

ATTACKING AND CLEARING BUILDINGS

At platoon and squad level, the major offensive tasks for combat in built-up areas are attacking and clearing buildings, which involves suppressing fires, advancing infantry assault forces, assaulting a building, and reorganizing the assault force.

F-1. REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of a structure's characteristics or the type of built-up area, there are four interrelated requirements for attacking a defended building: fire support, movement, assault, and reorganization. Proper application and integration of these requirements reduce casualties and hasten accomplishment of the mission. The application is determined by the type of building to be attacked and the nature of the surrounding built-up area. For example, medium-size towns have numerous open spaces, and larger cities have high-rise apartments and industrial and transportation areas, which are separated by parking areas or parks. Increased fire support is required to suppress and obscure enemy gunners covering the open terrain and spaces between buildings. Conversely, the centers of small- and medium-size towns, with twisting alleys and country roads or adjoining buildings, provide numerous covered routes that can decrease fire support requirements.

F-2. FIRE SUPPORT

Fire support and other assistance to advance the assault force are provided by a support force. This assistance includes—

- Suppressing and obscuring enemy gunners within the objective building(s) and adjacent structures.
- Isolating the objective building(s) with direct or indirect fires to prevent enemy withdrawal, reinforcement, or counterattack.
- Breaching walls en route to and in the objective structure.
- Destroying enemy positions with direct-fire weapons.
- Securing cleared portions of the objective.
- Providing replacements for the assault force.
- Providing resupply of ammunition and explosives.
- Evacuating casualties and prisoners.

a. The size of the support force is determined by the type and size of the objective building(s); whether the adjacent terrain provides open or covered approaches; and the organization and strength of enemy defenses.

b. The support force could consist of only one infantry fire team with M60 machine guns, M249s, M203 grenade launchers, and M202 multishot flame weapons. In the case of Bradley-equipped units, the BFV may provide support with the 25-mm gun as the rifle team assaults. In situations involving a larger assault force, a platoon or company reinforced with tanks, engineers, and self-propelled artillery may be required to support movement and assault by an adjacent platoon or company.

c. After seizing objective buildings, the assault force reorganizes and may be required to provide supporting fires for a subsequent assault. Each weapon is assigned a target or area to cover. Individual small-arms weapons place fires on likely enemy weapon positions—loopholes, windows, roof areas. Snipers are best employed in placing accurate fire through loopholes or engaging long-range targets. The M202s and M203s direct their fires through windows or loopholes.

d. LAWs and demolitions are employed to breach walls, doors, barricades, and window barriers on the ground level of structures. Tank main guns and BFV 25-mm guns engage first-floor targets and breach walls for attacking infantry. Tank machine guns engage suspected positions on upper floors and in adjacent structures. In addition to destroying or weakening structures, tank main gun projectiles cause casualties by explosive effects and by hurling debris throughout the interior of structures.

e. Artillery and mortars use time fuzes to initially clear exposed personnel, weapons, observation posts, and radio sites from rooftops. They then use delayed fuze action to cause casualties among the defenders inside the structure from shrapnel and falling debris. Artillery can also be used in the direct-fire mode much like the tank and CEV.

F-3. MOVEMENT

The assault force (squad, platoon, or company) minimizes enemy defensive fires during movement by—

- Using covered routes.
- Moving only after defensive fires have been suppressed or obscured.
- Moving at night or during other periods of reduced visibility.
- Selecting routes that will not mask friendly suppressive fires.
- Crossing open areas (streets, space between buildings) quickly under the concealment of smoke and suppression provided by support forces.
- Moving on rooftops that are not covered by enemy direct fires.

a. In lightly defended areas, the requirement for speed may dictate moving through the streets and alleys without clearing all buildings. Thus, the maneuver element should employ infantry to lead the column, closely followed and supported by BFVs or tanks.

b. When dismounted, rifle elements move along each side of the street, with leading squads keeping almost abreast of the lead tanks. When not accompanied by tanks or BFVs, rifle elements move single file along one side of the street under cover of fires from supporting weapons. They are dispersed and move along quickly. Each man is detailed to observe and cover a certain area such as second-floor windows on the opposite side of the street.

F-4. ASSAULT

The assault force, regardless of size, must quickly and violently execute its assault and subsequent clearing operations. Once momentum has been gained, it is maintained to prevent the enemy from organizing a more determined resistance on other floors or in other rooms. The small-unit leaders should keep the assault force moving, yet not allow the operation to become disorganized.

a. An assault in a built-up area involves the elementary skills of close combat. Leaders must—

- Be trained in the required techniques to defeat the enemy in a face-to-face encounter.
- Keep themselves in excellent physical condition.
- Have confidence in their abilities.

b. The composition of the assault force varies depending on the situation; however, the considerations for equipping the force remain the same. The criteria for the size of any party are the availability of equipment and personnel, and the tactical situation. The assault force for a squad should consist of 2 three-man teams carrying only a fighting load of equipment and as much ammunition as possible, especially grenades (Figure F-1). A three-man support team provides suppressive fire for the assault force. The assault teams use maneuver techniques to clear a building room by room.

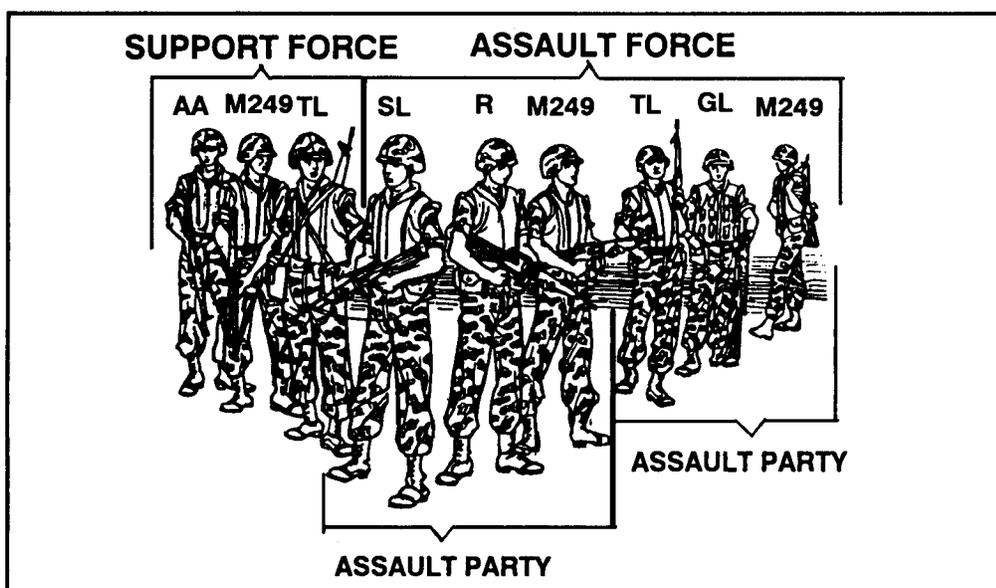


Figure F-1. Rifle squad.

c. The M249 is normally employed with the support element but can also be used with the assault force to gain the advantages of its more powerful round. The Dragon may not be carried by the assault force due to its weight versus its expected effectiveness against the building being assaulted. The squad leader is located with the element from which he can best control the squad. If the squad is understrength or suffers casualties, priority is given to keeping the assault force up to strength at the expense of the support force (see Tables F-1 and F-2).

SUPPORT FORCE	ASSAULT FORCE
3 - 7.62-mm (Coaxial) 2 - M249s	(Each squad organized into two- or three-man assault/support parties).
1 - Dragon	2 - 7.62-mm (4 - M249s)
1 - M202	* 2 - Dragons
LAWs	LAWs
4 - 25-mm guns	Hand grenades
* Dependent upon Dragon's effectiveness against building being attacked.	

Table F-1. Bradley platoon.

SUPPORT FORCE	ASSAULT FORCE
2 - 7.62-mm	LAWs
2 - Dragons	Hand grenades
1 - M202	* 1 - Dragon
4 - M249s	2 - M203s
4 - M203s	2 - M249s
LAWs	
* Dependent upon Dragon's effectiveness against building being attacked.	

Table F-2. Alternative with an infantry rifle platoon.

F-5. CLEARING

Entry at the top and fighting downward is the preferred method of clearing a building (Figure F-2). Clearing a building is easier from an upper story since gravity and building construction become assets to the assault force when throwing hand grenades and moving from floor to floor. This method is only feasible, however, when access to an upper floor or rooftop can be gained from the windows or roofs of adjoining, secured buildings; or, when enemy air defense weapons can be suppressed and troops transported to the rooftops by helicopter. Helicopters should land only on those buildings that have special heliports on the roofs or parking garages. Soldiers can rappel onto the roof or dismount as the helicopter hovers a few feet above the roof. Troops then breach the roof or common walls with explosives and use ropes to enter the lower floors. Stairs are guarded by friendly security elements when not used.

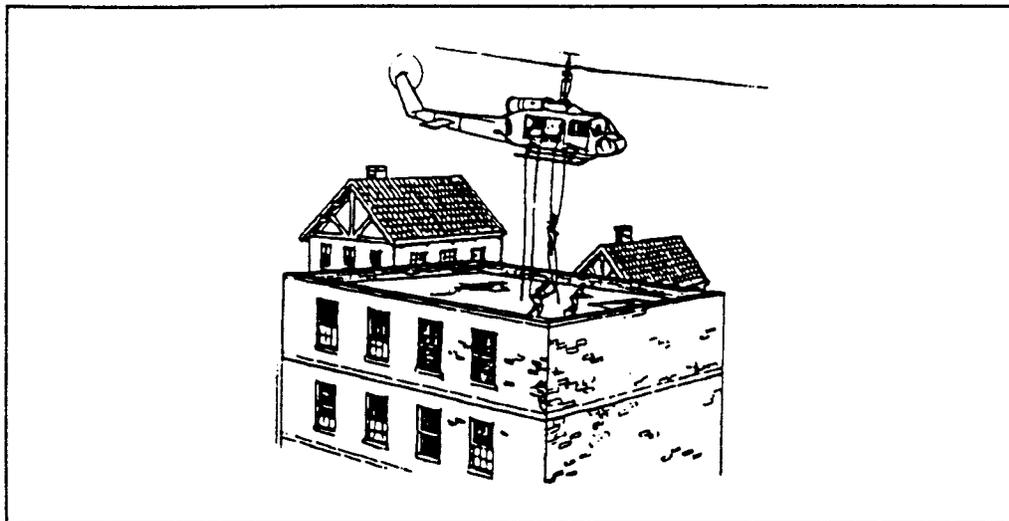


Figure F-2. Helicopters used to clear buildings.

a. Although the top-to-bottom method is preferred for clearing a building, assaulting the bottom floor and clearing upward is a common method in all areas except where buildings form continuous fronts. In this situation, the assault force attempts to close on the flank(s) or rear of the building. The assault team clears each room on the ground floor and then, moving up, begins a systematic clearance of the remaining floors.

b. Preferably, entry is gained through walls breached by explosives or gunfire. Assault teams avoid windows and doors since they are usually covered by fire or are boobytrapped. If tanks are attached to the company, they can breach the wall by main gunfire for one entry point (Figure F-3).

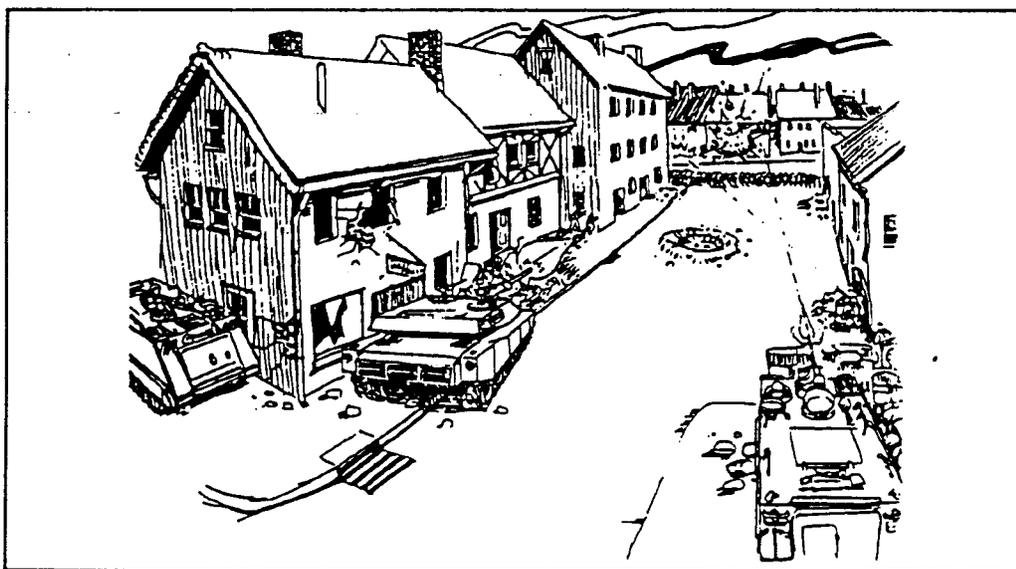


Figure F-3. Main gun used to breach exterior.

c. Just before the rush of the assault force, suppressive fires on the objective should be increased by the support force and continued until masked by the advancing assault force. Once masked, fires are shifted to upper windows and continued until the assault force has entered the building. At that time, fires are shifted to adjacent buildings to prevent enemy withdrawal or reinforcement.

d. Assault parties quickly close on the building. Before entry through the breached wall, a hand grenade is cooked off (pin pulled, safety lever released, and held for two seconds before being thrown) and vigorously thrown inside. Immediately after the explosion, assault parties enter and spray the interior, using three-round bursts and concentrating on areas of the room that are possible enemy positions.

e. Once inside the building, the priority tasks are to cover the staircase leading to upper floors and the basement, and to seize rooms that overlook approaches to the building. These actions are required to isolate enemy forces within the building and to prevent reinforcement from the outside. The assault parties clear each ground floor room and then the basement.

(1) The assault team leader determines which room(s) to clear first.

(2) The support team provides suppressive fire while the assault team is systematically clearing the building. It also provides suppressive fire on adjacent buildings to prevent enemy reinforcements or withdrawal. The support team destroys any enemy trying to exit the building.

(3) After assault team 1 establishes a foothold in the building, a soldier from assault team 2 positions himself to provide security for the foothold. Assault team 1 proceeds to clear the first room.

(a) Soldier 1 throws a grenade into the room and yells, "Frag out," to alert friendly personnel that a grenade has been thrown toward the enemy.

WARNING

If walls and floors are thin, fragments from hand grenades can injure soldiers outside the room.

*(b) After the grenade explodes, soldier 2 enters the room and positions himself to the left of the door up against the wall, scanning the room from left to right. (Soldiers 1 and 3 provide outside room security.) Soldier 2 will give a voice command of "All clear" before soldier 3 enters the room.

(c) Soldier 3 shouts, "Coming in," and enters the room. He positions himself to the right of the door up against the wall and scans the room from right to left. (Soldier 2 provides inside room security and soldier 1 provides outside room security.)

(d) Soldier 1 positions himself up against the hall wall so that he can provide security outside the room and can also observe into the room.

(e) Soldier 3 proceeds to clear the room while soldier 2 provides inside room security. Soldier 1 remains at his outside security position.

(f) After the room is cleared, the clearing team shouts, "Coming out," and proceeds to clear the next room(s). A soldier from the second assault

team positions himself to cover the cleared room. The cleared rooms are marked IAW unit SOP.

(g) This procedure is continued until the entire floor is cleared.

f. If the assault force is preparing to clear a building from the top floor down, they should gain entrance through a common wall or the roof of an adjoining building. Accompanied by the company's attached engineer squad, the force uses a demolition charge to breach the wall and to gain entrance to the top floor. Access to lower floors and rooms may be gained by breaching holes in the floor and having the soldiers jump or slide down ropes to the lower floors. Stairs can be used if they are first cleared.

g. When using the top-to-bottom method of clearing, security requirements remain the same as for other methods (Figure F-4). After the floor is breached to gain access to a lower floor, a grenade is allowed to cook off and is dropped to the lower room. A soldier then sprays the lower room with gunfire using three-round bursts and drops through-the mousehole.

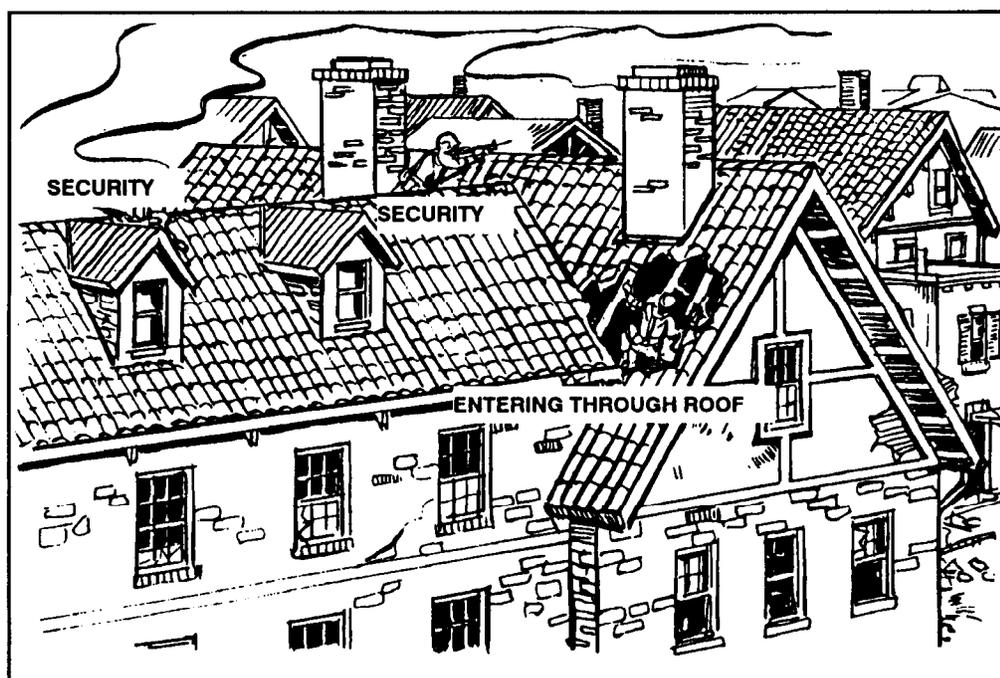


Figure F-4. Upper floors secured.

h. Soldiers must avoid clearing rooms the same way each time by varying techniques so that the enemy cannot prepare for the assault (Figure F-5, page F-8). As rooms are cleared, doors should be left open and a predetermined mark (cloth, tape, spray paint) placed on the doorjamb or over the door.

i. If there is a basement, it should be cleared as soon as possible, preferably at the same time as the ground floor. The procedures for clearing a basement are the same as for any room or floor, but important differences do exist. Basements often contain entrances to tunnels such as sewers and communications cable tunnels. These should be cleared and secured to prevent the enemy from infiltrating back into cleared areas.

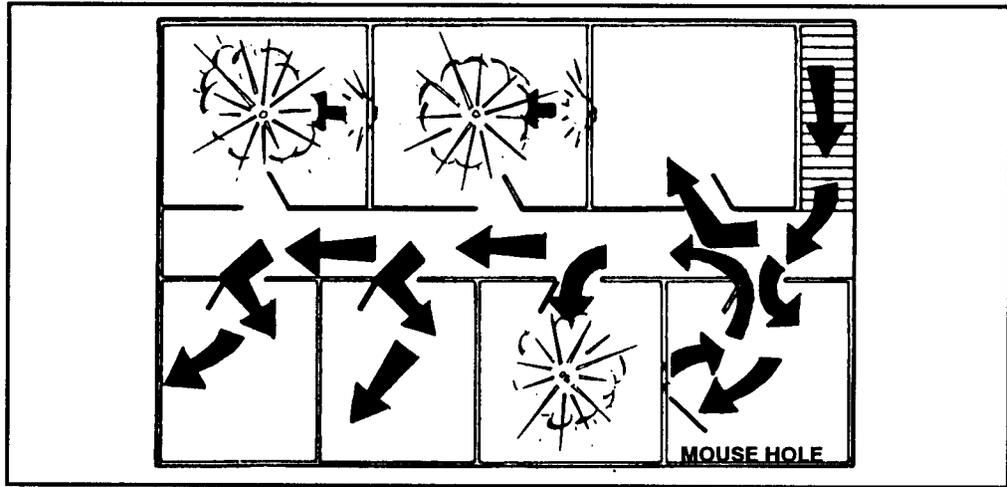


Figure F-5. Varying techniques for clearing rooms.

j. The most common types of buildings that must be cleared are brick buildings, brick houses, box-wall buildings, heavy-clad framed buildings, and light-clad framed buildings (Figure F-6). The best way to enter a brick building is to blow a breaching hole in the side with a tank firing HEAT ammunition. If tanks are not available, a door or window in the rear of the building usually provides better cover and concealment for entry than one in the front. If there is enough cover and concealment, the assault force should enter the rear of the building at an upper level, using a fire escape or grapplinghook.

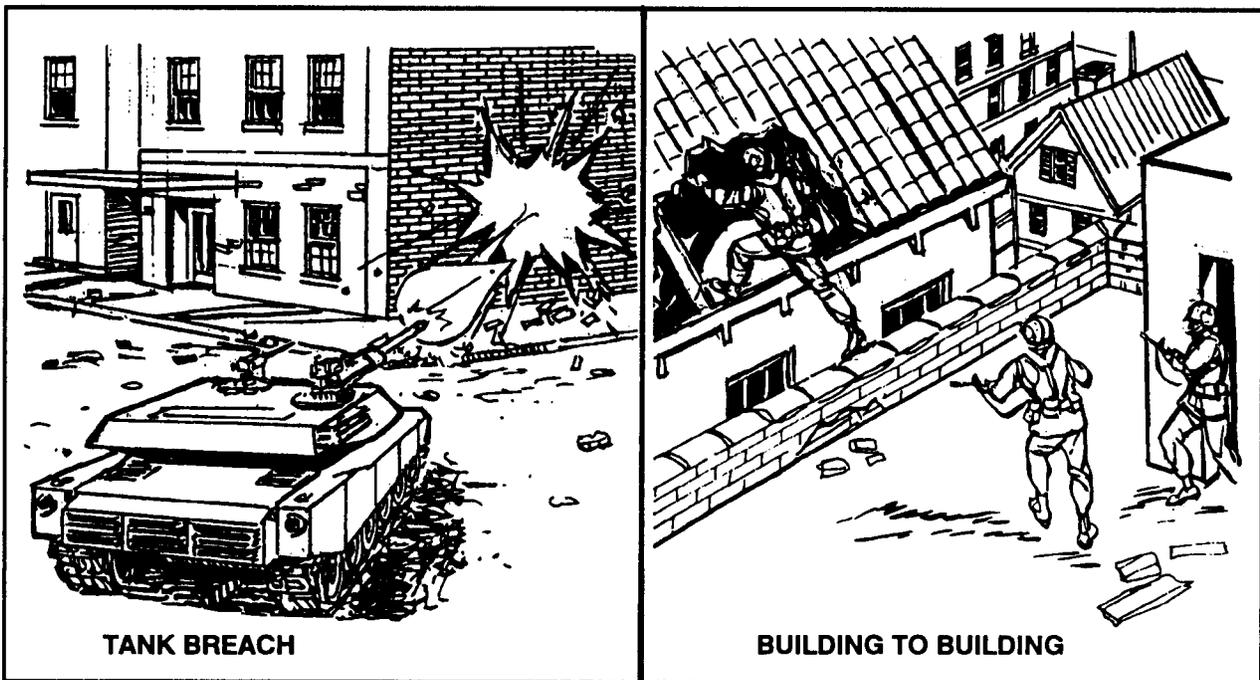


Figure F-6. Building being cleared.

(1) **Brick buildings.** To clear from building to building, the best method is to move from roof top to rooftop since the roofs of brick buildings are usually easy to breach. The walls between buildings are at least three bricks thick (total of six bricks between buildings) and require large quantities of demolitions to breach. Walls are normally easier to breach on an upper floor than a lower floor, since the walls are thinner on upper floors. If rooftops are covered by fire and if there are not enough demolitions to breach walls between buildings, clearing from rear to rear of buildings is safer than clearing from front to front. The floor plans in brick buildings are different on ground floor levels than on upper levels (Figure F-7).

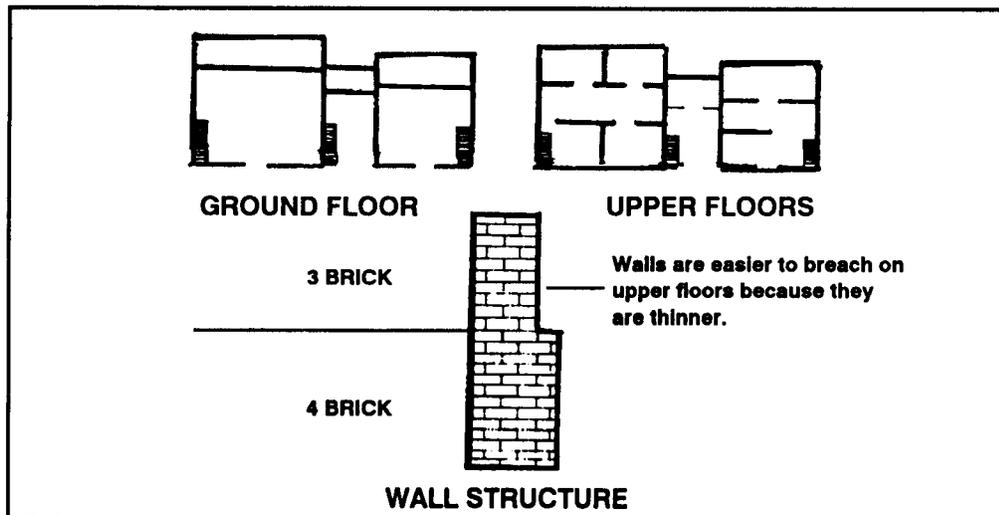


Figure F-7. Floor plans of brick buildings.

(2) **Brick houses.** Brick houses have similar floor plans on each floor (Figure F-8), therefore, ground floors are cleared the same way as upper floors.

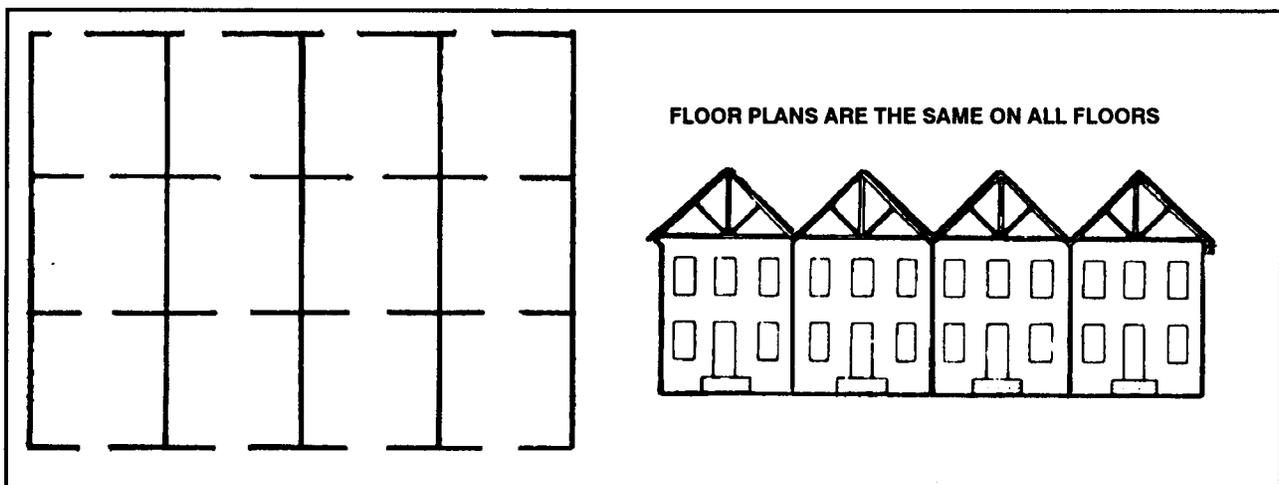


Figure F-8. Similar floor plans.

(3) **Box-wall buildings.** Box-wall buildings often have reinforced concrete walls (Figure F-9), which are difficult to breach due to the reinforcing bars. Therefore, the best way to enter is to blow down the door or to blow in one of the side windows. The floor plans of these buildings are predictable; clearing rooms is usually done from one main hallway. Interior walls are also constructed of reinforced concrete and are difficult to breach. The stairways at the ends of the building must be secured during clearing.

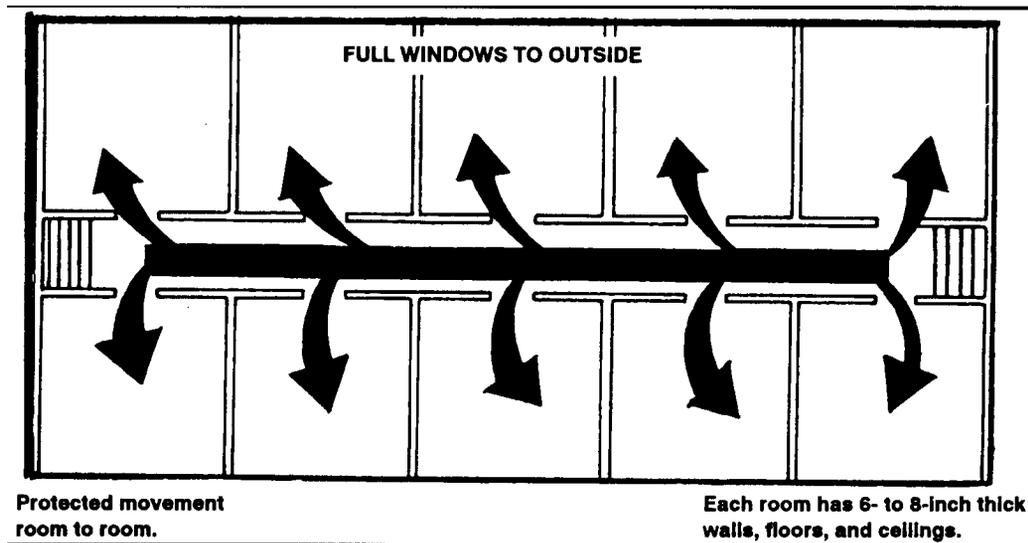


Figure F-9. Box-wall principle buildings.

(4) **Heavy-clad framed buildings.** Heavy-clad framed buildings are relatively easy to breach, because a tank can breach a hole in the cladding (Figure F-10). Their floor plans are oriented around a stairway or elevator, which must be secured during clearing. The interior walls of these buildings can be breached, although they may require use of demolitions.

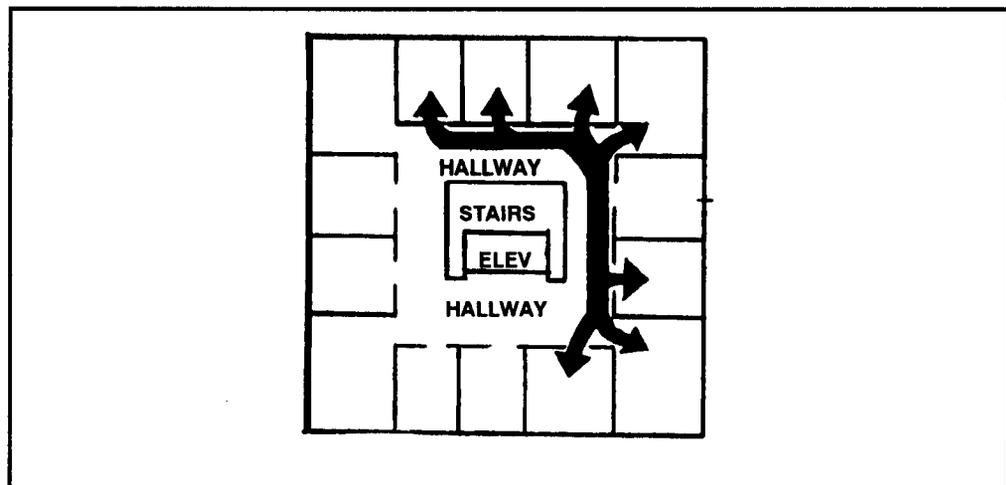


Figure F-10. Heavy-clad framed buildings.

(5) **Light-clad framed buildings.** On light-clad framed buildings (Figure F-11), the clearing tasks are usually the same: secure the central stairway and clear in a circular pattern. Walls are easier to breach since they are usually thin enough to be breached with an axe.

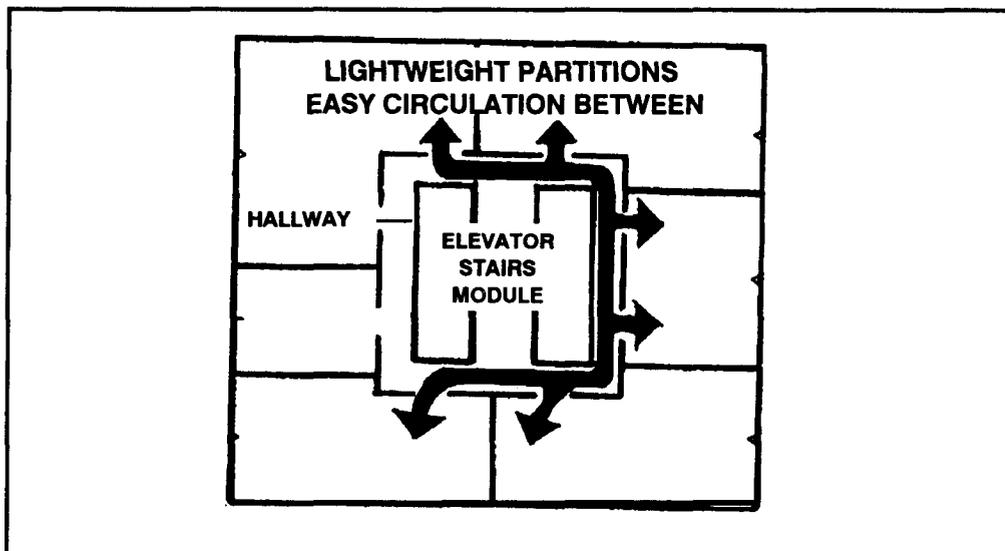


Figure F-11. Light-clad framed buildings.

Reorganization of the assault force in a cleared building must be quick to repel enemy counterattacks and to prevent the enemy from infiltrating back into the cleared building. After securing a floor (bottom, middle, or top), selected members of the assault force are assigned to cover potential enemy counterattack routes to the building. Those sentinels alert the assault force and place a heavy volume of fire on enemy forces approaching the building. They guard—

- Enemy mouseholes between adjacent buildings.
- Covered routes to the building.
- Underground routes into the basement.
- Approaches over adjoining roofs.

As the remainder of the assault force completes search requirements, they are assigned defensive positions. After the building has been cleared, the following actions are taken:

- Resupplying and redistributing ammunition.
- Marking the building to indicate to friendly forces that the building has been cleared.
- Assuming an overwatch mission and supporting an assault on another building.
- Treating and evacuating wounded personnel.
- Developing a defensive position if the building is to be occupied for any period.