direct Fire Suppression

Do not allow the attacking enemy force to bring effective fires to bear on your disengaging force. Direct fires from the base-of-fire element, employed to suppress or disrupt the enemy, are the most effective way to facilitate disengagement. Your platoon may receive base-of-fire support from another element in the company, but in most cases the platoon will establish its own base of fire. Employing an internal base of fire requires you to carefully sequence the displacement of your elements.

Cover and Concealment

Ideally, your platoon and subordinate elements should use covered and concealed routes when moving to alternate, supplementary, or subsequent defensive positions. Regardless of the degree of protection the route itself affords, your platoon should rehearse the movement. By rehearsing, your platoon can increase the speed at which it moves and provide an added measure of security. You must make a concerted effort whenever time is available to rehearse movement in limited visibility and degraded conditions, since you are likely to encounter these when the time comes to move.

Indirect Fires and Smoke

You can employ artillery or mortar fires to assist your platoon during disengagement. Suppressive fires, placed on an enemy force as it is closing inside your standoff range, will disrupt his formations, slow his progress, and—if the enemy is a mechanized force—cause him to button up. The defending force engages the enemy with long-range direct fires, then disengages and moves to new positions. You may employ smoke to obscure the enemy's vision, slow his progress, or screen your movement out of the defensive positions or along your displacement route.

Obstacle Integration

You should integrate obstacles with direct and indirect fires to assist your disengagement. By slowing and disrupting enemy movement, obstacles provide you the time necessary for displacement. Obstacles also allow you to employ direct and indirect fires against the enemy. You can employ the modular pack mine system (MOPMS) in support of the disengagement to either block a key displacement route once the displacing unit has passed through it, or to close a lane through a tactical obstacle. Where you place obstacles depends in large measure on METT-TC factors. You should position an obstacle far enough away from your unit so you can effectively engage enemy elements on the far side of the obstacle while your forces remain out of range of the enemy's massed direct fires.

Fire Support

For the indirect fire plan to be effective in the defense, your unit must plan and execute indirect fires in a manner that achieves the intended task and purpose of each target. Indirect fires serve a variety of purposes in the defense, including:

- slowing and disrupting enemy movement
- preventing the enemy from executing breaching operations at turning or blocking obstacles
- destroying or delaying enemy forces at obstacles using massed indirect fires or precision munitions (such as Copperhead rounds)
- defeating attacks along dismounted avenues of approach using final protective fires (FPF)
- disrupting the enemy to allow friendly elements to disengage or conduct counterattacks
- obscuring enemy observation or screening friendly movement during disengagement and counterattacks
- based on the appropriate level of approval, delivering scatterable mines to close lanes and gaps in obstacles, disrupting or preventing enemy breaching operations, disrupting enemy movement at choke points, or separating or isolating enemy echelons.

Protection

Platoons are responsible for coordinating and employing their own obstacles to protect their defensive positions. To be most effective, you should tie these obstacles into existing obstacles and FPFs. Your platoon may use mines and wire from its basic load or pick up additional assets (including MOPMS, if available) from the engineer Class IV or V supply point. Your platoon, through the company, may also be responsible for any other required coordination (such as that needed in a relief in place) for recovery of the obstacle or for its destruction (as in the case of MOPMS).

In planning for protective obstacles, you must evaluate the potential threat to the platoon position and employ the appropriate asset. For example, MOPMS is predominately an antitank system best used on mounted avenues of approach, but it does have some antipersonnel applications. Wire obstacles may be most effective when employed on dismounted avenues of approach. FM 90-7 provides detailed planning guidance for the emplacement of protective obstacles.

Protective obstacles are usually located beyond hand grenade range (40 to 100 meters) from a Soldier's fighting position. They may extend out 300 to 500 meters to tie into tactical obstacles and existing restrictive or severely restrictive terrain. As platoon leader, you should therefore plan protective obstacles in depth and attempt to maximize the effective range of your weapons.

When planning protective obstacles, consider the amount of time required to prepare them, the resources available after constructing necessary tactical obstacles, and the priorities of work for your platoon's Soldiers.

Wire Obstacles

There are three types of wire obstacles: protective wire, tactical wire, and supplementary wire (Figure 10.5).

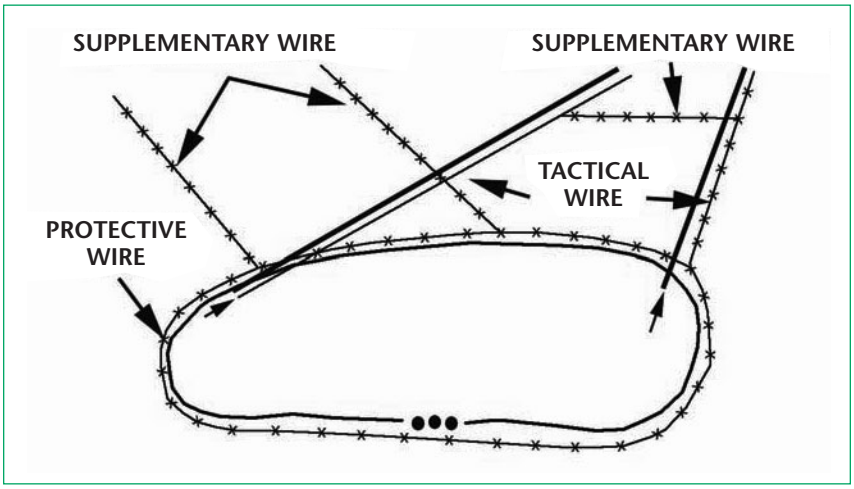

Figure 10.5 Three Types of Wire Obstacles

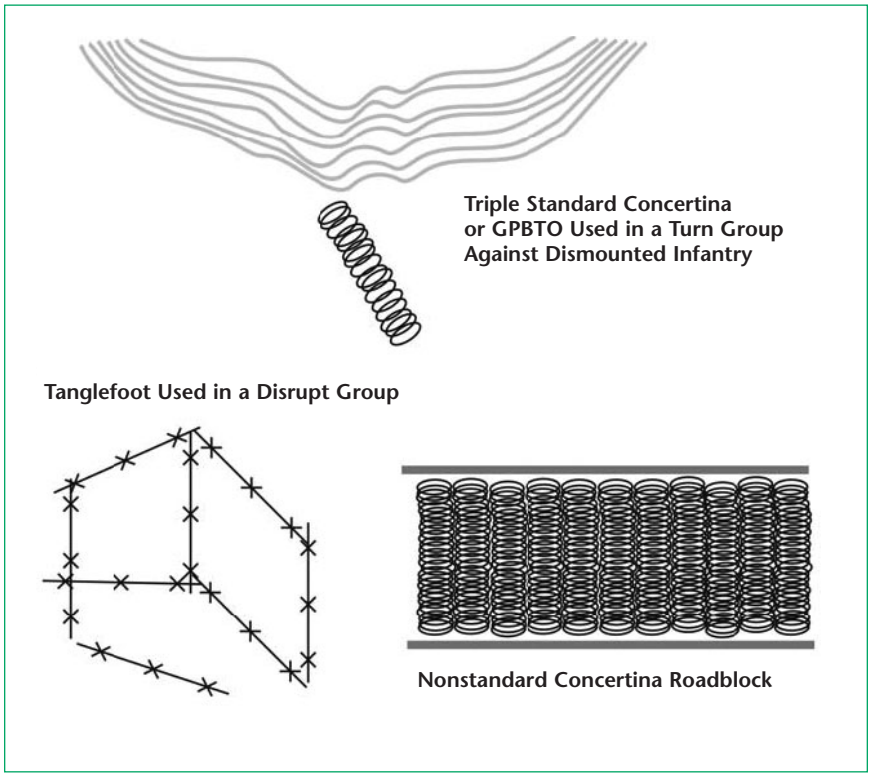

Figure 10.6 Protective Wire Groups

Protective Wire

Protective wire may be a complex obstacle providing all-round protection of a platoon perimeter, or it may be a simple wire obstacle on the likely dismounted avenue of approach toward a squad position (Figure 10.6). Command-detonated M18 Claymore mines may be integrated into the protective wire or used separately.

Tactical Wire

You position tactical wire to increase the effectiveness of the platoon's direct fires. It is usually positioned along the friendly side of a machine gun final protective line (FPL). You may also integrate tactical minefields into these wire obstacles or employ them separately.

Supplementary Wire

You employ supplementary wire obstacles to break up the line of tactical wire. This prevents the enemy from locating platoon weapons (particularly CCMS and machine guns) by following the tactical wire.

Obstacle Lanes

Your platoon may be responsible for actions related to lanes through obstacles. These duties may include:

- overwatching lanes in an obstacle
- marking lanes in an obstacle
- reporting the locations of the entry and exit points of each lane
- manning contact points
- providing guides for elements passing through an obstacle
- closing lanes when directed.

Survivability

Survivability focuses on protecting friendly forces from the effect of enemy weapons systems. You prepare survivability positions in defensive positions or strongpoints to protect weapons systems and rifle squads. You can dig in and reinforce positions with overhead cover to provide rifle squads and crew-served weapons with protection against shrapnel from air bursts. The company may dig in ammunition stocks at platoon alternate, supplementary, or subsequent defensive positions. As platoon leader, you may have time only to dig in positions that have little natural cover and concealment. You should consider soil composition when selecting defensive positions. Sites to avoid include those where the soil is overly soft, hard, wet, or rocky.

Air and Missile Defense

The focus of your air and missile defense plan is on likely air avenues of approach for enemy fixed-wing, helicopters, and unmanned aircraft systems that may differ from the enemy's ground avenues of approach. As platoon leader, you are not likely to emplace air defense assets, but you must be aware that higher headquarters may employ air defense assets near your defensive position.

Sustainment

In addition to the sustainment function required for all operations, you should consider prestocking (also known as pre-positioning or caches) ammunition. Your mission analysis (or guidance from your company commander) may reveal that your platoon's ammunition needs during an operation exceed its basic load. This requires the platoon to establish ammunition caches. You should dig in these caches, which you may position at an alternate or subsequent position. Provide security by active or passive means (guarded or observed) so you know when and if the cache is tampered with.

Your platoon must have a plan to recover its assets when quickly transitioning to the offense or counterattack or when disengaging.

Intelligence

The intelligence warfighting function consists of the related tasks and systems that help you understand the enemy, terrain, weather, and civil considerations. It includes tasks associated with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). It is a flexible, adjustable architecture of procedures, personnel, organizations, and equipment. These provide commanders with relevant information and products relating to the threat, civil populace, and environment. The intelligence warfighting function focuses on four primary tasks:

1. Supporting situational understanding
2. Supporting strategic responsiveness
3. Conducting ISR
4. Providing intelligence support to targeting.

Command and Control

The command and control warfighting function consists of the related tasks and systems that support commanders in exercising authority and direction. It includes those tasks associated with acquiring friendly information, managing all relevant information, and directing and leading subordinates.

Engagement Area Development

The engagement area is the place where you intend to destroy an enemy force using the massed fires of all available weapons. The success of any engagement depends on how effectively you can integrate the obstacle and indirect fire plans with your direct fire plan in the engagement area to achieve the platoon's purpose. At the platoon level, developing an engagement area remains a complex function that requires parallel planning and preparation if your platoon is to accomplish its assigned tasks. Despite this complexity, developing an engagement area resembles a drill. You and your subordinate leaders use a standardized set of procedures. Beginning with an evaluation of the factors of METT-TC, the development process covers these steps:

- Identify likely enemy avenues of approach
- Identify the enemy scheme of maneuver
- Determine where to kill the enemy
- Plan and integrate obstacles
- Emplace weapons systems
- Plan and integrate indirect fires
- Conduct an engagement area rehearsal.

Identify Likely Enemy Avenues of Approach

Conduct an initial reconnaissance from the enemy's perspective along each avenue of approach into the sector or engagement area. During your reconnaissance, confirm key terrain identified by the company commander, including locations that give you an advantage over the enemy and natural obstacles and choke points that restrict his forward movement. Determine which avenues will afford the enemy cover and concealment while allowing him to maintain his tempo. You should also evaluate lateral mobility corridors (routes) that adjoin each avenue of approach.

Identify the Enemy's Scheme of Maneuver

You will greatly enhance this step of the engagement area development process by gaining information early. You should receive answers to the following questions from your company commander:

- Where does the enemy want to go?
- Where will the enemy go, based on terrain?
- What is the enemy's mission (or anticipated mission)?
- What are the enemy's objectives?
- How will the enemy structure his attack?
- How will the enemy employ his reconnaissance assets?
- What are the enemy's expected rates of movement?
- How will the enemy respond to friendly actions?

Determine Where to Kill the Enemy

As part of your TLP, you must determine where you will mass combat power on the enemy to accomplish your purpose. This decision is tied to your assessment of how the enemy will fight into your platoon's engagement area. Normally this entry point is marked by a prominent target reference point (TRP) that all platoon elements can engage with their direct fire weapons. This allows your commander to identify where your platoon will engage enemy forces through the depth of the company engagement area. In addition, you should:

- identify TRPs that match the enemy's scheme of maneuver, allowing the platoon (or company) to identify where it will engage the enemy through the depth of the engagement area
- identify and record the exact location of each TRP
- determine how many weapons systems can focus fires on each TRP to achieve the desired purpose
- determine which squad(s) can mass fires on each TRP
- begin development of a direct fire plan that focuses on each TRP.

Note: **In marking TRPs, use thermal sights to ensure visibility at the appropriate range under varying conditions, including daylight and limited visibility.**

Plan and Integrate Obstacles

To be successful in the defense, you must integrate tactical obstacles with the direct fire plan, taking into account the intent of each obstacle. At the company level, obstacle intent consists of the target of the obstacle, the desired effect on the target, and the relative location of the group. Your platoon must have a clear task and purpose to properly emplace a tactical obstacle. The company or battalion will normally designate the tactical obstacle's purpose. The purpose will influence many aspects of the operation, from selecting and designing obstacle sites, to actually conducting the defense. Once the tactical obstacle has been emplaced, report your location and the gaps in the obstacle to your company commander. This ensures that the company commander can integrate obstacles with direct and indirect fire plans, refining the company's development of the engagement area.

Emplace Weapons Systems

To position weapons effectively, you must know the characteristics, capabilities, and limitations of the weapons as well as the effects of terrain and the enemy's tactics. As platoon leader, you should position weapons where they have protection, where they can avoid detection, and where they can surprise the enemy with accurate, lethal fires. In order to position the weapons, you must know where you want to destroy the enemy and what effect you want the weapon to achieve. You should also consider:

- selecting tentative squad defensive positions
- conducting a leader's reconnaissance of the tentative defensive positions
- walking the engagement area to confirm that the selected positions are tactically advantageous
- confirming and marking the selected defensive positions
- developing a direct fire plan that accomplishes the platoon's purpose
- ensuring that your defensive positions do not conflict with those of adjacent units and are effectively tied in with adjacent positions
- selecting primary, alternate, and supplementary fighting positions to achieve the desired effect for each TRP
- ensuring that squad leaders position weapons systems so the required numbers of weapons or squads effectively cover each TRP
- inspecting all positions.

Note: **When possible, select fighting and crew-served weapon positions while moving in the engagement area. Using the enemy's perspective enables you to assess the positions' survivability.**

Plan and Integrate Indirect Fires

In planning and integrating indirect fires, you must accomplish the following:

- Determine the purpose of fires if the company commander has not already done so
- Determine where that purpose will best be achieved if the company commander has not done so
- Establish the observation plan with redundancy for each target—observers include you as well as members of subordinate elements (such as team leaders) with fire support responsibilities
- Establish triggers based on enemy movement rates
- Obtain accurate target locations using survey and navigational equipment
- Refine target locations to ensure coverage of obstacles
- Register artillery and mortars
- Plan FPF.

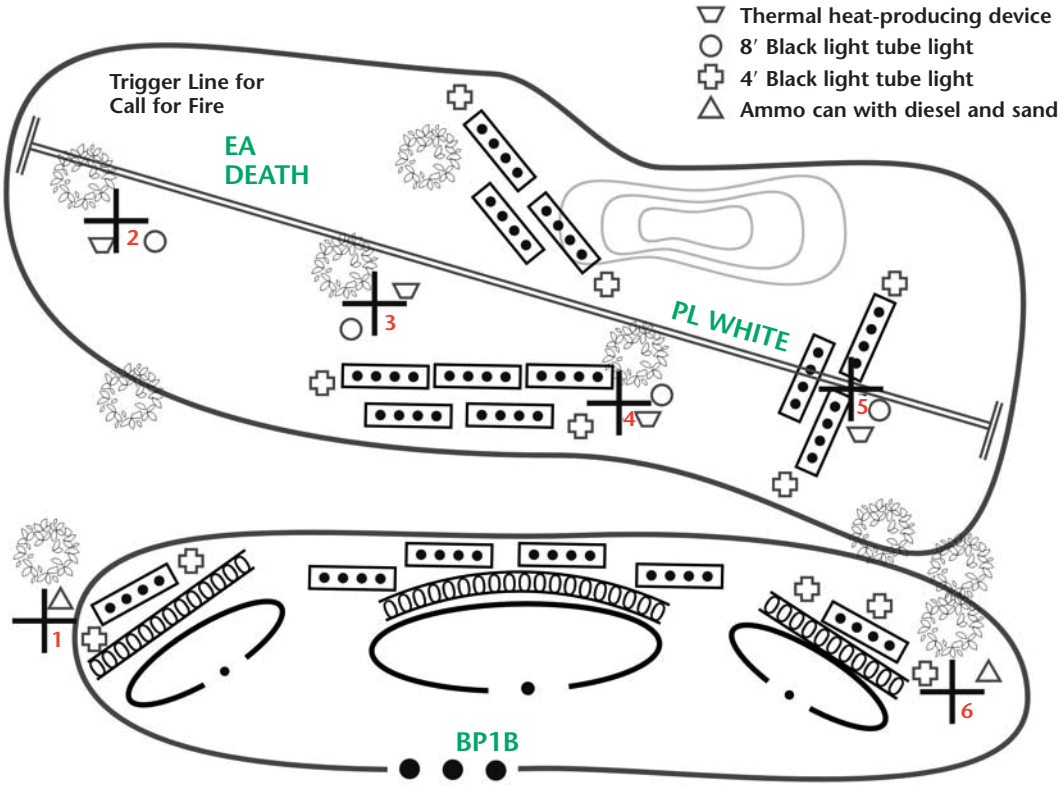

Figure 10.7 Integrated Engagement Area Plan

Conduct an Engagement Area Rehearsal

The purpose of rehearsal is to ensure that every leader and Soldier understands the plan (Figure 10.7) and is prepared to cover his or her assigned areas with direct and indirect fires.

Your platoon will probably participate in a company-level engagement area rehearsal. The company commander has several options for conducting a rehearsal, but the combined arms rehearsal produces the most detailed understanding of the plan. One technique you may use for your rehearsal is the full dress rehearsal. In the defense, you may have the platoon sergeant and squads conduct a movement through the engagement area to depict the attacking enemy force, while you and squad leaders rehearse the battle from the platoon defensive positions. The rehearsal should cover:

- rearward passage of security forces (as required)
- closing lanes (as required)
- using fire commands, triggers, and or **maximum engagement lines** (MELs) to initiate direct and indirect fires
- shifting of fires to refocus and redistribute fire effects
- disengagement criteria
- identifying displacement routes and times

maximum engagement line

a graphic representation of the maximum effective range of a weapon system—in the defense, you do not engage the enemy force until it has closed within this line

- preparing and transmitting critical reports
- assessing the effects of enemy weapons systems
- moving to alternate, supplementary, or subsequent defensive positions
- cross-leveling or resupplying Class V items
- evacuating casualties.

Note: **When conducting your rehearsal, you should coordinate it with the company to ensure other units' rehearsals are not planned for the same time and location. Coordination will lead to more efficient use of planning and preparation time for all company units. It will also eliminate the danger of misidentification of friendly forces in the rehearsal area.**

Occupying and Preparing Defensive Positions

You occupy and prepare defensive positions concurrently with the TLP and engagement area development. The process is not sequential. The potential problem with this process is the lack of adequate preparation time if the platoon has several other defensive positions (alternate, supplementary, and subsequent) and engagement areas to develop.

Occupation of the Defense

The platoon occupies defensive positions in accordance with your plan and the results of the reconnaissance.

To ensure an effective and efficient occupation, rifle squads move to the locations marked previously by the reconnaissance element. These positions may also be on the operational graphics. Once in position, squad leaders check their locations on the map to ensure they are complying with your graphics. As your platoon occupies its positions, you ensure that each squad locates in accordance with your plan. If you note discrepancies between actual positioning of the squads and your plan, you correct them immediately.

Once each rifle squad has occupied its position, you must walk the positions to ensure that weapons orientation and positioning of the rifle squads are in accordance with the preestablished plan and that everyone understands the plan. You should not rely on updates from your subordinates. You should always walk your defensive perimeter. For command and control purposes, each squad leader must know your location as well as that of the platoon sergeant.

Night vision equipment helps the occupation process under limited visibility conditions. For instance, you can mark your position with an infrared light source, and squad leaders can move to premarked positions with infrared light sources showing them where to locate. Additionally, the squad leaders can use AN/PAQ-4B/Cs or AN/PEQ-2As to point out sectors of fire and TRPs to their Soldiers, using infrared light sources to keep the occupation clandestine.

Note: **The AN/PAQ-4B/C is a weapon-mounted infrared aiming light. It is designed to be used with night-vision devices for precise weapon aiming and target acquisition at long ranges.**

The AN/PEQ-2A, Target Pointer Illuminator Aiming Light (TPIAL), is a weapon-mounted device that incorporates both infrared aiming and illumination lasers. It is designed to be used with night-vision devices for long-range target acquisition, precise weapon aiming, and target/area illumination.

The platoon may conduct a hasty occupation in the defense during a counterattack or after disengagement and movement to alternate, supplementary, or subsequent defensive positions.

As platoon leader, you issue a fragmentary order (FRAGO) covering the following minimum information:

- Changes in the enemy or friendly situation
- The platoon task and purpose (what the platoon must accomplish and why)
- The task and purpose for each subordinate element
- The scheme of fires
- Coordinating instructions.

At a minimum, you must take the following actions:

- The platoon approaches the defensive positions from the rear or flank
- The platoon establishes direct fire control measures or, if these are preplanned, reviews the plan
- You report, "Occupied," to your company commander.

The platoon conducts deliberate occupation of defensive positions when time is available, when enemy contact is not expected, and when friendly elements are positioned forward in the sector to provide security for forces in the main battle area. You actually establish defensive positions concurrently with the development of the engagement area. Direct the initial reconnaissance from the engagement area and then tentatively position your crew-served weapon systems.

Once you have established your defensive positions, subordinate leaders can begin to develop their sector sketches and fire plans based on the basic fire plan developed during your reconnaissance. Soldiers improve their fighting positions while you finalize and proofread the direct fire plan. With guidance from the company commander, you designate the level of preparation for each defensive position based on the time available and other tactical considerations for the mission. The three levels of defensive position preparation (occupy, prepare, and reconnoiter) are listed here in descending order of thoroughness and time they require.

Occupy

Complete the preparation of the position from where the platoon will initially defend. You fully reconnoiter, prepare, and occupy the position prior to the "defend not later than (NLT)" time specified in the company order. The platoon must rehearse the occupation, and you must establish a trigger for occupying the position.

Prepare

Fully reconnoiter the position and the corresponding engagement area. Mark squad positions in the defensive positions and direct fire control measures in the engagement area. You may dig survivability positions, pre-position ammunition caches, and emplace protective obstacles.

Reconnoiter

Fully reconnoiter both the engagement area and defensive positions. Plan tentative weapon positions in the defensive positions, and establish direct fire control measures in the engagement area.

In addition to establishing the platoon's primary defensive positions, you and subordinate leaders normally plan for preparation and occupation of alternate, supplementary, and subsequent defensive positions. This is done in accordance with the company order.

Priority of Work

You must ensure that Soldiers prepare for the defense quickly and efficiently. Work must be done in order of priority to accomplish the most in the least amount of time while maintaining security and the ability to respond to enemy action. Below are basic considerations for priorities of work.

range card

a record of the firing data required to engage predetermined targets within a sector of fire during good and limited visibility

- Emplace local security (all leaders)
- Position and assign sectors of fire for each squad (platoon leader)
- Position and assign sectors of fire for the CCMS and medium machine gun teams (platoon leader)
- Position and assign sectors of fire for M249 MG, grenadiers, and riflemen (squad leaders)
- Establish command post and wire communications
- Designate FPLs and FPFs
- Clear fields of fire and prepare **range cards**
- Prepare sector sketches (leaders)
- Dig fighting positions
- Establish communication and coordination with the company and adjacent units
- Coordinate with adjacent units and review sector sketches
- Emplace antitank and Claymore mines, then wire and other obstacles
- Mark or improve marking for TRPs and other fire control measures
- Improve primary fighting positions and add overhead cover
- Prepare supplementary and then alternate positions (same procedure as the primary position)
- Establish sleep and rest plans
- Distribute and stockpile ammunition, food, and water
- Dig trenches to connect positions
- Continue to improve positions—construct revetments, replace camouflage, and add to overhead cover.

Unit priorities of work are normally found in standing operating procedures (SOPs). However, the commander will dictate the priorities of work for the company based on the factors of METT-TC. Several actions may be accomplished at the same time. You must constantly supervise the preparation of fighting positions, both for tactical usefulness and proper construction.

Security in the Defense

Security in the defense includes all active and passive measures taken to avoid detection by the enemy, deceive the enemy, and deny enemy reconnaissance accurate information on friendly positions. The two primary tools available to you are observation posts and patrols. In planning for the security in the defense, you must consider the terrain in terms of OAKOC. Use your map to identify terrain that will protect the platoon from enemy observation and fires while providing observation and fires into the engagement area. Additionally, use intelligence updates to increase your situational understanding, reducing the possibility of the enemy striking at a time or in a place for which the platoon is unprepared.

Observation Posts

An observation post (OP) gives the platoon its first echelon of security in the defense. The observation post provides early warning of impending enemy contact by reporting the enemy's direction, distance, and size. As platoon leader, you establish observation posts along the most likely enemy avenues of approach into the position or into the area of operations. You must ensure that observation posts have communication with the platoon.

Early detection reduces the risk of the enemy overrunning the observation post. Observation posts may also be equipped with a Javelin command launch unit (CLU) to increase their ability to detect the enemy. They may receive infrared trip flares, infrared parachute flares, infrared M203 rounds, and even infrared mortar round support to illuminate the enemy. You must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of using infrared illumination when the enemy is known to have night vision devices that detect infrared light. Although infrared and thermal equipment within the platoon enables the platoon to see the observation post at a greater distance, the observation post should not be positioned outside the range of the platoon's small arms.

To further reduce the risk of fratricide, observation posts use GPS, if available, to navigate to the exit and entry points in the platoon's position. You must submit an observation post location to the company commander to ensure a no-fire area (NFA) is established around each observation post. The commander sends his operational overlay with observation post positions to the battalion and adjacent units. He receives the same type overlay from adjacent units to assist in better command and control and fratricide avoidance. You then confirm that the company fire support element (FSE) has forwarded these locations to the battalion FSO and has received the appropriate NFAs on the fire support graphics.

Patrols

Platoons actively patrol in the defense. Patrols enhance the platoon's ability to fill gaps in security between observation posts. As platoon leader, you forward your tentative patrol route to the commander to ensure the patrols do not conflict with other elements within the company. The commander forwards the entire company's patrol routes to the battalion. This allows the battalion S-3 and S-2 to ensure all routes are coordinated for preventing fratricide, and that the company and platoons are conforming to the battalion ISR plan. You may use a GPS to enhance your basic land navigational skills as you track your patrol's location on a map, compass, and pace count or odometer reading.

Establishing Defensive Positions

Platoons establish defensive positions in accordance with your plan and your commander's plan. They mark engagement areas using marking techniques prescribed by unit SOP. Your platoon physically marks obstacles, TRPs, targets, and trigger lines in the engagement area. During limited visibility, the platoon can use infrared light sources to mark TRPs for the rifle squads. When possible, platoons should mark TRPs with both a thermal and an infrared source so the rifle squads can use the TRP.

Range Card

A range card is a sketch of a sector that a direct fire weapons system is assigned to cover. Range cards aid in planning and controlling fires. They also assist crews in acquiring targets during limited visibility, and orient replacement personnel, platoons, or squads that are moving into position. During good visibility, the gunner should have no problems maintaining orientation in his or her sector. During poor visibility, the gunner may not be able to detect lateral limits. If the gunner becomes disoriented and cannot find or locate reference points or sector limit markers, he or she can use the range card to locate the limits. The gunner should draw the range card to become more familiar with the terrain in the sector. He or she should continually assess the sector and, if necessary, update the range card.

Sector Sketches

Detailed sketches aid in the planning, distribution, and control of the platoon fires. Squad leaders prepare squad sector sketches, section leaders prepare section sketches, and as platoon leader, you prepare the platoon sketch.

Weapons Placement

To position weapons effectively, you must know the characteristics, capabilities, and limitations of the weapons; the effects of terrain; and the tactics used by the enemy. Additionally, you must consider whether your primary threat will be vehicles or infantry. Your plan should address both mounted and dismounted threats. Also, you may attach an antitank section.

Employing Close Combat Missile Systems

The primary role of Close Combat Missile Systems (CCMS) is to destroy enemy armored vehicles. When there are no enemy armored vehicles, CCMS can be employed in a secondary role of providing fire support against point targets such as crew-served weapons positions. CCMS optics (such as the Javelin's command launch unit [CLU]) can be used alone or as an aided vision device for reconnaissance, security operations, and surveillance. Reduced or limited visibility will not degrade the CCMS's effectiveness. This fact allows the antiarmor specialist to continue to cover the sector without having to reposition closer to the avenue of approach. Your assessment of the factors of METT-TC will determine the employment of CCMS. Based on the situation, you may employ all or some of the CCMS. You may use centralized control or decentralized control.

Centralized Control

Under centralized control, you control the fires of your CCMS gunners by both physically locating the weapons in your vicinity and personally directing their fires. You can also group them together under the control of the platoon sergeant or weapons squad leader.

Decentralized Control

Under decentralized control, the CCMS gunners operate with and are controlled by their weapons squad leader. A rifle squad leader may need to employ one fire team with a CCMS. You are the one who normally gives the command to fire.

Medium Machine Gun Employment

Medium machine guns are the platoon's primary crew-served weapons that you position first if the enemy force is dismounted. Once these guns are sited, you position riflemen to protect them. Position guns to place direct fire on locations where you want to concentrate combat power to destroy the enemy.

M203 Employment

The M203 grenade launcher is the squad leader's indirect fire weapon. As platoon leader, you position the grenadier to cover dead space in the squad's sector, especially the dead space for the medium machine guns. You should also assign the grenadier a sector of fire overlapping the riflemen's sectors of fire. The high-explosive dual purpose (HEDP) round is effective against lightly armored vehicles.

Employing Riflemen

You and your squad leaders assign positions and sectors of fire to each rifleman in the platoon. Normally, you and your squad leaders position the riflemen to support and protect machine guns and antiarmor weapons. You also position riflemen to cover obstacles, provide security, cover gaps between platoons and companies, or provide observation.

Coordination

Coordination is important in every operation. In the defense, coordination ensures that units provide mutual support and interlocking fires. In most circumstances, you should conduct face-to-face coordination to facilitate understanding and resolve issues effectively. You should send and receive the following information prior to conducting face-to-face coordination:

- The location of your subordinate leaders
- The location of fighting positions
- The location of observation posts and withdrawal routes
- The location and types of obstacles, including Claymores
- The location, activities, and passage plan for reconnaissance platoon and other units forward of the platoon's position
- The location of all Soldiers and units operating in and around the platoon's area of operations.

Defensive Techniques

The platoon will normally defend in accordance with command orders using one of these basic techniques:

battle position

a defensive location oriented on a likely enemy avenue of approach

- Defend an area
- Defend a **battle position**
- Defend a strongpoint
- Defend a perimeter
- Defend a reverse slope.

Defend an Area

Defending an area sector allows your platoon to maintain flank contact and security while ensuring unity of effort in the scheme of maneuver. Areas afford depth in the platoon defense. They allow your platoon to achieve its desired end state while facilitating clearance of fires at the appropriate level of responsibility. The company commander normally orders a platoon to defend an area (Figure 10.8) when flexibility is desired, when retention of specific terrain features is not necessary, or when the unit cannot concentrate fires because of any of the following factors:

- Extended frontages
- Intervening, or cross-compartmented, terrain features
- Multiple avenues of approach.

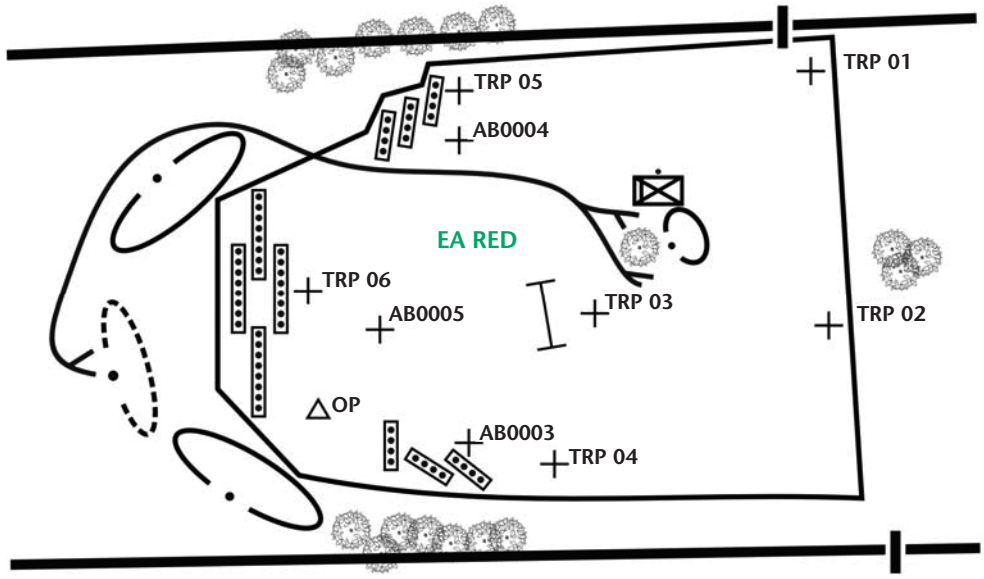

Figure 10.8 Concept of the Operation for Defending an Area

Your platoon is assigned an area defense mission to prevent a specific amount of enemy forces from penetrating the area of operations. To maintain the integrity of the area defense, the platoon must remain tied to adjacent units on the flanks. You may be directed to conduct the defense in one of two ways.

1. Your company commander may specify a series of subsequent defensive positions within the area from which the platoon will defend to ensure that the fires of two platoons can be massed.
2. Your company commander may assign an area to the platoon. You assume responsibility for most tactical decisions and controlling maneuvers of your subordinate squads by assigning them a series of subsequent defensive positions. You do this in accordance with your company commander's guidance in the form of intent, specified tasks, and the concept of the operation. The company commander normally assigns an area to a platoon only when it is fighting in isolation.

Defend a Battle Position

The company commander assigns the defensive technique of defending a battle position to platoons in order to mass the fires of two or more platoons in a company engagement area, or to position a platoon to execute a counterattack. A unit defends from a battle position to:

- destroy an enemy force in the engagement area
- block an enemy avenue of approach
- control key or decisive terrain
- fix the enemy force to allow another friendly unit to maneuver.

The company commander designates engagement areas to allow each platoon to concentrate its fires or to place it in an advantageous position for the counterattack. Battle positions are developed so the platoon can place direct fire throughout the engagement area. The size of your platoon's battle position can vary, but it should provide enough depth and maneuver space for subordinate squads to maneuver into alternate or supplementary positions and to counterattack.

The battle position is a general position on the ground. You should place your squads on the most favorable terrain in the battle position based on the higher unit mission and commander's intent. The platoon then fights to retain the position unless the company commander orders it to counterattack or displace. The following are basic methods of employing a platoon in a battle position:

- Same battle position, same avenue of approach
- Same battle position, multiple avenues of approach
- Different battle positions, same avenue of approach
- Different battle positions, multiple avenues of approach.

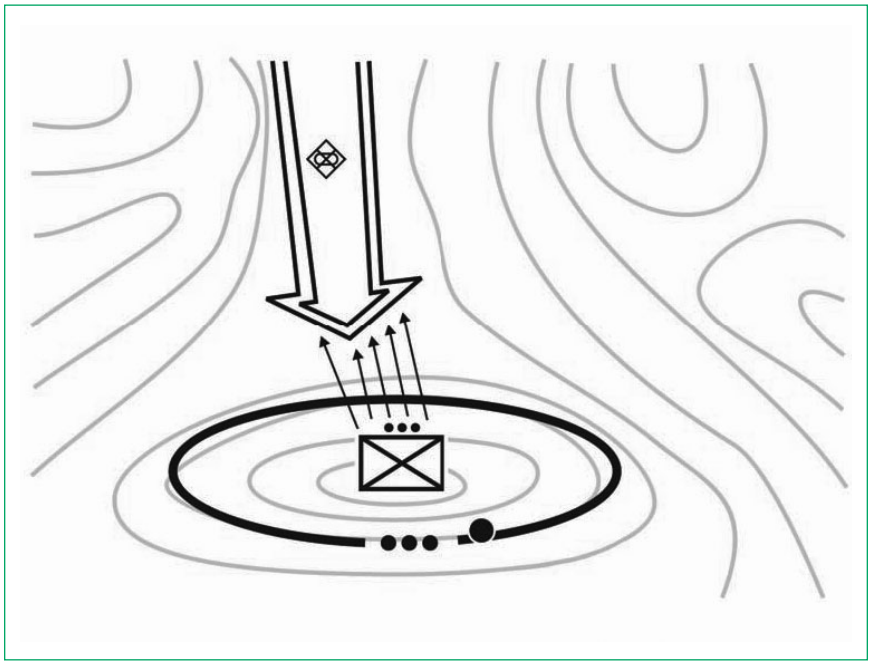

Figure 10.9 Same Battle Position, Same Avenue of Approach

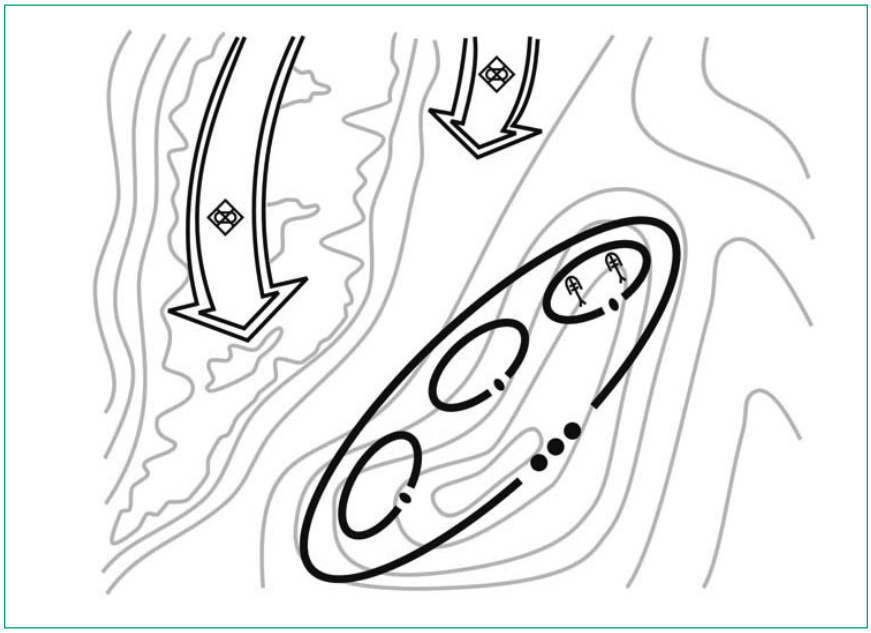

Figure 10.10 Same Battle Position, Multiple Avenues of Approach

Same Battle Position, Same Avenue of Approach

In this method, rifle squads are on the same battle position covering the same avenue of approach (Figure 10.9). The platoon can defend against mounted and dismounted attacks and move rapidly to another position.

All squads are in the same battle position when the terrain provides good observation, fields of fire, and cover and concealment.

Employing all the squads of the platoon on the same battle position covering the same avenue of approach is the most conservative use of the platoon. Its primary advantages are that 1) it facilitates command and control functions because of the closeness of squad elements on the same approach; and 2) it provides increased security.

Same Battle Position, Multiple Avenues of Approach

In this method, rifle squads occupy the same battle position but cover multiple enemy avenues of approach (Figure 10.10).

Different Battle Positions, Same Avenue of Approach

Rifle squads in this method are on different battle positions covering the same avenue of approach (Figure 10.11). If positioned on separate battle positions, rifle squads must fight in relation to each other when covering the same avenues of approach. A weapons squad can provide supporting fires for the rifle squads from their primary, alternate, or supplementary positions. All squads are positioned to engage enemy forces on the same avenue of approach, but at different ranges.

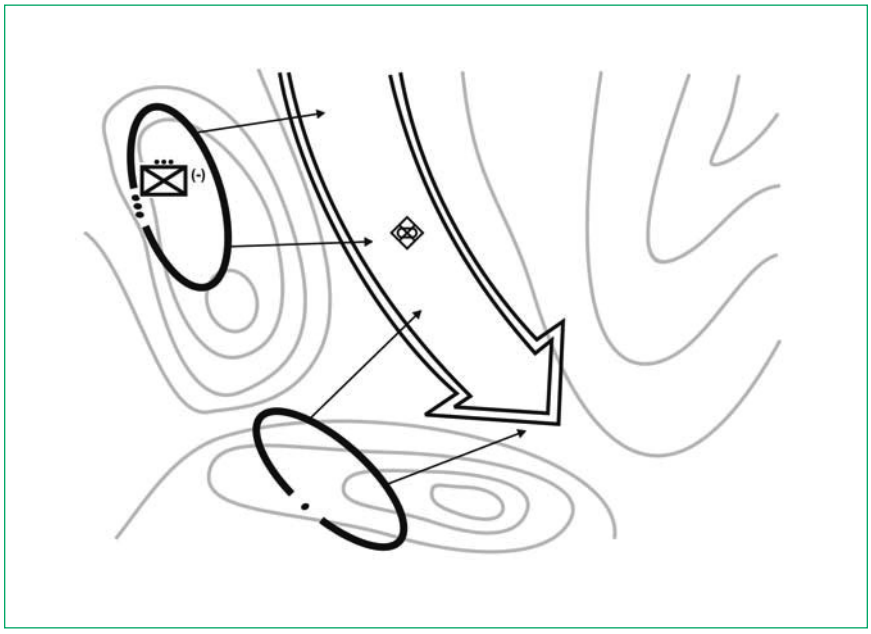

Figure 10.11 Different Battle Positions, Same Avenue of Approach

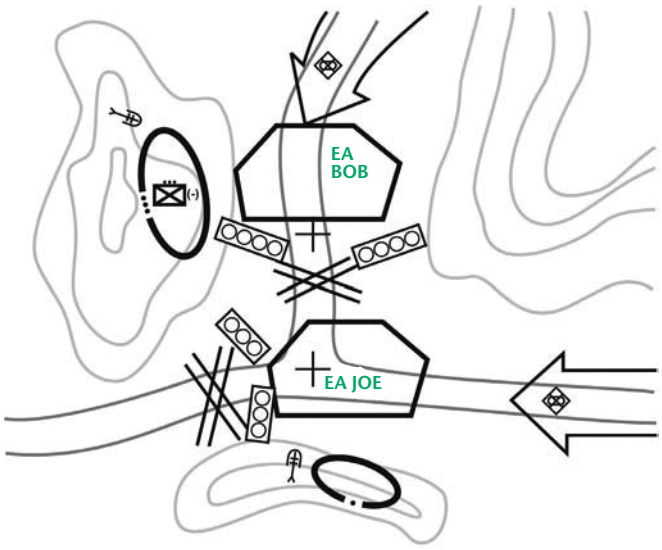

Figure 10.12 Different Battle Positions, Multiple Avenues of Approach

Different Battle Positions, Multiple Avenues of Approach

Squads may be employed on different battle positions and multiple avenues of approach in this method (Figure 10.12) to ensure that the enemy cannot fix, isolate, or defeat the squad battle positions.

Defend a Strongpoint

Defending a strongpoint (Figure 10.13) is not a common mission for an infantry platoon. A strongpoint defense requires extensive engineer support (expertise, materials, and equipment), and takes a long time to complete. When the platoon is directed to defend a strongpoint, it must retain the position until ordered to withdraw. The success of the strongpoint defense depends on how well the position is tied into the existing terrain. This defense is most effective when it is employed in terrain that provides cover and concealment to both the strongpoint and its supporting obstacles. You can easily adapt mountainous, forested, or urban terrain to a strongpoint defense. Strongpoints placed in more open terrain require the use of reverse slopes or of extensive camouflage and deception efforts. This defensive mission may require the platoon to:

- hold key or decisive terrain critical to the company or battalion scheme of maneuver
- provide a pivot to maneuver friendly forces
- block an avenue of approach
- channel the enemy into one or more engagement areas.

Characteristics of the Strongpoint Defense

The prime characteristic of an effective strongpoint is that the enemy cannot easily overrun or bypass it. It must be positioned and constructed so the enemy knows he can reduce it only at the risk of heavy casualties and significant loss of materiel. He must be forced to employ massive artillery concentrations and dismounted infantry assaults in his attack, so the strongpoint must be tied in with existing obstacles and positioned to afford 360-degree security in observation and fighting positions.

Techniques and Considerations

Several techniques and considerations are involved in establishing and executing the strongpoint defense, including considerations for displacement and withdrawal from the strongpoint.

As platoon leader, you begin by determining the projected size of the strongpoint. You do this through assessing the number of weapons systems and individual Soldiers available to conduct the assigned mission, and by assessing the terrain on which the platoon will fight. You must remember that although a strongpoint is usually tied into a company defense and flanked by other defensive positions, it must afford 360-degree observation and firing capability.

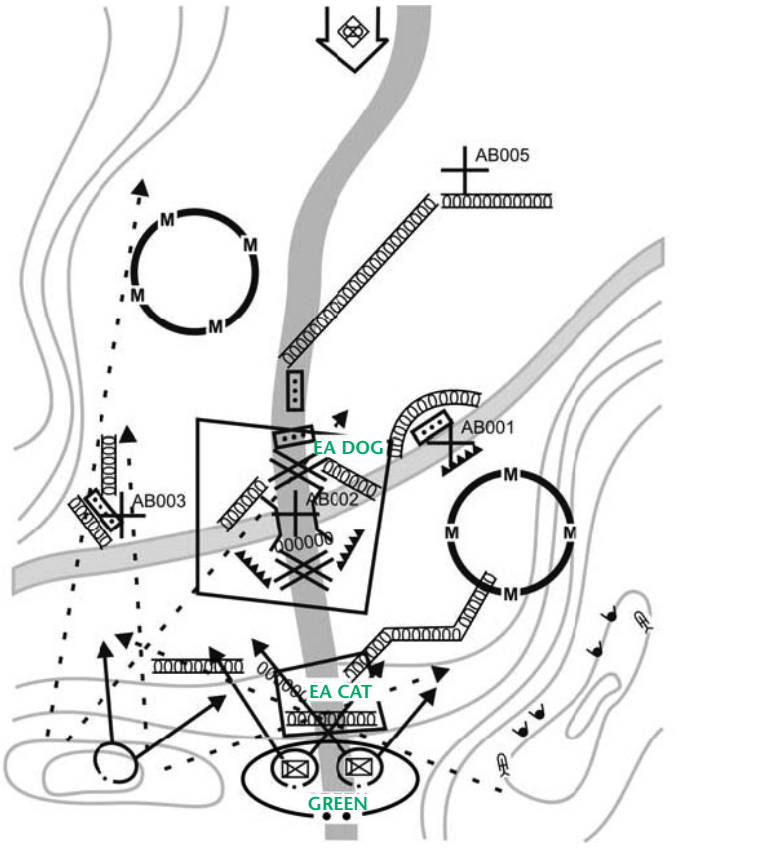

Figure 10.13 Defending a Strongpoint

You must ensure that the layout and organization of the strongpoint makes the best use of the platoon's personnel strength and weapons systems without sacrificing the position's security. Platoon options range from positioning CCMS outside the strongpoint (with the rifle squads occupying fighting positions inside it) to placing all assets within the position. From the standpoint of planning and terrain management, placing everything in the strongpoint is the most difficult option and potentially the most dangerous, because of the danger that the enemy can encircle you.

In laying out the strongpoint, you should designate weapon positions that support the company defensive plan. Once you have identified these primary positions, continue around the strongpoint, siting weapons on other possible enemy avenues of approach and engagement areas until you can orient effectively in any direction. The fighting positions facing the company engagement area may be along one line of defense or staggered in depth along multiple lines of defense (if the terrain supports positions in depth).

The platoon's reserve may be comprised of a fire team, squad, or combination of the two. You must know how to influence the strongpoint battle by employing your reserve. You have several employment options, including reinforcing a portion of the defensive line or counterattacking along a portion of the perimeter against an identified enemy main effort.

You should identify routes or axes that will allow the reserve to move to any area of the strongpoint. You should then designate positions the reserve can occupy once it arrives. These routes and positions should afford sufficient cover to allow the reserve to reach its destination without enemy interdiction. You should give special consideration to developing a direct fire plan for each contingency involving the reserve. The key area of focus may be a plan for isolating an enemy penetration of the perimeter. Rehearsals cover actions the platoon takes if it has to fall back to a second defensive perimeter, including direct fire control measures necessary to accomplish the maneuver. You may employ FPF to assist in the displacement.

Engineers support strongpoint defense by reinforcing the existing obstacles. Priorities of work will vary depending on the factors of METT-TC, especially the enemy situation and time available. For example, the first 12 hours of the strongpoint construction effort may be critical for emplacing countermobility obstacles and survivability positions, and command and control bunkers..

The battalion obstacle plan provides the foundation for the company strongpoint obstacle plan. The commander determines how to integrate protective obstacles (designed to defeat dismounted enemy infantry assaults) into the overall countermobility plan. If adequate time and resources are available, you should plan to reinforce existing obstacles using field-expedient demolitions.

Once the enemy has identified the strongpoint, he will mass all the fires he can spare against the position. To safeguard your rifle squads, you must arrange for construction of overhead cover for individual fighting positions. If the strongpoint is in a more open position (such as on a reverse slope), you may also plan for interconnecting trenchlines. This will allow Soldiers to move between positions without exposure to direct and indirect fires. If time permits, these crawl trenches can be improved to fighting trenches or standard trenches.

Defend a Perimeter

A perimeter defense allows the defending force to orient in all directions. In terms of weapons emplacement, direct and indirect fire integration, and reserve employment, you should consider the same factors as for a strongpoint operation.

The perimeter defense allows only limited maneuver and limited depth. Therefore, the platoon may be called on to execute a perimeter defense under the following conditions:

- Holding critical terrain in areas where the defense is not tied in with adjacent units
- Defending in place when it has been bypassed and isolated by the enemy
- Conducting occupation of an independent assembly area or reserve position
- Preparing a strongpoint
- Concentrating fires in two or more adjacent avenues of approach
- Defending fire support or engineer assets
- Occupying a patrol base.

The major advantage of the perimeter defense (Figure 10.14) is the platoon's ability to defend against an enemy avenue of approach. A perimeter defense differs from other defenses in that:

- the trace of the platoon is circular or triangular rather than linear
- unoccupied areas between squads are smaller
- flanks of squads are bent back to conform to the plan
- the bulk of combat power is on the perimeter
- the reserve is centrally located.

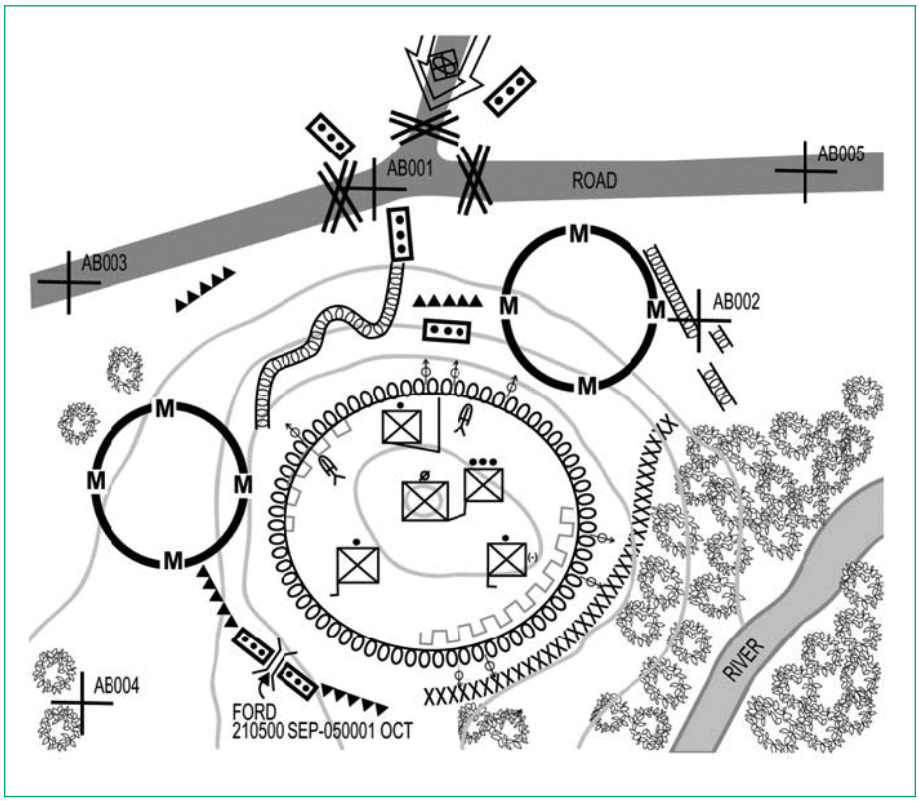

Figure 10.14 Perimeter Defense with Rifle Team in Reserve

Note: **A variant of the perimeter defense is the use of the shaped defense, which allows two of the platoon's squads to orient at any particular time on any of three engagement areas.**

Defend a Reverse Slope

Your analysis of the factors of METT-TC will often lead you to employ your forces on the reverse slope (Figure 10.15). If the rifle squads are on a mounted avenue of approach, they must be concealed from enemy direct fire systems. This means rifle squads should be protected from enemy tanks and observed artillery fire.

The majority of a rifle squad's weapons are not effective beyond 600 meters. To reduce or prevent destruction from enemy direct and indirect fires beyond that range, you should consider a reverse-slope defense. Using this defense conflicts to some extent with the need for maximum observation forward to adjust fire on the enemy and the need for long-range fields of fire for CCMS. In some cases it may be necessary to deploy these weapons systems forward while the rifle squads remain on the reverse slope. CCMS gunners withdraw from their forward positions as the battle closes. You should select their new positions to take advantage of their long-range fires, and to get enfilade shots from the depth and flanks of the reverse slope.

The nature of the enemy may change at night, and the rifle squads may occupy the forward slope or crest to deny it to the enemy. In these circumstances, it is feasible for a rifle squad to have an alternate night position forward. You must ensure that the area forward of the topographical crest is controlled by friendly forces through aggressive patrolling and both active and passive reconnaissance measures. The platoon should use all of its night vision devices to deny the enemy undetected entry into the platoon's defensive area. CCMS are key parts of the platoon's surveillance plan, and you should position them to take advantage of their thermal sights. You must not allow enemy soldiers to take advantage of reduced visibility to advance to a position of advantage without taking them under fire.

The company commander normally makes the decision to position platoons on a reverse slope. The commander does so when:

- he or she wishes to surprise or deceive the enemy about the location of the defensive position
- forward slope positions might be made weak by direct enemy fire
- occupation of the forward slope is not essential to achieve depth and mutual support
- fields of fire on the reverse slope are better than needed or at least sufficient to accomplish the mission
- forward slope positions are likely to be the target of concentrated enemy artillery fires.

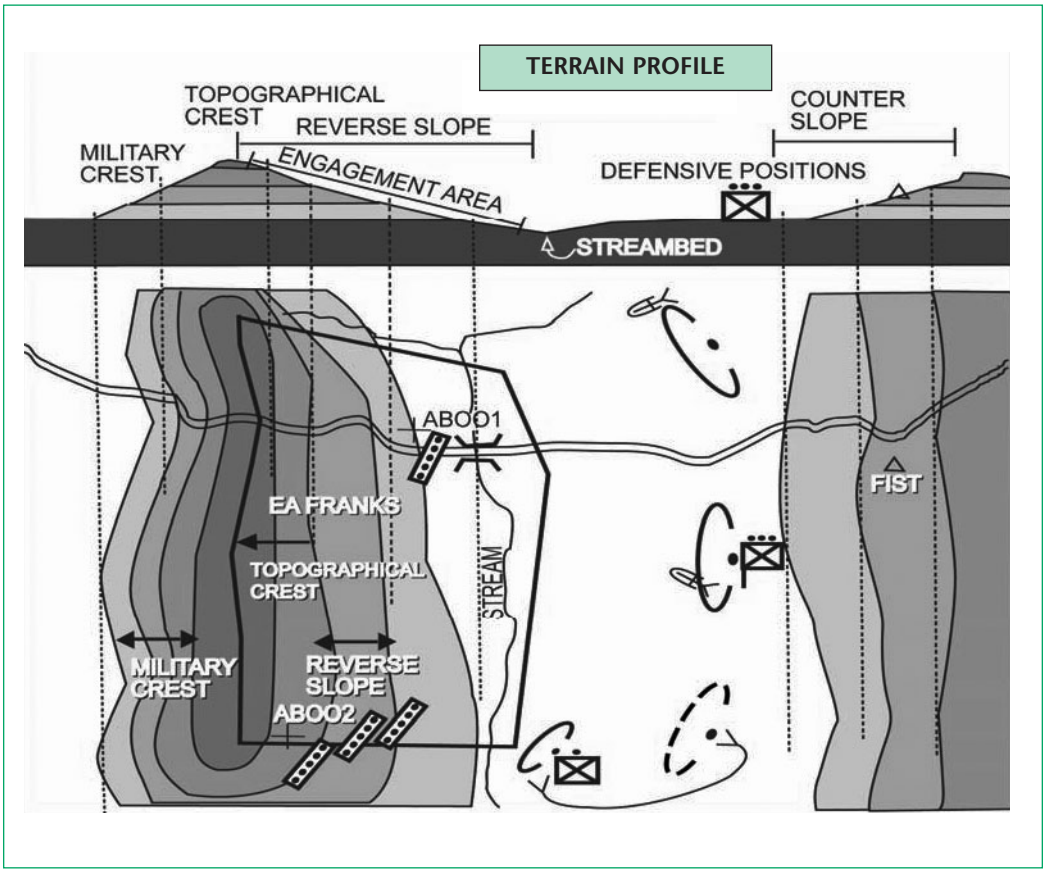

Figure 10.15 Reverse Slope Defense Options

The advantages of a reverse-slope defense are several:

- Enemy observation of the position, including the use of surveillance devices and radar, is masked
- Enemy forces cannot engage the position with direct fire without coming within range of your weapons
- Enemy indirect fire will be less effective because of the lack of observation
- The enemy may be deceived about the strength and location of positions
- You have more freedom of movement out of the enemy's sight.

Disadvantages of a reverse-slope defense include the following:

- Observation to the front is limited
- Fields of fire to the front are reduced
- Enemy can begin his assault from a closer range.

You must use obstacles in a reverse-slope defense. Because the enemy will be engaged at close range, obstacles should prevent the enemy from closing too quickly and overrunning your positions. Obstacles on the reverse slope can halt, disrupt, and expose enemy vehicles to flank antitank fires. Obstacles should also block the enemy to facilitate the platoon's disengagement.

Fighting and Survivability Positions

The defensive plan normally requires building fighting positions. Fighting positions protect Soldiers by providing cover from direct and indirect fires and by providing concealment through positioning and proper camouflage. Because the battlefield conditions confronting infantrymen are never standard, there is no single standard fighting position design that fits all tactical situations.

Soldiers prepare fighting positions even when there is little or no time before contact with the enemy is expected (Figure 10.16). They locate them behind whatever cover is available and where they can engage the enemy. The position should give frontal protection from direct fire while allowing fire to the front and oblique. Occupying a position quickly does not mean there is no digging. Soldiers can dig initial positions in only a few minutes. A fighting position just 18 inches deep will provide a significant amount of protection from direct fire and even fragmentation. All positions are built by stages. You can improve the initial fighting position construction over time to a more elaborate position.

Figure 10.16 Initial Fighting Position

TABLE 10.1 Do's and Don'ts of Fighting Position Construction

DO . . .	DON'T . . .
• construct to standard	• fail to supervise
• ensure adequate material is available	• use sandbags for structural support
• dig down as much as possible	• put Soldiers in marginally safe positions
• maintain, repair, and improve positions continuously	• take short cuts
• inspect and test position safety daily, after heavy rain, and after receiving direct and indirect fire	• build above ground unless absolutely necessary
• revet walls in unstable and sandy soil	• forget lateral bracing on stringers
• interlock sandbags for double wall construction and corners	• forget to camouflage
• check stabilization of wall bases	• drive vehicles within 6 feet of a fighting position.
• fill sandbags about 75 percent full	
• use common sense	
• use soil to fill sandbags, sill in any cavities in overhead cover, or spread to blend with surroundings.	

Principles

You should follow three basic principles to effectively and efficiently prepare fighting positions: 1) site positions to best engage the enemy; 2) prepare positions by stages; and 3) inspect all positions. As a platoon leader, your responsibilities include:

- protecting troops
- planning and selecting fighting position sites
- supervising construction
- inspecting periodically
- depending on assets, requesting technical advice from engineers as required
- improving and maintaining unit survivability continuously
- determining if there is a need to build the overhead cover up or down.

Types of Fighting Positions

There are many different types of fighting positions. The number of occupants; types of weapons; tools, materials, and time available; and terrain dictate the type of position.

The do's and don'ts of fighting position construction are listed in Table 10.1.

Infantry fighting positions are normally are constructed to hold one, two, or three Soldiers. There are special designs adapted for use by machine gun (M240B) and antiarmor (Javelin) teams.

One-Soldier Fighting Positions

Positions that contain a single Soldier are the least desirable, but they are useful in some situations. One-Soldier positions may be required to cover exceptionally wide frontages. They should never be positioned out of sight of adjacent positions. The one-Soldier fighting position (Figure 10.17) should allow the Soldier to fire to the front or to the oblique from behind frontal cover. Advantages and disadvantages to consider when choosing a one-Soldier fighting position include:

- The one-Soldier position allows choices in the use of cover
- The hole only needs to be large enough for one Soldier and gear
- It does not have the security of a two-Soldier position.

Figure 10.17 One-Soldier Fighting Position

Two-Soldier Fighting Position

A two-Soldier fighting position (Figure 10.18) is normally more effective than a one-Soldier fighting position. It can be used to provide mutual support to adjacent positions on both flanks and to cover **dead space** immediately in front of the position. One or both ends of the hole may extend around the sides of the frontal cover. Modifying a position in this way allows both Soldiers to have better observation and greater fields of fire to the front. Also, during rest or eating periods, one Soldier can watch the entire sector while the other sleeps or eats. If they receive fire from their front, they can move back to gain the protection of the frontal cover. By moving about one meter, the Soldiers can continue to find and hit targets to the front during lulls in enemy fire. This type of position:

- requires more digging
- is more difficult to camouflage
- provides a better target for enemy hand grenades.

dead space

an area within the maximum range of a weapon, radar, or observer, that cannot be covered by fire or observation from a particular position because of intervening obstacles, the nature of the ground, the characteristics of the trajectory, or the limitations of the weapon's pointing abilities

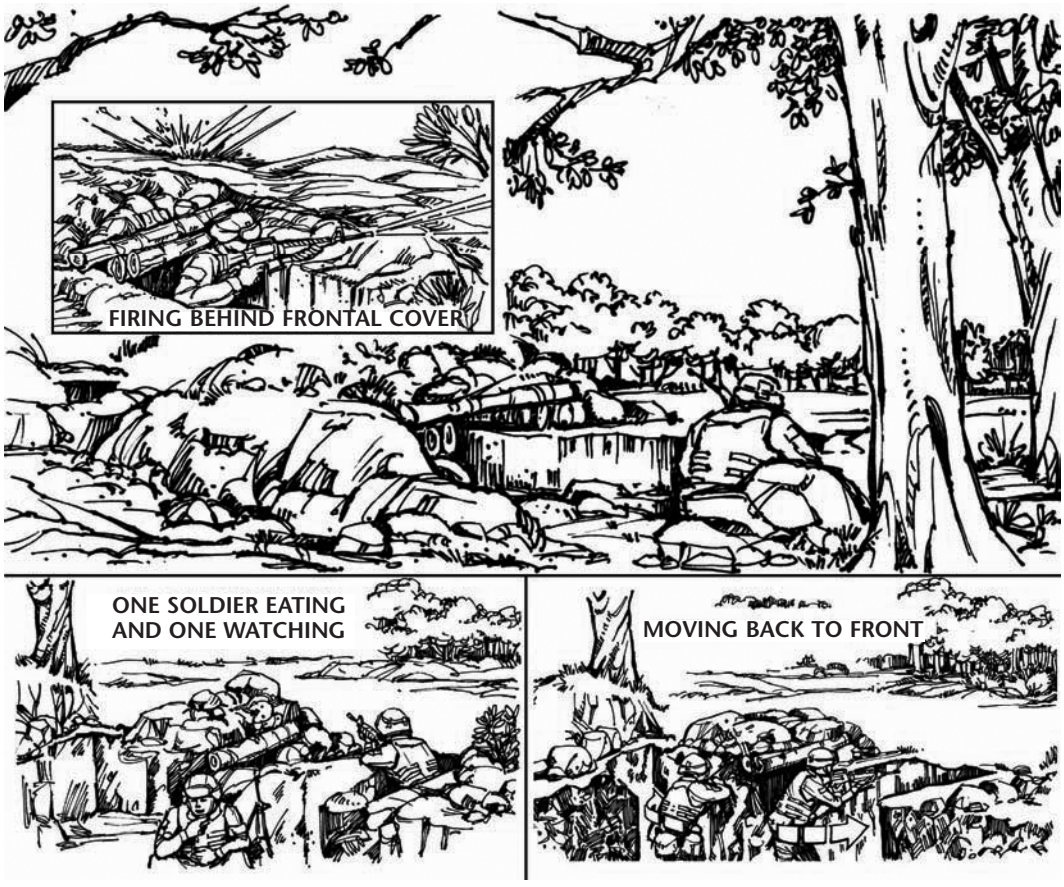

Figure 10.18 Two-Soldier Fighting Position

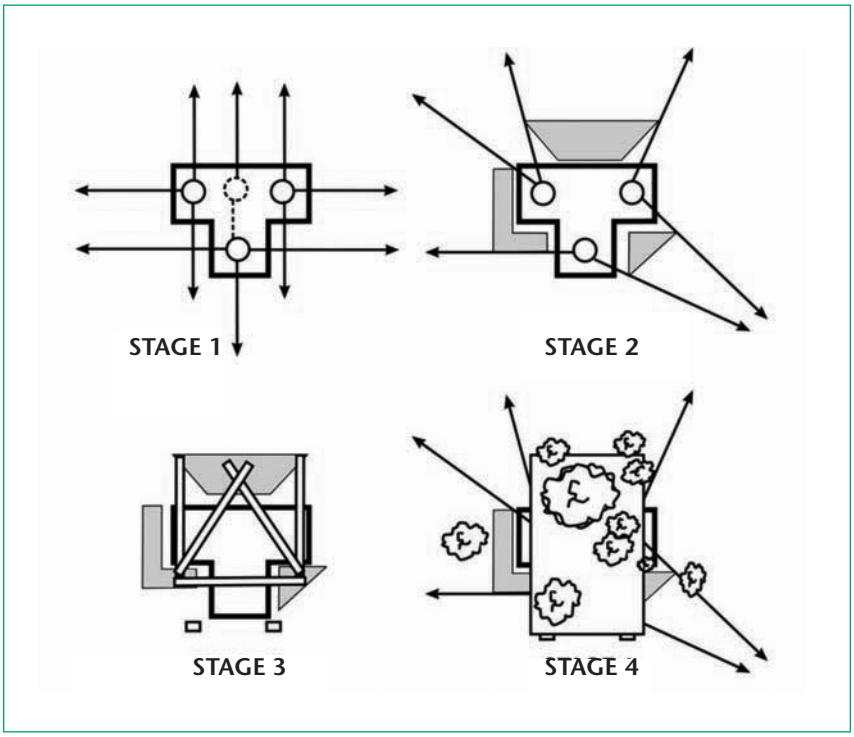

Figure 10.19 Three-Soldier T-Position

Three-Soldier Fighting Position

A three-Soldier position has several advantages. A leader can be in each position, making command and control easier. It supports continuous security operations better than other positions. One Soldier can provide security; one can do priority work; and one can rest, eat, or perform maintenance. This allows the priority of work to be completed more quickly than in a one- or two-Soldier position. This position allows the platoon to maintain combat power and security without shifting personnel or leaving positions unmanned. It provides 360-degree observation and fire, and is more difficult for the enemy to destroy because he must kill or suppress three Soldiers.

When using three-Soldier positions, you must consider several things. Either the distance between positions must be increased, or the size of the squad's sector must be reduced. The choice depends mainly on visibility and fields of fire. Because the squad leader is in a fighting position that will most likely be engaged during the battle, he or she cannot exert personal control over the other two positions. The squad leader controls the battle by:

- communicating plans and intent to the squad, including control measures and fire plans
- using prearranged signals like flares, whistles, or tracers
- positioning key weapons in the fighting position
- placing the fighting position so it covers key or decisive terrain
- placing the fighting position where the team might be able to act as a reserve.

The three-Soldier emplacement is a T-position (Figure 10.19). You can change this basic design by adding or deleting berms, changing the orientation of the T, or shifting the position of the third Soldier to form an L instead of a T. You can orient the layout of the position to fire on expected enemy avenues of approach from any direction. Berms must not block observation or fire into assigned primary or alternate sectors. Take care to properly support the overhead cover.

Machine Gun Position

A machine gun's primary sector of fire is usually to the oblique so the gun can fire across the platoon's front. The tripod is used on the side covering the primary sector of fire, while the bipod legs are used on the side covering the secondary sector of fire. When changing from primary to secondary sectors, the gunner moves only the machine gun. Occasionally you can assign a sector of fire that allows firing directly to the front, but this can reduce the frontal cover for the crew when they are firing to the oblique (Figure 10.20).

After you position the machine gun, you mark the position of the tripod legs and the limits of the sectors of fire. The crew then traces the outline of the hole and the frontal cover (if it must be improved).

The crew digs firing platforms first to lessen their exposure in case they must fire before completing the position. The platforms must not be so low that the gun cannot be rotated across its entire sector of fire, reducing the profile of the gunner when firing and reducing the frontal cover height.

After digging the firing platforms, the crew digs the hole. They first place the dirt where frontal cover is needed, digging the hole deep enough (usually armpit deep) to protect them while allowing the gunner to fire with comfort. When the frontal cover is high enough and thick enough, the crew uses the rest of the dirt to build flank and rear cover. Trench-shaped grenade sumps are dug at various points so either Soldier can kick a grenade into one if needed.

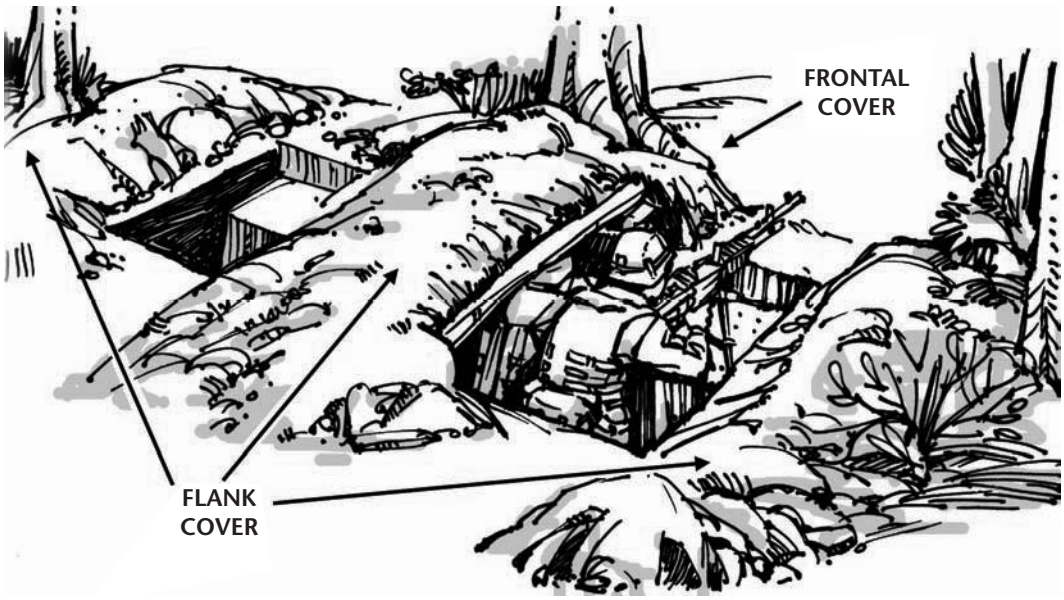

Figure 10.20 Machine Gun Position

Note: **In some positions, a machine gun might not have a secondary sector of fire. In this case, dig only half the position.**

For a three-Soldier machine gun crew, the ammunition bearer digs a one-Soldier fighting position to the flank that is connected with the gun position by a crawl trench. From this position, the ammunition bearer can see and fire to the front and to the oblique. Usually the ammunition bearer is on the same side as the FPL or PDF. This allows bearers to see and fire their rifles into the machine gun's secondary sector and to see the gunner and assistant gunner.

Javelin Position

The Javelin can be employed from initial or completed positions (Figure 10.21). However, some changes are required. For a detailed discussion on the employment of the Javelin, see FM 3-21.8, Appendix B.

The gunner must keep the weapon at least six inches above the ground to allow room for the stabilizing fins to unfold. The hole is only waist deep to allow the gunner to move while tracking to acquire a target. Because the Javelin gunner must be above ground level, the frontal cover should be high enough to hide his or her head and, if possible, the backblast of the Javelin. A hole is dug in front of the position for the bipod legs.

When the Javelin can be fired in one direction only, adjust the position to provide cover and concealment from all other directions. In this case, the Javelin should be fired to the oblique. This protects the position from frontal fire and allows engagement of the target from the flank. Both ends of the launcher must extend out over the edges of the hole.

Build overhead cover on the flanks. Cover must be large enough for the gunner, the tracker, and the missiles. Soldiers can build overhead cover that allows fire from underneath if the backblast area is clear. Overhead cover must be well camouflaged.

The Javelin is an important weapon and is easy to detect. Therefore, selection and preparation of alternate positions have high priority. When preparing an alternate position, the gunner should select and improve a covered route to it so he or she can move to the position under fire.

Figure 10.21 Javelin Position

Figure 10.22 Crawl Trenches

Trenches

When time and help are available, dig trenches to connect fighting positions so Soldiers can move by covered routes. The depth of a trench depends on the type of help and equipment available. Without engineer help, platoons dig crawl trenches (about 3 feet deep by 2 feet wide) (Figure 10.22). With engineer help, they dig standard trenches. The trench should zigzag so the enemy cannot fire down a long section. Platoons normally dig crawl trenches because engineer assets are usually limited. Platoons use crawl trenches to conceal their movement into and within positions. Spoil dirt is placed on parapets, normally on each side of the trench. If the trench runs across a forward slope, all the spoil is placed on the enemy side to make the forward parapet higher. All spoil needs careful concealment from enemy direct observation.

Retrograde

The retrograde is a type of defensive operation that involves organized movement away from the enemy. The enemy may force these operations, or a commander may execute them voluntarily. Retrograde operations are transitional and are not considered in isolation. There are three forms of retrograde: *withdrawal*, *delay*, and *retirement*. Platoons may participate in stay-behind missions as part of a withdrawal or delay.

Withdrawal

A withdrawal occurs when an element disengages from enemy contact to reposition itself for another mission. A platoon usually conducts a withdrawal as part of a larger force. As part of a company, your platoon may withdraw with the main element (under pressure) or may be used as the detachment left in contact (DLIC) in a withdrawal not under pressure. This information applies whether or not the platoon is under pressure from the enemy. Regardless of employment, conduct your withdrawal in accordance with your higher commander's guidance. On receipt of the order to conduct a withdrawal, begin preparing your order based on your higher unit's FRAGO. Identify possible key terrain and routes based on the higher unit's graphics and your map. Formulate and brief your FRAGO to your squad leaders. When the withdrawal is executed, squad leaders ensure they are moving in accordance with your plan by monitoring position locations.

Withdrawal Not Under Pressure

In a withdrawal not under pressure, platoons may serve as or as part of the DLIC. A DLIC is used to deceive the enemy into thinking that the entire force is still in position (Figure 10.23). As the DLIC, the platoon:

- repositions squads and weapons to cover the company's withdrawal
- repositions a squad in each of the other platoon positions to cover the most dangerous avenue of approach into the position
- continues the normal operating patterns of the company and simulates company radio traffic
- covers the company withdrawal with planned direct and indirect fires if the company is attacked during withdrawal
- withdraws by echelon once the company arrives at its next position.

Withdrawal Under Pressure

If the platoon cannot prepare and position the security force, it conducts a fighting withdrawal. The platoon disengages from the enemy by maneuvering to the rear. First withdraw Soldiers and squads not in contact to provide suppressive fire and to allow Soldiers and squads in contact to withdraw.

Disengagement

Based on orders from the battalion commander, the company commander determines how long to retain defensive positions. He or she may require the company to remain and fight for a certain amount of time, or he or she may require it to disengage and move to subsequent positions. A platoon, as part of a company, may disengage to defend from another battle position, prepare for a counterattack, delay, withdraw, or prepare for another mission.

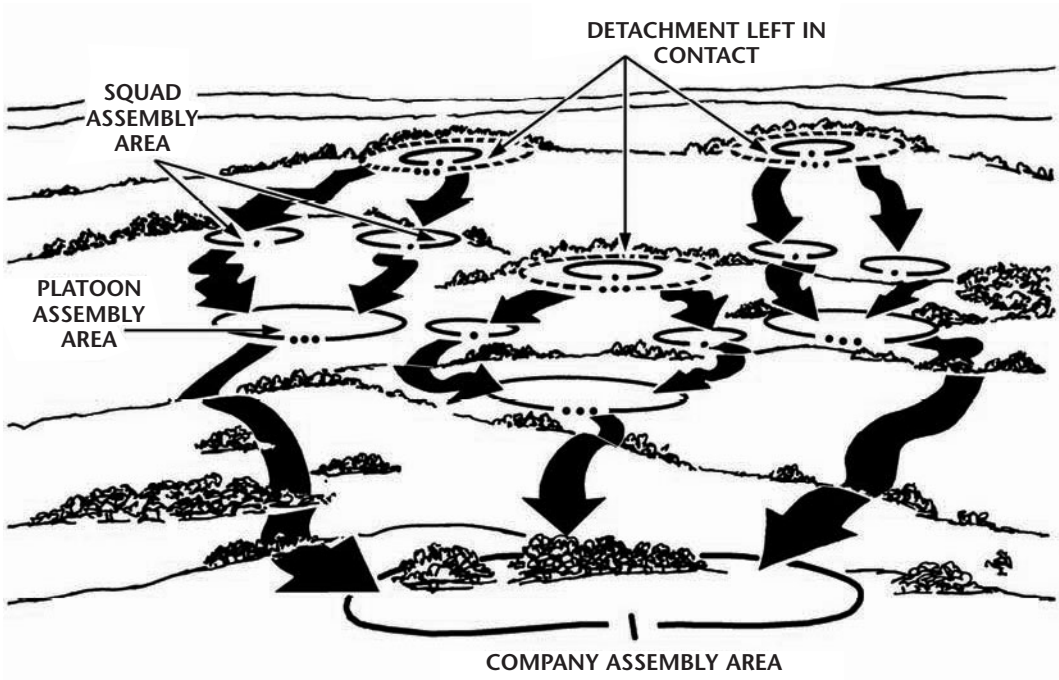

Figure 10.23 Withdrawal Not Under Pressure

Fire and movement to the rear is the basic tactic for disengaging. All available fires are used to slow the enemy and allow platoons to move away. The company commander may move platoons and mass fires to stop or slow the enemy advance before beginning the movement away from the enemy.

Using bounding overwatch, the company commander forms a base of fire to cover platoons or squads moving away from the enemy. One platoon or squad acts as the base of fire, delaying the enemy with fire or retaining terrain blocking his advance, while other platoons or squads disengage.

Moving platoons or squads get to their next positions and provide a base of fire to cover the rearward movement of forward platoons and squads.

Fire and movement is repeated until contact with the enemy is broken, the platoons pass through a different base-of-fire force, or the platoons are in position to resume their defense (Figure 10.24).

The tactics the platoon uses to disengage from the enemy differ according to the company commander's plan for disengagement, how the platoon is deployed, and other factors. The following actions apply in all cases:

- Make maximum use of the terrain to cover rearward movement—squads back out of position and move, attempting to keep a terrain feature between them and the enemy
- Rapid movement and effective base of fire enhance mobility and are key to a successful disengagement.

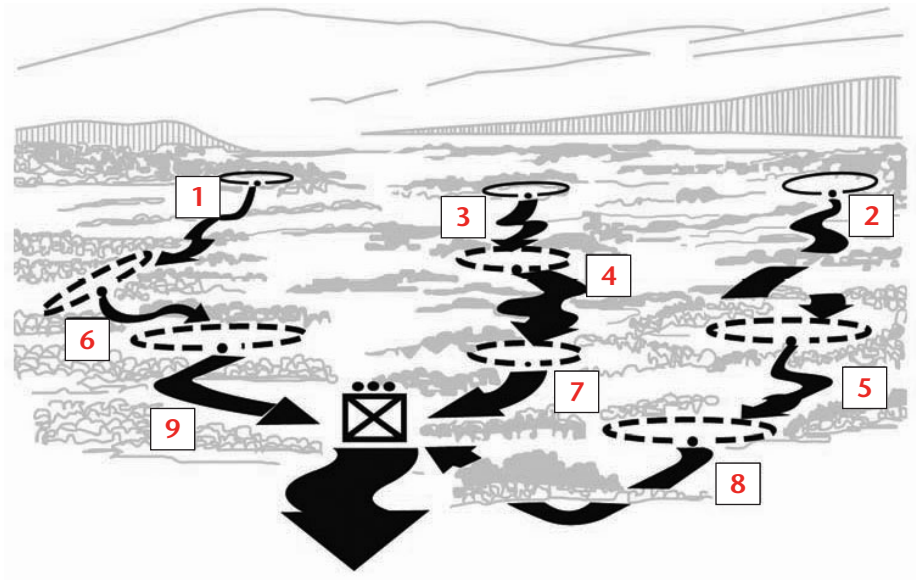

Figure 10.24 Bounding Overwatch to the Rear

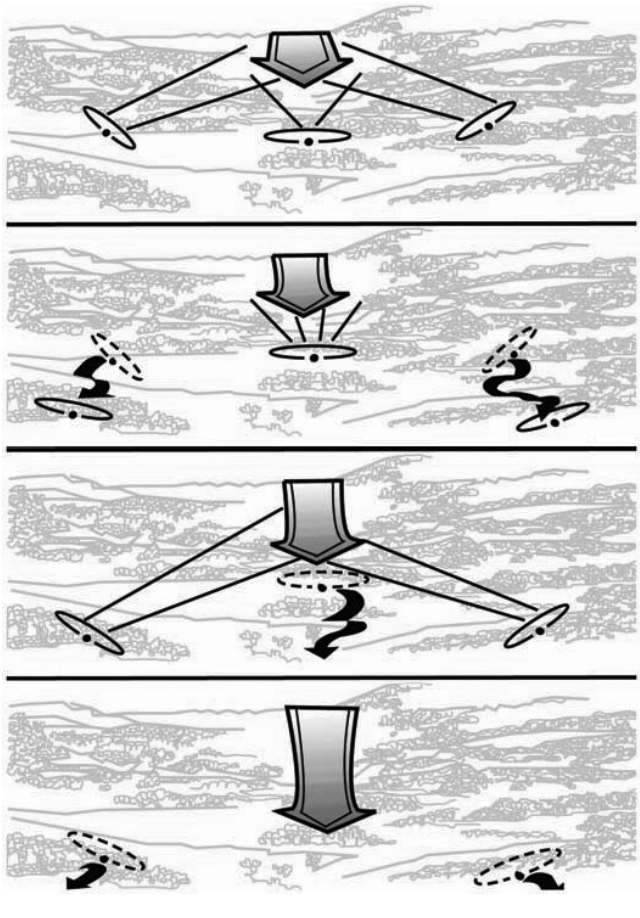

Figure 10.25 Disengagement by Squads

Plans for disengagement may be part of any defensive plan. When squads are separated, there are three ways they can disengage: by teams; by thinning the lines when they must cover their own movement; or simultaneously when they are covered by another force.

Teams

When the rifle platoon must cover its own movement, two squads stay in position as a base of fire (Figure 10.25). The third squad and weapons squad move to the rear (crew-served weapons move based on your assessment of when they can best move). The squads left in position must fire into the entire element's sector to cover the movement of the other squad(s). You adjust sectors of fire for better coverage of the element's sector. The moving squad may displace by fire teams or as squads because there are two squads covering their movement. The squads left in position sequentially disengage. Movement to the rear by alternating squads continues until contact is broken.

Thinning the Lines

When your platoon disengages by thinning the lines, selected Soldiers from each fire team (usually one Soldier from each fighting position) disengage and move to the rear (Figure 10.26). The Soldiers still in position become the base of fire to cover the movement.

Figure 10.26 Disengagement by Thinning the Lines

Simultaneous

Squads disengage simultaneously when they are covered by another force. Simultaneous disengagement is favored when rapid movement is critical; when the disengaging element is adequately covered by overwatching fires; when the enemy has not closed on the rifle squad or cannot fire effectively at it; and when there are obstacles to delay the enemy. You use simultaneous disengagement when rifle squads are able to move before the enemy can close on their position. Other platoons of the company or battalion cover the disengagement with supporting fires.

Delay

In a delay, the enemy slows its forward momentum when the platoon forces him to repeatedly deploy for the attack. After causing the enemy to deploy, the delaying force withdraws to new positions, trading space for time. You conduct a delay typically to buy time for friendly forces to regain the offensive. You can also conduct a delay to buy time so friendly forces can establish an effective defense, or to determine enemy intentions. Inflicting casualties on the enemy is normally secondary to slowing the enemy approach. As part of a company or larger operation, the platoon can expect to be tasked as a reserve, security force, or part of the main body. The squads or sections and platoons disengage from the enemy as described in a withdrawal under pressure and move directly to their next position and defend again. The squads and platoons slow the advance of the enemy by causing casualties and equipment losses by employing:

- ambushes
- snipers
- obstacles
- minefields (including phony minefields)
- artillery and mortar fire.

A common control measure in these missions is the delay line—a phase line the enemy is not allowed to cross until a specified date and time. Infantry must carefully consider the mobility difference between themselves and the attacking force, maximizing the use of both terrain and counter-mobility obstacles. A delay operation terminates when the delaying force conducts a rearward passage of lines through a defending force, the delaying force reaches defensible terrain and transitions to the defense, the advancing enemy force reaches a culminating point and can no longer continue to advance, or the delaying force goes on the offensive.

Stay-Behind Operations

Stay-behind operations can be used as part of defensive or retrograde operations. In these operations, the commander leaves a unit in position to conduct a specified mission while the remaining forces withdraw or retire from the enemy. Stay-behind is inherently risky, and resupply and casualty evacuation are difficult. Conducting stay-behind operations places a premium on your infantry leadership and initiative, and ultimately terminates when the unit conducts a linkup with attacking friendly forces or reenters friendly lines.

Types

The two types of stay-behind operations are *unplanned* and *deliberate*.

Unplanned. An unplanned stay-behind operation is one in which a unit finds itself cut off from other friendly elements for an indefinite time. In this kind of operation the unit has no specific planning or targets, and must rely on its organic assets.

Deliberate. A deliberate stay-behind operation is one in which a unit plans to operate in an enemy-controlled area as a separate yet cohesive element for a certain amount of time or until a specified event occurs. A deliberate stay-behind operation requires extensive planning. Squads, sections, and platoons conduct this type of operation as part of larger units.

Planning

Troop leading procedures (TLP) apply to stay-behind operations. Planners must pay strict attention to task organization, reconnaissance, and sustainment.

A stay-behind unit includes only the Soldiers and equipment needed for the mission. It provides its own logistics support and security, and must be able to hide easily and move through restrictive terrain.

Reconnaissance is most important in a stay-behind operation. Reporting tasks and information requirements can include suitable sites for patrol bases, hiding positions, observation posts, caches, water sources, dismounted and mounted avenues of approach, kill zones, engagement areas, and covered and concealed approach routes. The commander may require the unit to collect intelligence on enemy forces around it.

Because the stay-behind unit will not be in physical contact with its supporting unit, it caches supplies of rations, ammunition, radio batteries, water, and medical supplies. Provisions for casualty and EPW evacuation depend on company and battalion plans.

Retirement

Retirement is a form of retrograde in which a force not in contact with the enemy moves away from the enemy. Retiring units organize to fight but do so only in self-defense. Retirements are usually not as risky as delays or withdrawals. Retiring units normally road march away from the enemy. Infantry platoons participate in retirements as part of their company and higher headquarters.

CONCLUSION

Far from being a passive activity, a successful defense takes as much time, expertise, and careful planning as any offensive operation. In fact, rather than being in a static state, your defensive posture should actively locate, harass, and interdict the enemy as far forward as possible, forestalling his successful offensive planning and actions. A strong defensive posture is *active,* not passive.

The Army recognizes and supports a range of SOPs and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for the defense. As a small-unit leader, you have learned some of the fundamentals of conducting a strong defense. Your job as a platoon leader will be to train your Soldiers to effectively use troop leading procedures, priorities of work, and defensive tactics, with an eye toward quickly regaining the initiative on the offense. You will help them understand defense as an integral part of completing your mission and a crucial resource in winning battles.

Key Words

sector of fire
reverse slope
maximum engagement line
range card
battle position
dead space

Learning Assessment

1. List the five primary characteristics of defense that constitute the planning fundamentals.
2. List the six phases within the sequence of the defense.
3. Explain the seven-step planning process in the engagement area development and explain the purpose of each step.
4. Describe the minimum information a platoon leader's FRAGO must contain in the preparation of the defense.
5. Compare and contrast the five basic platoon defensive techniques.

6. **Explain the platoon leader's three basic responsibilities in the effective and efficient preparation of fighting positions.**
7. **List and describe the three forms of retrograde operations.**

References

Field Manual 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphics*. 21 September 2004.

Field Manual 3-21.8, *The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. 28 March 2007.

Tsouras, P. G., ed. (2000). *The Greenhill Book of Military Quotations*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books.