



CHAPTER 4

Execution of FOOT MARCHES

The execution phase of foot marches is a continuation of the planning phase. The troop-leading procedure provides a framework for feedback to the unit commander or leader. Proper planning ensures a smooth transition by setting up proper task organization, security measures, and a flexible command and control system. Also, the successful execution is enhanced by being able to adapt the plan to changing situations.

Section I CONDUCT OF THE MARCH

Proper execution of the march depends upon establishment of an effective organization and security measures, standardized communication means, and contingencies for reaction to enemy contact. These ensure the foot march is flexible to changing conditions and responsible to the needs of the commander.

4-1. ORGANIZATION FOR THE MARCH

Execution depends upon the establishment of the proper organization and the accomplishment of critical tasks. These ensure flexibility to changing conditions and responsiveness to the needs of the commander. A command is organized into

march units and further divided into march serials or march columns (Figure 4-1).

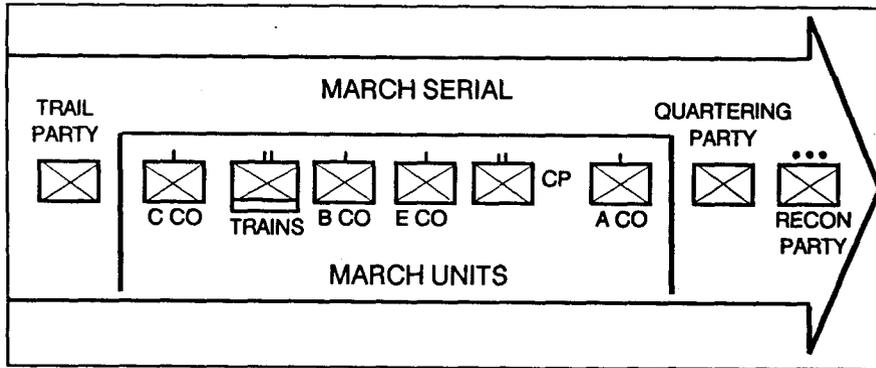


Figure 4-1. March Organizations.

a. Reconnaissance Party.

(1) The reconnaissance party reconnoiters the route to determine travel time, capacity of underpasses and bridges, and locations of culverts, ferries, and fords; and to identify critical points and obstacles. Route reconnaissance can be conducted to confirm and supplement data from map studies, higher headquarters, and air reconnaissance. The amount of detail is often related to speed of movement.

(2) Instructions to the party should state the type and extent of information required, and the time and place the report is to be submitted.

b. Main Body.

(1) Before starting a march, each march unit of a serial reconnoiters its route to the SP and determines the exact time for reaching it. The movement order states the time that the serial must arrive and clear its SP. The serial commander then determines and announces the times for march units of his serial.

(2) Arrival time at the SP is critical. Each march unit must arrive at and clear the SP on time, otherwise movement of other elements may be delayed. Each leader reconnoiters the route

from his position to the SP to help him decide when his unit must move to meet its SP time.

(3) During the movement, march units move at the constant speed designated in the order, maintaining proper vehicle/foot interval and column gap. Erratic increases and decreases in speed, particularly at hills, create an accordion or whipping effect. This could force tail elements to move at increased and unsafe speeds to keep up with the head of the column. If the march unit is behind schedule, it uses only the designated catch-up speed. March units report crossing each control point as directed by the march order. During the move, air and ground security must be maintained.

c. Trail Party.

(1) The trail party is the last march unit in a battalion serial. It is usually led by the BMO and consists of elements of the maintenance platoon and medical personnel. The trail party recovers disabled vehicles and stragglers. If a disabled vehicle cannot be repaired or towed, the vehicle and crewmembers are moved off the road into a secure area. The drivers/crewmembers are left with the vehicle, along with food and water. When a vehicle(s) is left behind, the BMO calls in the location and tells the battalion S4 why it was left.

(2) Medical personnel attached to the trail party compose the personnel evacuation section. This section is responsible for recovering stragglers from the march column that require medical care. Company medical aidmen try to maintain march unit discipline by treating casualties within their ability, but they must not allow stragglers to delay them or the progress of the foot march. The trail party's personnel evacuation section must have troop-carrying assets to pickup and treat stragglers from the various march units within the battalion serial. Once the trail party picks up a straggler, the S1 should be notified to maintain accountability.

(3) When the trail party completes the road march, the battalion's first priority is to recover vehicles left behind and to return stragglers to parent units. A tactical road march is not complete until all march units, vehicles, and personnel are accounted for.

4-2. SECURITY

During the march, the companies maintain security through observation, weapon orientation, dispersion, and camouflage. Commanders assign sectors of observation to their troops so that there is 360-degree observation. Main weapons throughout the column are oriented on specific sectors. The first elements cover the front, following elements cover alternate flanks, and the last element covers the rear.

a. Planning for and implementing air defense security measures are imperative to reduce the battalion's vulnerability to enemy air attack. The battalion commander must be able to integrate into his fire plan the ADA assets allocated to him. Furthermore, he must ensure that all passive and active air defense measures that could be implemented at company level are well planned and used.

(1) *Passive measures* include the use of concealed routes and assembly areas, movement on secure routes, night marches, increased intervals between elements of the columns, and dispersion when under attack.

(2) *Active measures* include the use of organic and attached weapons in accordance with the unit air defense plan during marches.

NOTE: Each vehicle in a motor march has an air guard to provide air security. Specific vehicles may be designated as air guard vehicles performing air rather than ground observation.

b. Scheduled halts preplanned along the march route for maintenance and rest, or to follow higher-echelon movement orders. They should be located on defensible, covered, and concealed terrain. During scheduled halts, vehicles/soldiers pull to the side of the road while maintaining march dispersion. Local security, to include at least one OP for each platoon, is immediately established, and drivers perform during-operation maintenance checks. OPs should not be established outside the range of small arms and should be readily retrievable so that the unit is ready to move at a moment's notice.

c. Unscheduled halts and actions may be caused by unforeseen developments such as obstacles, traffic congestion, or equipment failure. If a halt is necessary, the march column's first priority is to establish security and to have each unit form a hasty perimeter.

d. Obstacles that are reported by the reconnaissance party should be bypassed, if possible. If they cannot be bypassed, the lead march unit assumes a hasty defense to cover and overwatch while engineers remove the obstacle. As the lead march unit removes the obstacle, the other march units move slower or move off the road to closely monitor the battalion command net.

4-3. REACTION TO ENEMY CONTACT

If the battalion is attacked by indirect fire during the road march, the unit in contact continues to move. The remainder of the battalion attempts to bypass the impact area (Figure 4-2).

a. If the battalion is attacked by hostile aircraft during the march, the march unit that is attacked assumes a quick defensive posture or perimeter (whichever is best for the terrain) and immediately engages the attacking aircraft with all available weapons. The rest of the battalion moves to covered and concealed areas.

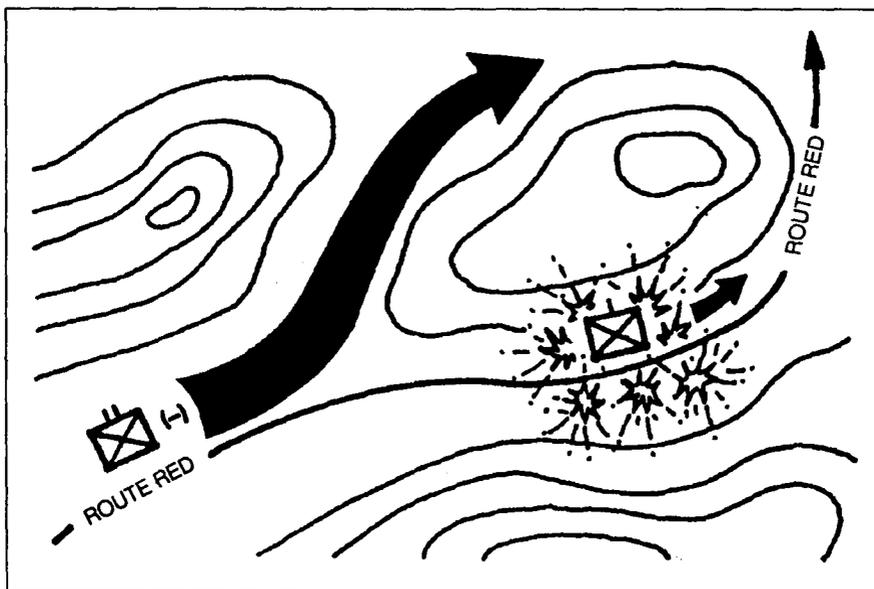


Figure 4-2. Battalion actions under indirect fire.

b. Ambushes are fought through without delay. If the battalion is ambushed, the march unit in the kill zone increases speed, fights through, and reports the ambush. The battalion commander may order a march unit already beyond the kill zone to return to the ambush site (Figure 4-3). The march unit conducts a hasty attack to clear it of enemy or establishes a blocking position on the far side of the kill zone while a following march unit conducts the hasty attack. Follow-on march units may also be ordered to aid in extracting the ambushed march unit from the kill zone either through assault by fire or by direct assault on the ambush position.

c. Disabled vehicles must not obstruct traffic. They are moved off the road, and their status is reported immediately. Security is established and guides are posted to direct traffic. If the operator repairs the vehicle, the vehicle rejoins the rear of the column. If the operator cannot repair the vehicle, trail party maintenance elements pick it up.

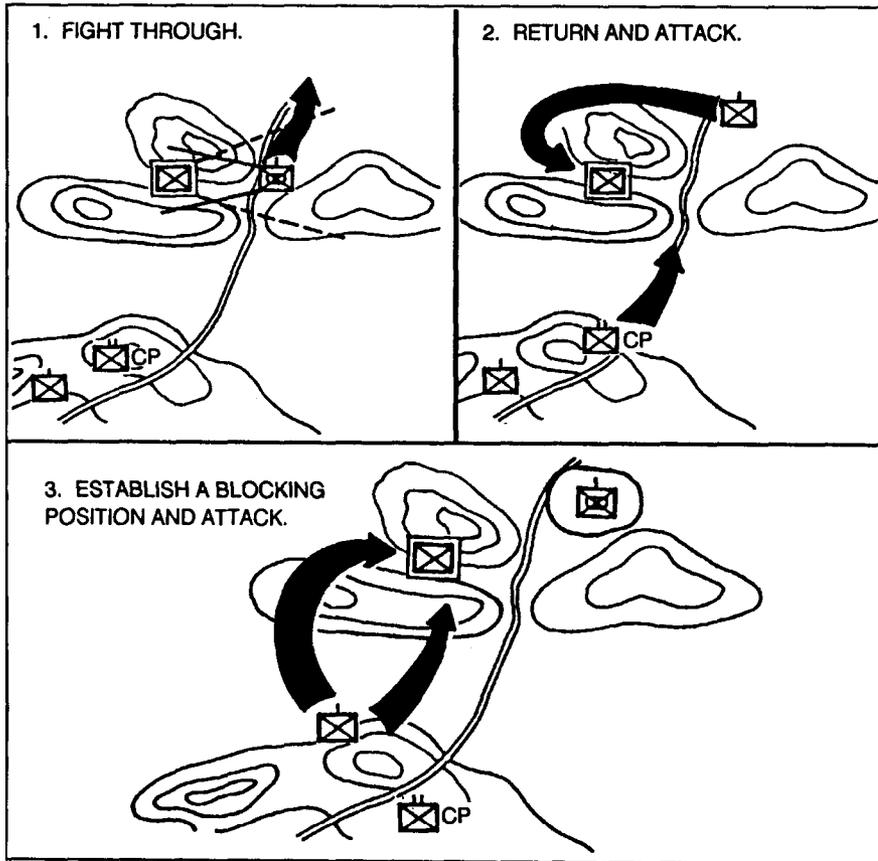


Figure 4-3. Actions on the ambush site.

4-4. COMMUNICATIONS

Messengers are the primary means of communication during tactical marches, but visual signals and road guides can also be used. Since the enemy has good direction-finding equipment, radio is used only in emergencies and when no other means of communication can be used.

a. Road guides can also be used to pass messages from one march unit to a following march unit. Because of the need to stay off the radio, road guides are needed to control the speed of

march units and their intervals. When used, they should be given enough information to control movement. The amount of information given depends upon the friendly and enemy situation.

b. The information that messengers or road guides can give to other passing units includes:

- A strip map update.
- The number, sequence, identification, and composition of march units.
- Expected arrival time and clearance time for march units passing the positions of the guides.
- Recognition signals.
- How guides are to be positioned, who will pick them up, and when.
- Instructions for linking up with the parent unit upon completion of road guide duties.
- Special instructions for the guides to pass on to march unit commanders to include details of the route and any changes.

c. Visual communication means include flashlights, lanterns, luminous markers, panel sets, flags, pyrotechnics, smoke, and arm-and-hand signals. The use and meaning of visual signals are standardized to avoid misunderstandings. The road movement order contains instructions for use in specific situations.

d. Sound communications include voice, whistles, horns, and gongs, which can be used to assemble troops upon completion of halts or to warn troops of an enemy air or chemical attack. Sound signals normally are standardized and can be included in the unit SOP if their use is routine.

4-5. HALTS

During a march, halts are enforced routinely to rest personnel and adjust equipment. They are regulated by SOP or by the road

movement order. Unit commanders are promptly notified of the time and approximate length of unscheduled halts.

a. Day marches should end early to provide troops with rest and time to prepare for the next day's activities. Midday heat or enemy action can require the unit to make long daylight halts or night marches. At long halts, each unit moves to a planned location near the route of march.

b. Under normal conditions, a 15-minute halt provides rest for soldiers after the first 45 minutes of marching. Following the first halt, a 10-minute halt is enforced for every 50 minutes of marching. Variations of time schedules are required if a halt time occurs when passing through a built-up area, or when cover and concealment are required but not available. On extended or long marches, variations in the time schedule should be kept to a minimum. Units establish observation posts and patrols for security during halts.

c. All units in the column should be halted at the same time. At the halt signal, troops should move to the sides of the road while staying close to their unit. If the situation permits, soldiers should remove or loosen their gear and sit or lie down with their feet elevated for optimum relaxation. Commanders inspect soldiers and equipment during halts, and aidmen administer medical treatment if needed.

d. Soldiers who relieve themselves should dig individual cat-hole latrines and cover them immediately after use. They can dig straddle trenches during noon halts and while occupying bivouac or assembly areas.

4-6. ACCORDION EFFECT

An accordion effect in marching is caused by changes in the rate of march and most often occurs as lead elements of a unit ascend or descend terrain, or pass through critical points along the march route. A change in the rate of march increases as it passes down the column, so that the rear elements must either double

time to maintain the distance or be left far behind. Thus, a minor change of rate at the head of the column becomes magnified by the time it reaches the tail of the column. The best method for reducing the accordion effect is for lead elements to slow their rate of march after passing obstacles to permit rearward elements to maintain distances without running. The accordion effect can also be reduced by lengthening or shortening the step, or by taking up the slack to maintain the prescribed distance between soldiers.

4-7. DISTANCES BETWEEN UNITS

Terrain, weather, and the enemy situation influence distances between soldiers and units during a march. Distances should sustain march efficiency and reduce the effects of accordion action, which usually results when marching over hills or difficult terrain. Normal distances are usually included in the unit SOP as a guide to commanders.

a. **Distances Between Men.** When soldiers march on roads in the daytime, the distances between them vary from 2 to 5 meters to provide dispersion and space for marching comfort. A distance in excess of 5 meters increases the length of the column and hinders control. At nighttime, the distances should be reduced to 1 to 3 meters between soldiers to assist in maintaining contact and facilitating control. The tactical situation could require changes to these distances—for example, if the march route is within range of enemy artillery fire, the maximum distances should be used.

b. **Distances Between Units.** Normally, distances are 100 meters between companies and 50 meters between platoons. During reduced visibility, the distances can be decreased to 50 meters between companies and 25 meters between platoons to facilitate control. In the daytime or when the column is marching within the range of enemy artillery, the distances should be

increased IAW the situation and the amount of control required. These distances permit vehicles to pass the column.

4-8. NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL, CHEMICAL

The battalion commander must include in his plan road marches and assembly areas on the integrated battlefield. He must also consider chemical, biological, and nuclear attacks. These planning considerations should include: properly distributing NBC protective and decontamination materials and ensuring locations are known, establishing and maintaining proper MOPP level, and avoiding contaminated areas.

- a. If a unit must cross a chemically contaminated area—
 - Use MOPP4.
 - Avoid moving through underbrush.
 - Stay on hard-surface roads.
 - Ensure soldiers are issued NAAK-MK 1 auto injectors.
 - Cover as much equipment as possible.
 - Avoid vehicle tracking (stagger vehicles in the column) to reduce secondary contamination from dust or debris created by vehicles.
 - Avoid low areas.
 - Avoid moving early or late in the day.
 - Decrease speed to reduce dust or mud.
 - Increase vehicle intervals.
 - Scrape dirt-road surfaces with a dozer to clear the road of surface contamination.
- b. If a unit must cross a nuclear contaminated area—
 - Wear BDUs with sleeves rolled down and the top collar buttoned, along with a scarf or handkerchief over the nose and mouth.
 - Avoid disturbing road dust.
 - Ensure that the unit's radiac equipment is used by march units.

- Dampen hardtop roads before traveling.
- Dampen dirt roads to prevent disturbing contaminated dust.
- Use dosimeters throughout the march to measure the total dose soldiers receive.

c. Detailed planning for the decontamination of march units must be accomplished to reduce losses and excessive delays. Every effort should be made to avoid contaminated areas.

Section II

PERSONNEL DUTIES

This section discusses the minimum duties of individuals at the company level.

4-9. COMPANY COMMANDER

The company commander has a variety of duties before, during, and after the march.

a. **Before the March.** The company commander issues the warning order in time to allow the subordinate leaders and their soldiers to prepare for the march. He conducts reconnaissance of the route to the SP to determine the length of time it will take the company to arrive there from its present area. (If the company is marching alone, the commander selects the route of march and directs a reconnaissance.) Then he prepares a march plan and issues the road movement order. The order is based on the order received from battalion; however, if the company is marching alone, the order is prepared by the company. The order can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Enemy situation.
- Friendly situation.
- Purpose of the march.
- Units participating.
- March objective.

- Order of march.
- Rate of march.
- Route of march.
- Start point and time.
- Release point.
- Instructions concerning march, water, light, and communication discipline.
- Formation time, based on time distance to start point.
- Uniform and equipment to include water and rations to be carried.
- Location of march collecting posts.
- Designation of personnel for straggler identification and control.
- Command and control.

NOTE: See Appendix B for an example of a battalion road movement order.

The company commander issues instructions concerning personnel who will not march with the unit but will either be left behind or transported to the destination. He supervises preparation for the march. He forms his company at the scheduled time and conducts an inspection to ensure that uniforms and equipment are as prescribed and are worn properly.

b. **During the March.** The company commander usually marches at the head of the company to the SP, after which he moves to a point in the column where he can effectively supervise the march. During the march, he supervises the rate of movement, company formation, appearance of troops, and adjustment of packs, weapons, and other equipment. The commander maintains control by using voice, messenger, and radio communications. Periodically, he checks the march rate and distances between soldiers and platoons to reduce the accordion effect (see paragraph 4-6). He checks the number and

condition of stragglers, and ensures that they have been accounted for by the chain of command.

c. **During Halts.** The company commander ensures foot inspections, water discipline, sanitation, safety, and adjustment of loads take place throughout the the company.

d. **After the March.** He ensures that movement of platoons into their respective assembly areas is rapid and without delay. He visits the platoon areas and supervises the platoon leaders in their inspections and execution of other duties.

4-10. COMPANY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The company executive officer assists the company commander as directed. When the commander is not marching at the head of the column, the company executive officer leads the unit over the designated route at the prescribed rate of march. He supervises the pace setter, assists in supervision of the platoons during halts, and resumes the march according to the time schedule. He posts and supervises company traffic guards and guides. Upon completion of the march, he supervises the establishment of the company command post (CP) and latrine facilities.

4-11. COMPANY FIRST SERGEANT

The company first sergeant assists the commander as directed and ensures the unit NCOs perform all inspections in the conduct of the foot march. He helps establish and maintain march unit formation and discipline to include pace, intervals between soldiers, noise and light discipline, and water and rest discipline.

4-12. PLATOON LEADER

The platoon leader has a variety of duties before, during, and after the march.

a. **Before the March.** The platoon leader informs his platoon of information contained in the road movement order to ensure adequate and timely preparations. During the company formation, just before the march, the platoon leader inspects the wearing and adjustment of clothing and equipment. He supervises his squad leaders in the performance of their duties.

b. **During the March.** As the platoon marches to the SP, the platoon leader ensures that the prescribed distances within his platoon and between his and the platoon ahead are maintained. He checks compliance of the announced restrictions such as water and march discipline. After leading his platoon across the SP, the platoon leader moves to a point in the column where he can effectively control his unit. As the column approaches the RP, the platoon leader moves to the head of the platoon column to lead the platoon into the assembly area.

c. **At Halts.** During halts, the platoon leader directs soldiers to clear the road and to relax by sitting or lying down and by loosening their equipment. He checks the physical condition of his soldiers, and enforces water and food discipline and field sanitation measures. He supervises the formation of the platoon about one minute before the march so it will not be delayed.

d. **After the March.** Upon crossing the RP, the platoon leader ensures that the platoon moves promptly to its assigned area. In the assembly area, he disperses his unit and finds cover and concealment. He ensures that soldiers obtain food, water, shelter, and rest. In a tactical situation, the platoon leader ensures his soldiers are ready to accomplish their mission. He supervises his squad leaders in their duties, while he concentrates on foot inspections. He ensures medical attention where needed.

4-13. PLATOON SERGEANT

Platoon sergeants assist the platoon leader in the conduct of the foot march as directed. He supervises the inspection of soldiers

during halts and controls straggling and dropouts by examining march casualties with the medical aidman before recommending to the platoon leader that the casualties be allowed to fall out and take wheel transportation. The platoon sergeant coordinates with the company supply representative for replenishment of water, rations, and medical supplies at rest stops and halts.

4-14. SQUAD LEADER

The squad leader has a variety of duties before, during, and after the march.

a. **Before the March.** The duties of the squad leader are similar to those of the platoon leader and platoon sergeant in relation to his platoon. Upon receipt of the warning order, the squad leader provides detailed instructions and individual attention. He inspects boots for serviceability, proper fit, and comfort. The squad leader inspects each soldier's socks for cleanliness and holes or for badly mended sections that could cause blisters (see Appendix C). He directs each soldier to carry an extra pair of socks for use during and after the march. He can prepare a kit containing foot powder, gauze, adhesive tape, and other appropriate items for use by his squad during the march. The squad leader also inspects soldiers for proper equipment, adjustment of equipment, and canteens full of water.

b. **During the March.** The squad leader marches at a location within the formation where he can best control the squad, maintaining the prescribed distance from the squad ahead and periodically checking soldiers for proper distance and rate of march. He assists the platoon leader in the enforcement of march discipline, other march control measures, and accountability of all personnel and equipment.

c. **At Halts.** The squad leader assists the platoon leader in the accomplishment of his duties by moving his squad off to the side of the road to allow soldiers to relax. He can shift crew-served

weapons and other heavy loads from tired soldiers to those who are rested. He inspects the physical condition of his soldiers. The squad leader is the key to the success of command supervised drinking. Soldiers must be encouraged to drink water at every halt and during the march to maintain proper levels of hydration.

d. **After the March.** The squad leader leads his soldiers to the squad's sector of the assembly area and disperses them, using all available cover and concealment. He conducts a foot inspection and reports the physical condition of his soldiers to the platoon leader or platoon sergeant. He prepares to continue the mission and informs soldiers of details for mission accomplishment.

4-15. COMPANY MEDICAL AIDMAN

The company medical aidman (if attached) assists the platoon leadership in the assessment and treatment of march casualties. He advises the chain of command on evacuation and transportation requirements of casualties during the march.

4-16. GUIDES

Guides are used to lead or direct a unit over a planned route and into or out of a selected area. They can be placed at points along the march to control direction. Guides are given detailed instructions of their duties to include critical information of the march and, if prepared, a strip map of the march route.

a. If conditions prevent the posting of guides ahead of the column, guides accompany the lead element and are posted at critical points to give directions to the remainder of the column. Examples of critical points are road and trail junctions, especially those where a new direction is taken.

b. Guides either join the tail of the column as it clears their posts or are picked up by unit transportation following the column. They are used at the RP to lead units to their assigned sector of the assembly area.

4-17. ROAD GUARDS

Road guards are placed about 50 meters to the front and rear of the column to slow or stop oncoming or passing traffic. The column commander places guards at road intersections or other critical points to stop traffic while the column crosses. At such times, the road guards also act as guides. When possible during night marches, road guards use flashlights or lanterns to control traffic.

4-18. PACE SETTER

The pace setter is an experienced soldier, carrying the same load as the majority of the soldiers, and marching from 4 to 10 meters at the head of the column (Figure 4-4).

a. The pace of the column must be governed by the most heavily loaded element. The pace setter's primary duty is to maintain the rate of march ordered by the column commander. He does this by establishing his pace (*length of step*) and cadence (*number of steps per minute*) to obtain the prescribed rate of march.

b. The pace setter should be of medium height so average strides can be taken. Overstriding or understriding tends to quickly tire the leg muscles and affects the efficiency of marching troops. The officer or NCO marching at the head of the column supervises the pace setter to ensure that the pace setter takes average strides and maintains a uniform cadence.



Figure 4-4. Pace setter.

Section III

SPECIAL MARCH OPERATIONS

Special march operations include limited visibility marches and forced marches, which require unique considerations in planning and executing. However, the techniques and procedures appropriate for other operations also apply.

4-19. LIMITED VISIBILITY MARCHES

The battalion commander must always be prepared to maneuver and engage his unit under all conditions.

a. Units must routinely operate during limited visibility. The battalion commander coordinates and controls the movement of his unit, but, as with any mission, disadvantages and advantages exist when operating during limited visibility.

(1) Disadvantages.

- Difficulty in navigation.
- Slower rate of speed.
- Difficulty in recognizing checkpoints.
- Difficulty in control of subordinate units.
- Difficulty in maintaining the proper interval between units.

(2) Advantages.

- Increased security.
- Tighter formations.
- Less traffic at night.
- Use of surprise and stealth.

b. Battalion SOPs should reflect increased control when movement must be during limited visibility. Items may include:

(1) Assigning colors to march units, which may be used on flashlights for recognition.

(2) Closing the interval between elements of the column.

(3) Increasing use of connecting files and messengers between march units in the serial.

(4) Requiring the dismounting of one soldier during short halts in a motor march to move to the halted vehicle to the front. The soldier informs the driver that the march has begun. This technique ensures constant contact within the column and prevents a break in the column. It also applies to foot marches through the use of connecting files.

c. Limited visibility marches are characterized by tighter formations, difficult control and reconnaissance, and a slower rate of march than day marches.

(1) Control is increased by reducing the distances between soldiers and units. The number of guides can be increased, depending on the suitability of the roads or trails. Also, visual communication means are used such as flashlights, lanterns, luminous markers, and pyrotechnics (consistent with light discipline).

(2) Limited visibility marches require added safety measures to prevent accidents, which should be provided by unit and installation SOPs. The following measures are appropriate:

(a) Use off-road trails or routes to avoid roads used by vehicles.

(b) Place guards to the front and rear of the column and on the flanks when vehicles could approach from that direction. Ensure guards are equipped, marked, and informed of the enemy situation.

(c) If the tactical situation permits, mark moving or static traffic guards, and other key personnel with reflective or luminescent materials such as reflective fabric or tape, vests, caps, mittens, hat bands, and traffic ensembles. Equip guards with appropriate warning devices such as illuminated or reflective signs, red lights, flashlights, traffic control batons, reflective flags, and lanterns.

(d) Warn vehicle operators of the presence of troops on or near the roadway and limit speeds as needed.

(e) Provide for the exclusive use of selected routes by foot soldiers. Enforce safety measures even when troops are assigned exclusive use of routes that are negotiable by wheeled or tracked vehicles.

4-20. FORCED MARCHES

A normal foot march day is 8 hours, for a distance of 32 km at a rate of 4 kph. The maximum distances recommended for forced marches are: 56 km in 24 hours; 96 km in 48 hours; or 128 km in 72 hours. A forced march usually exceeds this distance by increasing the hours marched rather than by increasing the rate of march. However, sometimes the rate of march must be increased to adjust to the situation.

a. Although forced marches may impair the fighting effectiveness of a unit, urgent conditions on the battlefield could require them. Rest periods should be scheduled to avoid marching at the hottest time of day and to ensure the arrival of the unit in combat-ready condition. At this time, commanders should consider increasing the rate of march when soldiers are most rested.

b. Time for a forced march of 52 km (4 km less than the maximum recommended distance) should be scheduled as follows, assuming the march began at first light:

	<u>Hours</u>
First phase: 20 km at 4 kph (daylight, on roads)	5.0
Noon meal and rest period	2.0
Second phase: 20 km at 4 kph (daylight, on roads)	5.0
Supper meal and rest period	6.0
Third phase: 12 km at 3.2 kph (limited visibility, on roads)	3.84
Total time	21.84