

CHAPTER 5

COUNTER AMBUSH TECHNIQUES

Seabees spend a considerable amount of time conveying from the bivouac area to project sites. This makes it important for you to know and understand proper convoy procedures. COMSECONDNCB/COMTHIRDNCBINST. 3122.1 provides the guidance you need for convoy procedures. Another good source for convoy procedures is the FMFM 4-9, *Motor Transport*. This chapter will focus on techniques for use in counter ambush operations that supplement established tactical procedures. It includes counter ambush preparations for motorized units and immediate action drills.

COUNTER AMBUSH TECHNIQUES FOR CONVOYS

Experience in fighting terrorists and guerrillas has shown that they favor the ambush anytime a favorable situation exists. The ambush of units traveling in a motor convoy is not difficult and can be very costly if you do not take time to prepare vehicles and occupants before contact.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A VEHICULAR AMBUSH

A convoy is never safe from a guerrilla ambush. There is no set pattern for a likely area for an ambush. Ravines, defiles, and heavily wooded or jungle-covered areas are most favorable but ambushes are equally likely to be conducted in villages or in flat terrain that offers a minimum of cover and concealment. The most common characteristics of an ambush are as follows:

1. The ambush lasts the minimum time necessary to accomplish the mission.
2. The ambush occurs in two phases—a short period of heavy fire followed by an assault of the ambushed vehicles to capture equipment, to complete the annihilation of personnel, and to destroy vehicles.
3. The basic ambush weapons are small arms. These are augmented by machine guns, rocket launchers, and recoilless rifles.

4. The enemy will use electrically detonated mines to disable vehicles and cause personnel casualties. These mines may consist of artillery shells and mortar rounds as well as conventional mines.

PREPARATION OF VEHICLES

Occupants traveling in vehicles must have all-around observation and fields of fire and can throw or fire grenades without hindrance. They must be able to exit from the vehicle rapidly with minimum restriction. For these reasons the configuration of vehicles, such as a 6 by 6 cargo truck, must be altered. The following measures are taken to “harden” a vehicle and provide its occupants with a degree of protection:

1. Canvas, bows, windshields, and doors are removed.
2. The tailgate is lowered to a horizontal position. A piece of pipe, wood, or metal is affixed to the vehicle in a vertical position extending above the driver's head. This will prevent decapitation from wire stretched across the road.
3. Sandbags are placed on the floorboards and bed of the vehicle. For a 6 by 6 truck, a single row of sandbags is placed on the bed of the truck. Then sandbags are stacked five layers high down each side of the truck. This provides protection from most small arms. A total of 70 to 100 sandbags is required for each truck. This load plus troops and equipment weight permits off-highway operation without undue wear on the vehicle. A wooden bench or packs rigged down the middle of the bed provide the troops with seats (fig. 5-1.)
4. Sections of scrap armor plate may be used to reinforce sandbags in the bed of the vehicle.

ORGANIZATION OF OCCUPANTS

Encounters with a guerrilla ambush are sudden, short, and unexpected. The opportunity to inflict casualties upon the guerrillas is lost if your troops are not organized and well-drilled to take immediate

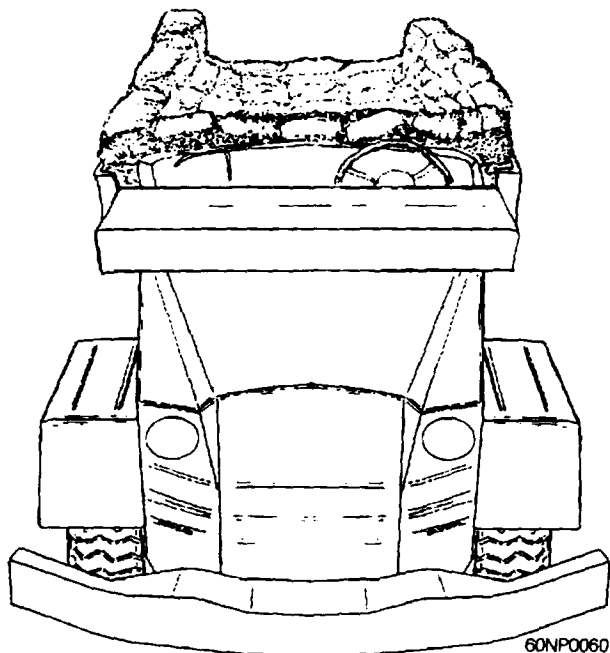


Figure 5-1.—Hardened vehicle.

offensive action. The organization of a rifle squad as occupants of a 6 by 6 truck is as follows:

1. A vehicle commander is designated for each vehicle. The squad leader is usually the vehicle commander and is positioned in the bed of the vehicle where he or she can best control the squad and operator of the vehicle.

2. An assistant driver (shotgun rider) capable of operating the vehicle is seated in the cabin with the driver. The shotgun rider is armed with a M-203 grenade launcher with the M-16 as a automatic rifle. After debarkation, the shotgun rider remains with the vehicle to act as close protection for the driver and vehicle. He or she does not accompany maneuvers executed by the occupant squad.

3. Four corner sentries are positioned in the bed of the vehicle. The two at the front observe an arc of 90 degrees from the front to each side. The two at the back observe an arc of 90 degrees from the back to each side. When possible, each sentry is armed with an automatic rifle. If the vehicle is ambushed, the sentries fire immediately from their positions within the vehicle. Their fire covers the debarkation of the occupants if the vehicle is halted in the ambush killing area. They also help the vehicle commander by notifying the commander of any convoy formation.

4. If a machine gun team is traveling with the occupant squad, it should be positioned facing out the rear of the vehicle and be prepared to debark expeditiously, bringing fire to bear on the enemy and covering the debarkation of the four corner sentries.

5. The remaining occupants are positioned in the bed of the vehicle, each facing outboard.

6. The maximum number of people in the bed of a hardened 6 by 6 truck should not exceed 13 (fig. 5-2).

CONVOY COMMANDER

The position of the convoy commander is where he or she can best control the convoy. This position should never be the lead vehicle. A second in command and a vehicle commander for each vehicle are designated by the convoy commander. Briefing by the convoy commander before departure is detailed and explicit. All drivers and vehicle commanders are present. The briefing includes the following:

- Formation (close column, open column, or infiltration)
- Timings
- Route
- Speed
- Order of march (organization of vehicles and vehicles intervals)
- Communication (radio frequencies, horn signals, and arm signals)

NOTE: Figure 5-3 shows recommended arm signals. It is important that each member of the

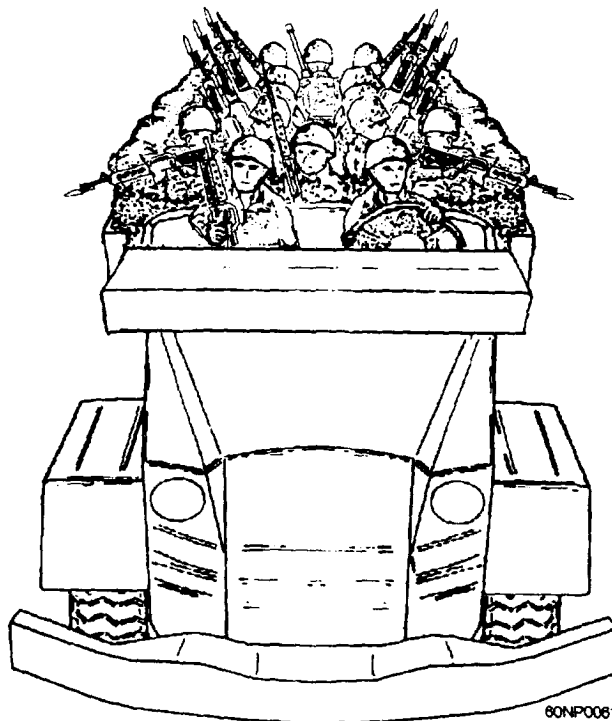


Figure 5-2.—Organization of occupants in a hardened 6 x 6 truck.



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Figure 5-3.—Convoy arm signals.

convoy know what the arm signals mean no matter which arm signals are used.

- Procedure when communication is lost
- Action on vehicle breakdown
- Actions on ambush
- Action in danger areas
- Call for fire procedures
- Check points
- Location of friendly forces

AMBUSH DEFENSE AND ACTION ON CONTACT

Whatever the precautions and preparations, the ambush is nearly always an unexpected encounter. Counter ambush drills are simple courses of action designed to deal with the problem of the unexpected encounter. They call for immediate, positive, and offensive action. The action on ambush is to drive through the ambush area or stop before running into it, then to attack the enemy immediately from the flank or the rear. When vehicles are fired upon, the following actions are taken:

1. Drivers attempt to drive through the killing zone.
2. Personnel return fire immediately.
3. When vehicles are clear of the killing zone, they are halted. Occupants dismount and take immediate offensive action against the enemy positions.
4. Subsequent vehicles approaching the killing zone halt short of the zone. Occupants debark and take immediate offensive action against the enemy positions.

If hardened vehicles are forced to halt in the killing zone, all available weapons are used to return fire immediately. Occupants remain in the vehicle. On the first perceptible slackening of enemy fire, occupants dismount. When riding in a "soft" vehicle and caught in a killing zone, occupants dismount immediately. In both cases, occupants dismount under the covering fires of the four corner sentries, who initially remain aboard. The occupants then deploy to the side directed by the vehicle commander and take the enemy under fire to cover the dismount of the four sentries.

After dismounting, if no cover is available, an immediate frontal assault against the enemy is

employed. The most logical course of action after dismounting is to take cover, immediately establish a base of fire, and use a maneuver element against the enemy ambush positions. Speed of execution is critical.

COUNTERACTION TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The most effective counteraction to ambushes is a flanking attack by elements not in the killing zone quickly followed by relentless pursuit of the enemy. Attention must be given to the following tactical considerations:

1. In actions when no troops have entered the killing zone, the convoy commander launches an immediate flanking attack on the enemy position, using supporting fires from machine guns and mortars.

2. Fire in the killing zone may be from only one side of the road with a small holding force on the opposite side. To contain the convoy element in the killing zone, the enemy will place mines and booby traps on the holding force side. Take care when assaulting the main ambush force because mines are commonly used to protect its flanks.

3. In actions where some portions of the vehicles are ahead and out of the killing zone and the remainder are halted short of the zone, the portion that has not yet entered the killing zone initiates the flanking attack. If the convoy commander is not present, the senior vehicle commander takes command and directs the attack. Troops in vehicles which are ahead of the killing zone dismount. Under the command of the senior vehicle commander, the troops return to the vicinity of the killing zone and exploit the situation.

4. The best way an armored vehicle can help in counter ambush action is by moving into the killing zone to engage the enemy at short range. In this way it can give good covering fire to the flanking attack or provide protection for those troops caught in the killing zone.

It is possible that the convoy commander may be killed, wounded, caught in the killing zone, or positioned on the wrong side of the zone. It is essential that all vehicle commanders and squad leaders know their responsibilities for organizing and directing a counter ambush action. This is clearly stated in unit convoy orders and emphasized at briefings. The techniques outlined above are practiced repeatedly until the reaction procedures

become a predrilled response, permitting immediate and positive action on ambush.

AMBUSH DEFENSE FOR AN UNBLOCKED ROAD

Guerrillas are seldom able to contain an entire convoy in a single killing zone. This is because of the extensive road space occupied by even a platoon size convoy, and because security or lack of available forces may limit the size of the ambushing force. More frequently, a part of a convoy, either head, tail, or a section of the main body, is ambushed.

That part of a convoy that is in the killing zone and receiving fire must drive out of the ambush if the road to the front is open. Vehicles disabled by enemy fire are left behind or, if blocking the road, are pushed out of the way by following vehicles. Armored escort vehicles must not block convoy vehicles by halting in the traveled portion of the road to return fire. Vehicles that have not entered the killing zone must not attempt to do so. They should stop and personnel should dismount and take defensive positions. Elements of the convoy should not fire on suspected enemy positions without coordinating with the escort forces. The escort vehicles may have left the road in an attempt to overrun hostile positions. Other actions available to convoy personnel for the neutralization of the ambush force are as follows:

1. Direct any vehicles mounted with weapons to lay down a heavy volume of fire on the ambush force.
2. Call for artillery fire on enemy positions.
3. Call for close air support on enemy positions.
4. Call for reaction forces.
5. Direct all nondriving personnel to place a heavy volume of fire on enemy forces as rapidly as possible, as vehicles move out of the killing zone.

A motor transport convoy with a limited escort is seldom able to defeat a hostile force and should not attempt to do so. When part of the convoy is isolated in the killing zone, vehicles that have not entered the ambush area should turn around and return to the nearest secured area until supporting forces can clear the ambush.

AMBUSH DEFENSE FOR A BLOCKED ROAD

When an element of a convoy is halted in the killing zone and is unable to proceed due to disabled

vehicles, a damaged bridge, or other obstacles, personnel will dismount, take cover, and return a maximum volume of fire on enemy positions. Security troops from vehicles that have passed through the ambush area dismount and prepare to attack the flanks of the ambush position. Leave a security force behind to protect these vehicles. Personnel in vehicles that have not entered the killing zone follow the same procedure. Before attempting to flank the ambush force, the convoy commander should ensure that the force will not be in the vicinity of any fire missions.

When a security escort is provided and a combat emergency arises, the convoy commander retains operational control unless the command responsibility has previously been assumed by the area commander in whose zone the convoy is operating. **Normally, the security force will take action to neutralize the ambush while the convoy escapes from the killing zone.**

If immediate air or artillery support is available, personnel will be restricted to a specified distance from the road to avoid casualties from friendly fire. In this situation, personnel in the killing zone establish a base of fire, while others take up defensive positions around their vehicles. Everyone waits while supporting fire is called in on the enemy positions.

When the enemy is defeated or has retreated, the road must be cleared and convoy movement resumed as soon as possible. Wounded personnel are evacuated, usually by helicopter. When disabled vehicles cannot be towed, their cargo is distributed among other vehicles if time permits. When it is not feasible to evacuate vehicles and/or cargo, they will be destroyed upon order from the convoy commander. When possible, radios and other critical items will be recovered before the vehicles are destroyed. Under no circumstances will anything in the convoy be allowed to fall into enemy hands.

CONVOY DEFENSE, MINES, AND BOOBY TRAPS

Mines and booby traps are frequently used by ambush forces. Command-detonated mines are often used to start an ambush. Mines will also be planted along the shoulder of the road. This is for harassment and interdiction. A booby trap system may be used against personnel in vehicles. They could consist of hand grenades attached to tree branches over the road where antennas or other projections from vehicles will

snag and detonate the grenades. Claymore mines may be suspended from trees and command detonated when a vehicle passes. The following guidelines have proved effective in decreasing damage by mines in convoy operations:

1. Follow the tracks of the vehicle in front.
2. Avoid driving on the shoulder of the road.
3. Whenever possible, do not run over foreign objects, brush, or grass in the road.
4. Avoid fresh earth in the road.
5. Watch local national traffic and the reactions of people on foot. (They will frequently give away the location of any mines or booby traps.)
6. Heavy vehicles, such as tanks, are useful in exploding small mines when deployed in front of the convoy.
7. Wear protective equipment (protective helmets and armored vests).

CONVOY DEFENSE FOR SNIPER FIRE

Exercise caution when sniper fire is received to ensure that any return fire does not harm friendly troops or civilians in the area. The best action to take is passive, and you should ensure that all personnel wear protective helmets and armored vests. **All vehicles should move through the area without stopping.** Escort personnel must notify the march element commander by giving a prearranged signal, such as a smoke grenade, thrown in the direction of fire. Any attempt to locate and destroy the sniper must be long-range fire. The convoy commander may order additional fire or supporting forces into the area to destroy, capture, or drive off the sniper. Convoy personnel should be aware that a heavy volume of fire is frequently used by the enemy to slow down a convoy before an ambush.

CONVOY DEFENSE AGAINST AN AIR ATTACK

The air threat varies from armed helicopters to high-performance aircraft. Convoys face the greatest danger of an air attack while moving along open roads and during halts where there is no overhead cover. An air attack is a type of ambush; therefore, many procedures used during a ground ambush are also applicable to the air attack. For example, the convoy commander must do the following:

1. Prescribe alarm signals.
2. Give instructions for immediate action to take when under attack.
3. Prescribe actions to take in the absence of orders.
4. Make sure that defense procedures are rehearsed.
5. Review the procedures with convoy personnel before the convoy moves out.

The convoy commander must remember that enemy pilots may do the following:

1. Tries to surprise the convoy.
2. If aircraft attack from higher than 350 meters, small-arms fire will not have much of a chance against them but air defense weapons can be used against them.
3. Will fly at high speed, using high-G maneuvers and evasive action to make air defense weapons and small-arms fire less effective.

Lookout Procedures

Air guard duties are assigned to each individual throughout the convoy, and each person is given specific search areas (scanning patterns). As much as vehicle configuration will allow, search areas assigned should cover a full 360 degrees in overlapping sectors. If the road march lasts more than an hour, Seabees should take turns at air guard duty. Scanning for a long period (over 30 minutes) dulls the ability to spot aircraft.

Camouflage and Concealment

Camouflage and concealment techniques are used to make it more difficult for the enemy to spot the convoy. Not much can be done to change the shape of a vehicle moving down the road, but the type of cargo being transported can be disguised or concealed by covering it with a tarpaulin. Bulk fuel transporters (tankers/refuelers) are usually priority targets. By rigging tarps and bows over the cargo compartment, you can conceal the nature of the cargo from the enemy pilot. Other effective cover and concealment measures are as follows:

1. Operators must be trained to break the shape of the vehicle as seen from the air by looking for a bush, a tree, or other means of concealment as they disperse.

2. Smooth surfaces and objects (windshields, headlights, and mirror) will reflect light and attract the attention of the pilot. All shiny items should be camouflaged or covered before the convoy moves out (fig. 5-4).

If vehicles are not painted in a pattern to blend with the terrain and to break the outline, you can use mud to achieve this effect.

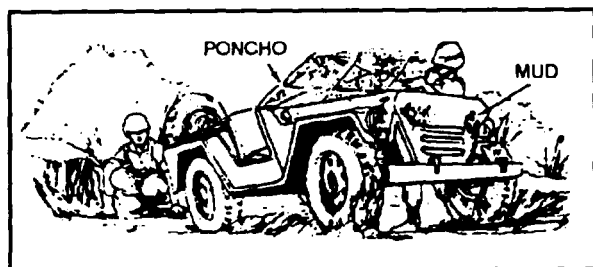
Communications Security

Communications equipment can be very useful for controlling convoys. But it can also help enemy pilots find you. Use the radio when necessary, but be brief.

ACTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST AIRCRAFT

The convoy commander may choose between an active and a passive defense against the air threat. In an active defense, the amount of fire a logistic convoy can bring to bear on attacking aircraft is usually limited. It is limited to the number of vehicles with mounted machine guns and the individual weapons of vehicle operators and assistant operators. However, convoy personnel should not be led to think that trying to shoot down an attacking airplane with small-arms weapons is fruitless. In the Korean conflict, the U.S. Air Force lost 544 aircraft to combined small-arms and air defense fire. Over North Vietnam, small arms contributed to significant losses of U.S. aircraft. During the Middle East War in 1973, units on both sides used small-arms weapons to drive off, damage, or destroy attacking aircraft.

NOTE: The key to effective small-arms fire against aircraft is volume. Put up a large volume of fire with small caliber weapons. Accuracy is not important; volume is!



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Figure 5-4.—Cover portions of vehicles that reflect light.

Firing Positions for Small Arms against Aircraft

Except for the prone firing position, the basic firing stances of the rifleman remain the same. A rifleman quickly learns that he or she wants to fire from some type of cover or concealment; therefore, you should look for a tree or a large rock to help support the weapon and provide some protection.

The M-60 machine gunner should also fire from a protected position if possible. In a real emergency, another Seabee can act as a hasty firing support for the machine guns. The M-2 .50 caliber machine gun can only be used from the ring mount of dedicated vehicles. The following are tips for Small-Arms Air Defense:

1. Fire at any attacking aircraft using all available weapons.
2. Fire at the nose of an aircraft.
3. Volume of fire is the key; everybody fires.
4. Lead aircraft crossing your position (M-16, M-60, and M-2 should lead jets by the length of one football field).
5. Take cover if you have time.
6. Support your weapon, if possible.
7. Lie on your back if caught in the open so you can fire upon the aircraft.
8. Mounted M-60s and M-2s should aim slightly above the nose of the aircraft for head-on targets.

Passive Measures

For a logistic convoy without significant firepower, passive measures are most effective. The key here is to prevent attacks by hostile aircraft. Dispersion is the key for air defense. The formation used by the convoy is a type of passive defense. The convoy commander must decide whether to use an open, closed, or infiltration column. Distance between vehicles must be flexible. It should vary from time to time during a march. Factors influencing selection of the best vehicle distance include the following:

- Mission
- Cover and concealment along the route
- Length of the road march
- Type of road surface

- Types of vehicles
- Nature of cargo
- Enemy threat (ground or air)
- Presence of defense support
- Small-arms potential

The following are types of formation a convoy commander may choose for passive air defense:

1. **Close Column.** Each vehicle follows the vehicle ahead at a distance sufficient to ensure against collision. The gap specified is dependent upon road conditions, weather conditions, terrain, and convoy security requirements. Close column formation eases column control and intracolumn communications. During daylight hours, fewer guides, traffic escorts, and

route markers are needed. The close column is generally used at night because air attack threats are less likely. It is also used over poorly marked routes when visual contact between vehicles is essential and in areas where hostile action is not imminent. Seabees found this formation to be a success in crowds during Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, Africa. The close column prevented crowds from coming between the convoy and disrupting the movement of the convoy.

2. **Open Column.** In open column formations distances between vehicles are increased to enhance dispersion. This formation offers an advantage in that fewer vehicles are likely to be damaged from air-delivered rockets, cannons, or cluster bomb units. An open column increases the degree of passive protection against hostile observation and attack. It

TYPE FORMATION	WHEN USED	DENSITY PER MILE/KM	SPEED mi/h/km/h	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Close	Night, poorly marked routes, or in congested areas.	67/40	10/16	Full traffic capacity of road can be used. Control is better. Fewer guides, escorts, and route markers are needed.	Quick dispersion is difficult. The column is easily detected. May cause congestion at point of arrival. Requires careful scheduling and control to avoid blocking at intersections. Causes driver fatigue.
Open	Daylight	20/12	15/24	Less chance of enemy observation or attack. Cargo moves faster. Driver fatigue is reduced. Fewer accidents, very flexible.	Command and control are difficult. Proper vehicle spacing is hard to keep.
Infiltration	Daylight, congested areas. Heavy traffic crosses route.	10 or less per hour	Various	Provides maximum security and deception. High speeds are possible. Other traffic has little effect on individual trucks. Does not hinder cross traffic.	More time required to complete the move. Column control is nearly impossible. Drivers can get lost. Specific details must be provided each driver. Maintenance, refueling, and messing are difficult to arrange. Vehicles may bunch up, causing close columns to form. Requires experienced drivers. Orders are not easily changed. The unit cannot be redeployed as a unit until the last vehicle arrives at destination.

Figure 5-5.—Types of column formation.

permits greater highway speeds with safety and provides for greater flexibility in highway use. However, open columns make control more difficult for the convoy commander when it is necessary to give orders to stop, to continue, to disperse and seek concealment, or to engage aircraft. Moreover, the column is more likely to be attacked since it is exposed for a longer period of time. If attacked, its defense is less effective because small-arms fire is less concentrated.

3. **Infiltration.** In infiltration formations, vehicles are dispatched as follows:

- a. Individually
- b. In small groups
- c. At irregular intervals

d At a rate that minimizes changes in the average traffic density and prevents massing of vehicles

Average distance between vehicles and groups is decided by the rate at which vehicles are dispatched. Deception is provided by intermingling various types of vehicles and by permitting passing within the column. Infiltration may provide the best passive defense against hostile observation and attack; however, it provides the least active defense capability if individual or small groups of vehicles are attacked. This method permits individual vehicles to travel at high speeds and cause less cross traffic interference. It permits use of a route on which heavy traffic normally precludes the entire unit moving at one time (fig. 5-5).

PASSIVE REACTIONS TO AIR ATTACKS

Seeing the enemy first has long been established as an element of survival in any combat situation. The advantages of seeing enemy aircraft first is largely self-evident, and the importance cannot be overemphasized. All convoy personnel must be thoroughly briefed as to their responsibilities in the employment of effective scanning techniques. When aircraft are spotted or early warning is received, the convoy commander has three options:

- Continue to march.
- Have the convoy immediately stop in place.
- Disperse quickly to concealed positions.

Continue to March

The mission and/or terrain may dictate that the march continue. If this is the case, the convoy speed should be increased. Continuing the march offers the advantage of preventing a moving target and making it more difficult for the enemy to hit. Disadvantages exist in that detection is easier and volume and density of small-arms fire are reduced.

Stop the Convoy

If the convoy commander chooses to halt the convoy, the vehicles simply pull to the shoulders of the road. This technique has several advantages:

1. Harder for the pilot to see the convoy.
2. Easy to continue the march.
3. Volume and density of organic weapons will be greater than if the convoy disperses.

However, a disadvantage exists in that a convoy stopped on the open road makes a good target for enemy troops. The enemy has a better chance of causing serious damage.

Disperse the Convoy

A simple technique that a convoy commander can use in dispersing vehicles is to establish a method in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). SOPs will emphasize that in case of an air attack odd-numbered vehicles go to the left, and even-numbered vehicles go to the right. The key to dispersion is not to make two straight lines out of what was one long line; the vehicles must be staggered. This should not be a problem if the drivers have been trained to go to trees, bushes, and folds in the ground that will give concealment (fig. 5-6).

Once the convoy is dispersed, all personnel, except vehicular mounted weapons gunners, dismount and take up firing positions. Advantages of this system are that it is more difficult for the enemy pilot



Figure 5-6.—Vehicles dispersed and in concealed positions.

to detect the vehicles and get multiple hits. However, this method has several disadvantages:

1. Easier for the enemy pilot to spot the convoy as it begins to disperse.
2. Volume and density of small-arms fire are reduced.
3. Takes longer to reorganize the convoy after the attack.

ARTILLERY OR INDIRECT FIRE

Enemy artillery units or indirect fire weapons may be used to destroy logistic convoys or to harass and interdict the forward movement of supplies and personnel. Artillery fires are either preplanned fire or fires called in and adjusted on a target of opportunity by a forward observer. Of the two, the adjusted fires present the more complex problem as the artillery barrages can be adjusted to follow the actions of the convoy.

Active Defense

Active defensive measures against artillery are limited but must not be overlooked. It is important that several personnel are highly capable of calling in a fire mission. Active measures would include the following:

1. Directing counterbattery fire if the direction and approximate distance to the enemy artillery can be estimated.
2. Directing small-arms fire or artillery fires against the enemy forward observer if they can be located.
3. Coordinating air strikes against the enemy artillery.

Passive Defense

The convoy commander has three passive defense options when confronted with incoming artillery rounds. The options are as follows:

- Halt in place.
- Continue to march.
- Disperse quickly to concealed positions.

Regardless of the option selected, the actions to be taken and the signal directing the action should be covered in the unit SOP.

The convoy should only be halted when the artillery concentration is ahead of the convoy. The convoy commander should look for an alternate route around the impact area and the convoy should remain prepared to move out rapidly.

The missions and/or terrain may require the convoy to continue. If this is the case, increase speed and spread out to the maximum extent the terrain will allow. Casualties can be reduced by the following:

- Avoiding the impact area
- Increasing speed
- Increasing dispersion
- Wearing individual protective equipment
- Using the vehicle for protection

IMMEDIATE ACTION DRILLS

The guerrilla normally seeks contact with organized units only under favorable tactical circumstances; for example, ambushes. When contact is made under less favorable circumstances, the guerrilla attempts a rapid withdrawal. In either case, small-unit encounters with guerrillas are likely to be sudden, violent, and of short duration. Slow reactions to an ambush can result in excessive losses or the loss of an opportunity to punish the guerrilla unit. Contact is often made at close range, particularly when operating in jungle, temperate zone forests, woods, or heavy brush. Immediate action drills aid small units in reacting quickly and properly.

Immediate action drills are predrilled, prerehearsed reactions to contact or anticipated contact with the enemy. Immediate action drills are most frequently used by rifle platoons and squads. They are used during the conduct of foot patrols and dismounted movements in close terrain against guerrillas.

The variety of drills is limited only by the imagination and initiative of the unit leader and the state of training of the unit. It is impractical to develop drills covering every contingency; however, it is important to develop a drill for each of the most frequently occurring situations. The response to a given situation must not be stereotyped, as the enemy may ultimately capitalize upon rigid adherence to the same tactics.

Immediate action drills stress simplicity, aggressiveness, and rapid execution. They demand alertness and a high state of individual training. Drills

are of little value to a unit in which the individual Seabee lacks proficiency in the fundamental combat skills.

VEHICLE UNLOADING DRILL

When a vehicle is forced to halt in the killing zone of an ambush, the debarkation of occupants must be organized and predrilled. On order or signal, the response must be immediate and each person must act swiftly to move to the proper position. Confusion is thus overcome and immediate offensive action against the enemy is more likely to be effective. When the vehicle is halted, the actions are as follows:

1. If the vehicle is hardened, the vehicle commander acts appropriately as previously discussed. The vehicle commander then commands "DEPLOY RIGHT (OR LEFT)," to show the direction in which the occupants are to assemble after dismounting.

2. Sentries throw smoke grenades and open fire immediately on the ambush positions. The grenadier, if one is aboard the vehicle, fires on the ambush position.

3. Occupants, under cover of fire from the sentries, dismount over both sides of the vehicle and move to the side of the vehicle indicated in the command. As few occupants as possible attempt to dismount over the tailgate of the vehicle.

4. When the occupants have dismounted, the sentries dismount under covering fire from troops on the ground.

5. The driver and assistant driver dismount in the direction indicated by the vehicle commander.

6. When all occupants are out of the vehicle, action is taken as previously mentioned in this chapter.

FREEZE AND HASTY AMBUSH DRILL

The freeze and hasty ambush is a drill designed to deal with the meeting engagement. The drill is undertaken when the unit has sighted guerrillas approaching but has not yet been seen by them. Immediate action is taken to ambush the guerrillas when their approach is moving on a trail different or the same used by the unit.

1. Freeze—When the guerrillas are sighted, the unit is halted by silent signal, such as an arm and hand or other prearranged special signal. The signal is relayed to each member of the unit, and each member

freezes in their tracks with their weapons in the firing position.

2. Different trails—If the guerrillas are approaching on a route different from that of the Seabee unit, the unit remains on the trail in a freeze position. The unit leader signals Commence Firing when the guerrillas present a suitable target.

3. Same trail—On initially sighting the enemy, the freeze is executed. The individual making the sighting indicates the number of enemy by silent signal and then moves off the trail. Each individual relays the signal and moves off the trail on the same side used by the originator. It is essential that the entire unit move to the same side of the trail. Speed of execution and silent movements are mandatory. Any unnatural sound may cause the guerrillas to turn and flee. Each member of the unit takes up a firing position facing the direction of enemy approach. The unit leader initiates the ambush by firing his or her weapon. In the event the guerrillas sight and fire upon a unit member other than the unit leader, that individual fires and springs the ambush.

IMMEDIATE ASSAULT DRILL

The immediate assault is a tactic used during an unexpected encounter at close quarters. It is a predrilled response to situations in which the guerrillas and the Seabee unit become aware of each other simultaneously. The immediate assault drill is a rapidly executed frontal assault.

1. The drill is usually initiated by the first member of the unit who sights the enemy. He or she fires at the enemy and shouts a prearranged signal showing the direction of the encounter; for example, "enemy front (left, right), charge."

2. The signal is repeated by each individual.

3. The unit adopts the line formation, oriented in the indicated direction of contact. A predesignated subordinate unit is withheld from the line to protect the flanks and rear.

4. The unit leader sounds a prearranged assault signal.

5. The assault is pressed forward until halted by the unit leader, usually when the guerrillas are no longer in sight.

COUNTER AMBUSH DRILL

There is no generally accepted immediate action for foot troops when ambushed. Adherence to the

principle of security in avoiding an ambush is easier than to escape from one. When ambushed, violent and concerted reaction is required to prevent annihilation. Units must have a prearranged plan, known to every troop, which allots a specific immediate action to each individual according to his or her location and function in the formation.

Entire Unit in Killing Zone

It is seldom possible to find covered or concealed positions within the killing zone from which to exchange fire with the enemy. The unit may execute the immediate assault in the direction shown by the unit leader. The direction shown is normally the weakest point in the ambush and is a prearranged counter ambush drill.

The unit may initially execute a preplanned movement to a position outside the killing zone indicated by the unit leader. Normally, the position is one that provides cover and concealment and is the location from which a subsequent drill is undertaken to eliminate the enemy.

Leading Element in Killing Zone

When only the foremost elements of the unit are caught in the killing zone, an immediate encircling attack is executed and actions are taken as follows:

1. Elements within the ambush indicate the nature and location of the ambush by prearranged signal; for

example, by voice "ambush front (left, right)" or by whistle or other signals.

2. Previously determined ambushed elements, execute an immediate assault.

3. Previously determined base of fire elements from personnel not yet engaged in the ambush, assume base of fire positions. These fires simultaneously support encircling maneuver elements and the personnel in the killing zone.

4. The encircling attack units move out in a prearranged envelopment of the enemy flank and/or rear (fig. 5-7).

NOTE: Take care in assaulting the main ambush force, as mines are commonly used to protect its flanks.

5. Whenever possible, the enemy rear is enveloped. The assault by the encircling units drives the enemy into the fires of the base of fire elements.

SUMMARY

The company commander must train his or her troops in convoy defensive techniques. OPSEC measures must be considered during the planning process and practiced during day-to-day hauling operations. The primary types of engagement likely to be encountered during convoy movements are attacks by air, artillery, sniper, ambush, and NBC. The convoy commander must ensure that subordinate commanders and drivers are aware of and trained on

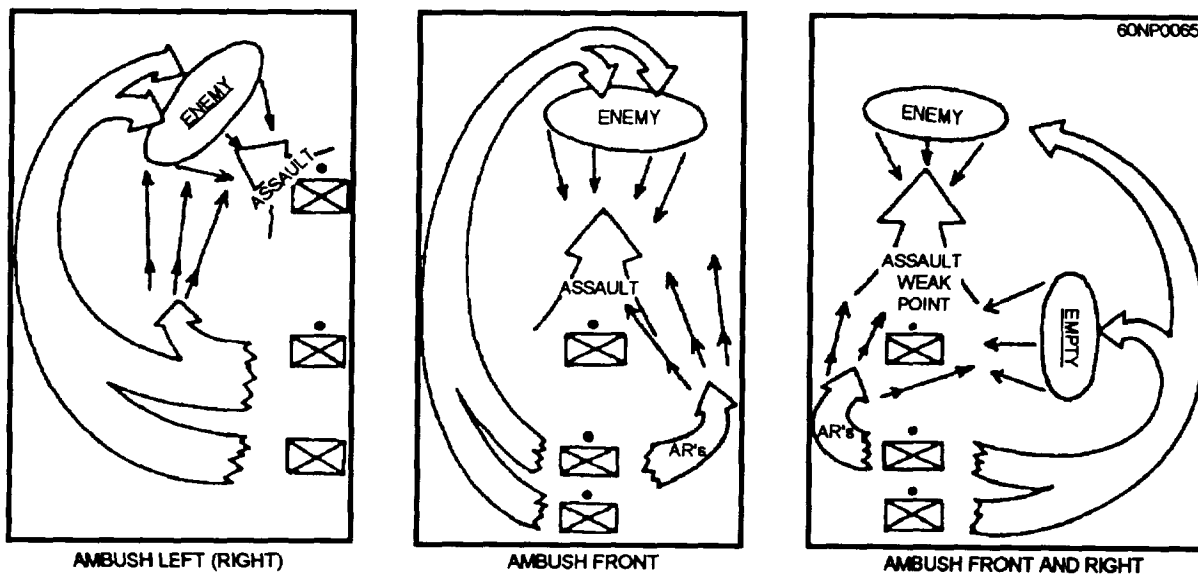


Figure 5-7.—Encircling attack.

the procedures to be used for countering the different type of attacks. Active and passive defense techniques must be learned and practiced. In an ambush situation, immediate reaction and aggressive leadership are essential to limit casualties and damage to vehicles, cargo, and personnel.

The following is a list of ambush instructions that was developed from lessons learned during the Vietnam War.

Before Ambush

1. Be alert for changes in familiar scenes along the route.
2. Expect ambush upon detonation of mines, automatic weapons fire, and heavy sniper fire.

During Ambush

1. Notify security force by radio call using prearranged signals. (Do not tie up the radio nets with unnecessary conversation. Maintain strict radio discipline.)
2. Continue moving, maintaining vehicle distance if possible.
3. Place any tracked vehicles in front to activate further detonation of road mines.
4. If disabled, steer off the road to allow passage of other vehicles.

5. If disabled and the convoy is moving through the killing zone, mount a passing vehicle.

6. Do not enter the killing zone when it can be avoided.

7. Provide flanking support fire into the killing zone.

8. Security vehicles apply maximum base of fire; fight as a team; deploy upon command.

9. Prime targets are enemy automatic weapons positions, enemy mortar, rocket positions, and assaulting ground forces.

After Ambush

1. Protect and care for wounded; evacuate wounded as soon as possible.
2. After contact has been broken, reopen roadway, ensuring that it is free of mines.
3. Do not attempt to remove mines; contact explosive ordnance disposal.
4. Provide flank security while the convoy passes through the area.
5. When contact is broken, do not give chase.
6. Stay alert for a counterattack
7. Remember details.

