Chapter 5

Defensive Combat

Section I. General

5101. Purpose

The purpose of defensive action is to develop more favorable conditions for offensive action, to economize forces to allow the concentration of force elsewhere and retain or control terrain, and gain time. The rifle squad should have an *ambush mentality* in which they seek to surprise and trap the enemy in away that sets him up for the decisive counter-attack.

5102. Mission

The mission of the infantry in the defense is, with the support of other arms, to delay / harass the enemy by fire as he approaches the battle position, to repel his assault by close combat if he reaches the battle position, and to destroy him by counterattack. For the rifle squad, this mission can be divided into three parts:

- **a.** To delay or suppress the enemy by fire once he comes into small arms range of the squad's fighting position. Depending on the mission, the enemy is delay or taken under fire as far forward of the squad's fighting position as possible. The closer the enemy comes to the squad's fighting position, the more friendly casualties he will inflict. Another technique is to deliver massed surprise fires by withholding fires until the enemy can be surprised and trapped e.g. ambush.

- **b.** If the enemy continues to press the attack to the point where he launches an assault, the squad repels this assault by continuing to deliver fire as part of their unit's final protective fires and, if necessary, by hand-to-hand combat.

- **c.** If the enemy succeeds in penetrating the platoon battle position, the squad either holds its fighting position, delivering fire on the intruding enemy, or fights from supplemental or alternate positions participates in counterattacks to destroy the enemy and restore the battle position if the battle position gets penetrated.

5103. Definitions

- **a. Sector of Fire.** A sector of fire is an area that is required to be covered by fire by an individual, a fire unit (squad or fire team), or a crew-served weapon. It is a pie-shaped area enclosed by two lateral limits and a forward limit. (See *fig. 5-1.*) Within a rifle platoon, a sector of fire is assigned to individual weapons, fire teams, and squads. Squad leaders are not normally assigned individual sectors of fire since their primary duty during the conduct of the defense is directing and controlling the fires of their units. The sector of fire is used to clearly indicate the
area to be covered by fire and to provide for the best distribution of available firepower and complete coverage of the area to the front. It is also employed to ensure mutual support by the overlapping of adjacent sectors of fire. Rifle platoons are assigned battle positions to be defended. The rifle platoon battle position is defended by the overlapping sectors of fire of the squads. The squad sector of fire is covered by the overlapping sectors of fire of the fire teams.

**Figure 5-1. Sector of Fire.**

(1) **Lateral Limits.** Readily identifiable terrain features are selected to indicate the line of sight along each side of the sector. These terrain features should be located near the forward limit of the sector so that all fire team members assigned to cover this sector use the same limiting features. Two stakes, placed near the position of the weapon, are used to indicate the lateral limits during periods of restricted visibility. These should be emplaced prior to darkness.

(2) **Forward Limit.** The forward limit is established at the range at which the weapon will open fire. For rifles and automatic rifles, this may extend up to their maximum effective ranges. When possible, a terrain feature is selected to locate the forward limit. As the attacker passes this limit, he is brought under fire. This allows the squad leader a positive means to control the commencement of small arms fire.

**b. Fighting Position.** A fighting position is a location on the ground from which fire is delivered by an individual, a fire unit (squad or fire team), or a crew served weapon. Before selecting a firing position, the assigned sector of fire must be carefully examined from various locations using the prone position to ensure effective coverage of the sector of fire. The exact fighting position is then designated on the ground prior to digging in. The position must allow for good fields of fire, make maximum use of available cover and concealment, and facilitate exercise of fire control by the unit leader.

(1) **Primary Fighting Position.** The primary position is the best available position from which the assigned sector of fire can be covered. Individuals, fire teams, squads, and crew served weapons are assigned primary positions.

(2) **Alternate Fighting Position.** Alternate positions are not normally assigned to individuals or units within the platoon. They are used primarily by crew-served weapons. An alternate position is located so that a crew-served weapon can continue to accomplish its original mission when the primary position becomes untenable or unsuited for carrying out that mission.

(3) **Supplementary Fighting Position.** One of the greatest threats to either the attacker or the defender lies in being surprised. The attacker seeks to surprise the defender by concealing his movements until the moment of the assault. The defender seeks to surprise the attacker by concealing the exact location and extent of his dispositions, thus leading his opponent into a false estimate of the situation and consequently, a faulty decision. Supplementary positions are prepared to guard against attack from directions other than those from which the main attack is expected. A supplementary position is a secondary position and does not cover the same sector of fire as the primary position. In some situations, the most likely avenue of approach may vary between daylight and darkness or other periods of low visibility. Thus, the requirement to shift
positions becomes an absolute necessity. This situation is more the rule rather than the
exception. Supplementary positions actually provide security. When occupied, they ensure
protection against attack from directions other than those covered by primary positions.
Movement to supplementary positions should be made by covered and concealed routes when
available movement to and from must be rehearsal.

c. Battle Position. A position on which the main effort of defense is concentrated. A battle
position is assigned to battalions, companies, and platoons. A battle position is made up of a
series of sectors of fire that support one another. Platoon battle positions are assigned a right and
a left limit of fire. A limit of fire is a boundary marking the area in which gunfire can be
delivered. The limits of fire should be indicated by readily identifiable terrain features located at
or beyond the limit of effective small arms fire. (See fig. 5-2.)

Figure 5-2. Frontline Platoon Battle Position.

d. Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA). The foremost limits of a series of areas in which
ground combat units are deployed. The FEBA is a control measure that divides the security area
from the main battle area. The FEBA need not be physically occupied, but it should be controlled
by friendly fire.

e. Main Battle Area. The main battle area extends from the FEBA to the rear. It is here that the
decisive defensive battle is fought. The main battle area is organized into sectors of defense that
are assigned to subordinate units. A company may be assigned a sector to defend or be directed
to occupy a battle position.

f. Security Area. The security area is located forward of the FEBA. The squad may be assigned
as part of a larger security force or may only be responsible for local security in front of the
platoon battle position.

g. Principal Direction of Fire. A principal direction of fire is a specific direction within the
sector of fire given to a flat trajectory weapon and which is designated as its primary fire mission.
Within a rifle squad, a principal direction of fire is assigned to automatic rifles. Units are not
assigned principal directions of fire. Riflemen may be assigned principal directions of fire for
periods of reduced visibility. Squad leaders and fire team leaders are not assigned a principal
direction of fire, nor can an automatic rifle be assigned more than one principal direction of fire.
The principal direction of fire is indicated by pointing out a readily identifiable terrain feature.
This terrain feature may be the target itself or it may indicate the line of sight when no target is
assigned. The limits of the target should be pointed out on the ground when distributed fire is
required along the principal direction of fire. A stake near the firing position is used to indicate
the principal direction of fire during periods of restricted visibility. The principal direction of fire
is employed to--

· Cover a gap in a final protective line of a machine gun.

· Cover a specific terrain feature endangering the company or platoon battle position,
Such as a draw that may serve as an avenue of approach, or hill top which may
Serve as a possible enemy vantage point. (See fig. 5-3.) This terrain feature is
Not necessarily a point on which fixed fire is placed; however, it is intended that coverage
Of the feature should require little distribution of fire. The principal direction of fire may be:

- Protect a crew served weapon by firing across its front.
- Augment the band of flanking fires placed immediately in front of the battle position
  when targets of opportunity to the front are not visible.

**Figure 5-3. Principal Direction of Fire.**

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**5104. Defense Planning Considerations**

The following fundamentals of defense are applicable to all tactical levels (fire team, squad,
platoon, company, etc.). Application of these fundamentals by all unit leaders increases the
chances for a successful defense.

**a. Preparation.** Normally, the defender will arrive at the battlefield before the attacker. Upon his
arrival at the position he is to defend, the squad leader must ascertain from the platoon
commander how much time is available to prepare his defensive position. If time is available to
prepare the position the squad leader must use it wisely; if not, he prepares a hasty defense. He
conducts a METT-T analysis.

**b. Concentration.** Forces must be concentrated to prepare for attacks at the most likely spots.
For the squad leader, this means he will establish his position as directed by the platoon
commander. This is called main effort.

**c. Flexibility.** At the squad level, flexibility is achieved through the continuous development of
various courses of action to meet the enemy threat. The squad leader should continuously be
asking himself, “What do I do if the enemy does this...?” This is called wargaming.

**d. Maximum Use of Offensive Action.** The squad will normally be tasked by the platoon
commander to conduct various types of patrols to maintain contact with the enemy. Additionally,
the squad leader must instill in his men an offensive state of mind and aggressive spirit.
Collecting extra equipment to provide for *creature comforts* must not be allowed as it can affect
the physical and mental ability of the squad to move out quickly and aggressively. Squads may
be tasked to conduct delaying type actions in the unit’s security area.

**e. Proper Use of Terrain.** Take maximum advantage of the military aspects of terrain--key
terrain, observation, cover and concealment, obstacles, and avenues of approach (KOCOA).
Considerations include employment of weapons, fighting positions and units in such a way to
both surprise the enemy and provide protection.

**f. Mutual Support.** Units and supporting weapons are located and employed so that they can
assist one another. The enemy easily destroys an isolated unit. Positions should be located so that
when attacking one, the enemy comes under fire from at least one other. The idea is to create a combined arms dilemma for the enemy so that whatever he does, he is presented with another problem to solve.

g. **Defense in Depth.** The squad may employ all three fire teams on line when deployed. The squad may engage the enemy at maximum small arms range and continue to fire until the enemy is stopped. If the attacker penetrates the front line squads, squads may move to supplementary positions to continue to engage the enemy, or they may be part of a counterattack to drive the enemy back. Defense in depth may also be achieved by a defense that is parallel to the line of attack, setting up a series of ambush style battle positions through which the enemy must fight. Defense in depth can also be achieved by a series of patrols, delays, ambushes, and movement from one battle position to another.

h. **Surprise.** The squad leader must employ every means available to mislead the enemy as to the true locations of his positions, his strength, and the disposition of his organic weapons as well as any crew served weapons located in his sector. He should plan to ambush and trap the enemy whenever possible.

i. **Knowledge of the Enemy.** Since the defense reacts largely to what the attacker does, the squad leader should find out from the platoon commander, the capabilities of the enemy facing him. Having an idea as to what the enemy can do, what weapons he will employ, and what his strength is, will help the squad leader organize his defense to meet that threat. This is an element of METT-T.

### 5105. Defensive Missions of the Squad

The squad will be assigned one of three types of missions:

a. **Front line Squad.** The squad may defend as part of a front line platoon. Its mission is to stop the enemy by fire forward of the platoon battle position and to repel him by close combat if he reaches the platoon battle position. The mission requires that the squad be assigned a fighting position and a sector of fire. The squad may hold its fighting position, withdraw or occupy other fighting positions in order to accomplish missions. Orders to withdraw usually come from higher.

b. **Squad as Part of the Reserves.** The squad may be part of the reserve platoon during the defense. As part of the reserve platoon, the squad is normally assigned a fighting position to the rear of the front line units and supports them by fire. The fighting position and sector of fire is assigned to concentrate fire in the rear, on the flanks, or into a gap between front line platoons. The squad as part of the reserve platoon may also be assigned a fighting position and sector of fire to limit enemy penetrations of the platoon battle position. The squad as part of the company's reserve platoon may participate in a counterattack.

c. **Squad as a Security Element.** During the defense the squad may serve as part of the security element located forward of the platoon or company battle position. The squad's mission in this capacity is to gain information about the enemy and to deceive, delay, ambush and/or disorganize his advance.
5106. The Fire Team in the Defense

a. Organization of the Ground. The squad leader organizes the fire team in the defense by specifying a sector of fire and principal direction of fire for the automatic rifle. He selects terrain features to indicate lateral and forward limits of the sector of fire. He points out on the ground the general location of fire team fighting positions to be occupied. (See fig. 5-4.)

Figure 5-4. The Fire Team Sector of Fire.

b. Fire Plan. The fire team leader formulates the team's fire plan to cover the entire sector assigned by the squad leader with the heaviest possible volume of fire. (See fig. 5-5.) The fire plan includes assignment of individual sectors of fire, individual fighting positions, firing positions and a principal direction of fire for the automatic rifles as assigned by the squad leader, and the position of the fire team leader.

Figure 5-5. Fire Team Fire Plan.

(1) Individual Sectors of Fire

(a) The fire team is the basic fire unit of the rifle platoon and, when practicable, each individual's sector of fire covers the entire fire team sector of fire. The same terrain features are used to indicate the limits. In this way mutual support can be achieved.

(b) In the defense, it is impractical for each automatic rifleman to cover the entire squad sector of fire. He is assigned to cover only the fire team sector.

(b) The fire team leader is assigned an individual sector of fire for the employment Of the M203 grenade launcher. He covers the entire fire team sector.

(2) Individual Fighting Position

(a) The fire team leader designates individual fighting positions which will enable the fire team to cover the assigned sector by fire.

(b) Positions may be prepared as single or double fighting holes. The interval between fighting holes within a fire team may vary. In close terrain, single fighting holes are usually prepared and may be as close as 5 meters in open or desert terrain double positions are prepared and may be as far apart as 30-50 meters.

(c) If double fighting holes are prepared, the automatic rifleman and assistant automatic rifleman will pair off.

(3) Automatic Rifleman

(a) Since the automatic rifles are the backbone of the squad's defense, the squad leader selects the exact fighting position for the automatic rifle. The remainder of the fire team is then positioned around it.
(b) The squad leader will indicate the principal direction of fire for the automatic rifle.
This principal direction of fire, under some conditions, may have been selected by the
platoon commander himself. (See par. 5107a.)

(4) Rifleman. The rifleman is positioned so he can cover the entire fire team sector, if
possible. His position must provide support and protection for the automatic rifleman.

(5) Assistant Automatic Rifleman. Normally, the assistant automatic rifleman participates in
the defense as a rifleman. He is positioned near or with the automatic rifleman because he must
be prepared to assume the duties of the automatic rifleman.

(6) Position of the Fire Team Leader. Usually the fire team leader's position is at the center of
the fire team. It must be a position from which he can--

· Observe the entire fire team and its sector of fire.
· Direct the fire of the automatic rifle.
· Deliver effective M203 grenade launcher fire.
· Observe the squad leader, if possible.

(7) M203 Employment
(a) In assigning the sectors of fire for employing his M203 grenade launcher, the fire
team leader must consider the overall fire plan. Specifically, he must consider the sectors of
fire assigned to the automatic rifleman and the need to furnish support to the automatic
rifleman and to adjacent units. The fire team leader then positions himself where he can best
control the fire team and deliver the most effective M203 fire. This is usually in the center
of the fire team position. (See fig. 5-5.) The idea is to employ the M203 in such a way that its fires
are mutually supporting, cover dead space and assist in creating a dilemma for the enemy.

(b) As the enemy approaches the platoon battle position, he is subjected to an ever
increasing volume of fire from weapons in the battle position and from supporting arms.
Unless restrictions are placed on the firing of the M203, the fire team leader opens fire with
the M203 on profitable targets as they come in range. In some situations, the squad leader or
platoon commander may desire to withhold M203 fires until the enemy has reached a
specified area, at which time the fire team leader opens fire. The surprise fire from the
grenade launcher, in conjunction with the fires of the other squad and platoon weapons, will
have a combine arms effect upon the enemy, particularly in the assault phase of the enemy
attack. When final protective fires are called for, the fire team leader engages the largest mass
of enemy infantry within his assigned sector with the M203.

(c) The fire team leader's fighting position should enable him to cover the entire fire
team sector of fire. Primary and supplementary firing positions are prepared. Firing
positions are selected to provide maximum cover and concealment consistent with the
assigned mission. Extreme care must be taken to ensure that fields of fire are cleared of
obstructions that might cause premature detonation of the projectile, thereby endangering
friendly personnel. The M203 is employed to cover the most likely avenues of approach for enemy infantry into the defensive position.

(8) Fire Team Sectors of Fire. Sectors of fire are selected for the fire teams so that when combined they will cover the entire squad sector of fire. The fire team sectors of fire overlap so as to provide mutual support.

(9) Fire Plan Sketch. A sketch of the fire plan is submitted by the fire team leader to the squad leader. It should include the individual sectors of fire and primary fighting positions, the principal direction of fire for the automatic rifleman, and the fighting position of the fire team leader. At times, irregularities within the terrain may prevent one of the individuals from covering the entire fire team sector of fire. Such is the case of the assistant automatic rifleman in the example shown in figure 5-6. Note that the symbol for the automatic rifleman's fighting position points along the principal direction of fire. The magnetic north line provides a reference to show the direction the fire team is facing. A line is drawn around the fire team fighting position and follows the general trace of the forward edge, flanks, and rear of the individual fighting positions of the fire team members. The symbol indicating the size of the unit is placed within a break along the rear edge. The numbers show this to be the 2d fire team of the 3d squad. Figure 5-7 illustrates the meaning of the various symbols.

Figure 5-6. Fire Plan Sketch.

Figure 5-7. Sketch Symbols.

5107. The Rifle Squad in the Defense

a. Organization of the Ground. The platoon commander organizes the fire team in the defense by specifying a sector of fire and a primary fighting position. He selects terrain features to indicate the lateral and forward limits of the squad sector of fire. He points out, on the ground, the general location of the squad fighting position to be occupied. He designates the general fighting positions and principal directions of fire for specific automatic rifles that are critical to the defense of the entire platoon. He may assign a supplementary fighting position for the squad to protect the flanks or rear of the platoon battle position. (See fig. 5-8.) He should plan to fight with an all around mindset.

Figure 5-8. Squad Fighting Position.

b. Fire Plan. The squad leader formulates the squad fire plan so as to physically occupy the assigned primary fighting position and to be able to cover by fire the sector of fire assigned by the platoon commander. (See fig. 5-6.) The fire plan includes the assignment of fire team sectors
of fire, fire team fighting positions, principal directions of fire for the automatic rifles, and the squad leader's fighting position.

c. Fire Team Positions

(1) The squad leader distributes his fire teams so that they physically occupy the assigned fighting position and are able to cover by fire the assigned squad sector of fire.

(2) Fire teams are placed generally abreast. They face the expected direction of enemy attack so as to be able to deliver their heaviest volume of fire against the enemy forward of the platoon battle position. Fighting positions of individual fire team members may be staggered in an irregular line to take advantage of the terrain; however, care must be taken not to mask the fires of members of the fire team.

(3) Selection of fire team fighting positions must be coordinated with the location of crew served weapons in the squad fighting position so as to provide for the close in protection of these weapons.

d. Automatic Rifles

(1) The platoon commander designates the general fighting positions and principal directions of fire for specific automatic rifles.

(2) The squad leader will assign a principal direction of fire for each automatic rifle not assigned by the platoon commander.

(3) The squad leader selects the exact fighting position for each automatic rifle.

e. Position of the Squad Leader. The squad leader's fighting position is usually slightly to the rear of the fire teams and in the center of the squad fighting position. It must be a position from which the squad leader can--

· Observe his squad's assigned sector of fire.

· Observe as much of the squad fighting position as possible, particularly the positions of the fire team leaders.

· Maintain contact with the platoon commander.

f. Fire Plan Sketch. The squad leader prepares the squad fire plan sketch in duplicate. He gives one sketch to the platoon commander for his approval and keeps a copy for himself. The sketch should include fire team fighting positions and sectors of fire, fighting positions and principal directions of fire of the automatic rifles, and the squad leader's fighting position. If the rifle squad is providing protection for a crew served weapon, its position and primary fire mission (final protective line for machine guns and principal direction of fire for other crew served weapons) should be included as part of the sketch. Figure 5-6 is an example of a squad fire plan sketch.
Section II. Defensive Procedures

5201. Troop Leading Procedures in the Defense

a. General. Upon receiving the platoon defense order, the squad leader follows the troop leading steps to make the best use of time, equipment, and personnel. Utilizing these steps and satisfactorily completing an estimate of the situation, he issues his squad defensive order. This follows the five-paragraph order format that includes--

· Information about the enemy, the location and identification of adjacent units, and the location of supporting weapons within the squad area.

· The mission of the squad.

· The fighting positions and sectors of fire for each fire team and the principal direction of fire for each automatic rifleman.

· The assignment of light anti-tank or assault weapons to squad members whose fighting positions will cover avenues of approach for armored vehicles.

· Organization of the ground, priority of work, squad security, and any other instructions the squad leader believes necessary.

· The administrative and supply details such as ammunition resupply and the location of medical corpsmen and the aid station.

· Prearranged signals such as pyrotechnics or audible signals, designating when to open fire or deliver final protective fires. The location of the squad leader and platoon commander is also given.

b. Guidance. For troop leading procedures, see appendix C; for estimate of the situation, see appendix D; for the five-paragraph order, see appendix E.

5202. Squad Plan of Defense

After issuing the squad defensive order, the squad leader positions his fire teams to cover the assigned sector of fire. Before detailed preparations of fighting positions are begun, the squad leader verifies the sector of fire of each fire team and the ability of the fire team to observe its assigned sector. During his supervision of the fighting positions, he ensures the sectors of fire overlap and that the desired density of fire can be delivered on avenues of approach. The squad leader's responsibilities during the preparation of the fighting position include--

· In conjunction with fire team leaders, inspecting the fighting position for each fire team member, verifying each man's ability to cover the fire team sector of fire.

· Selecting fighting positions for the automatic riflemen, verifying each one's ability to cover the assigned fire team sector of fire and have mutual support.
· Assigning each automatic rifleman a principal direction of fire (PDF) covering a likely avenue of enemy approach, ensuring the PDF is within the sector of fire assigned to the fire team.

· Coordinating with crew served weapons personnel located in the squad position.

· Supervising the preparation of fighting holes.

· Supervising the clearing of fields of fire.

· Providing security by assigning sentinels or observation posts.

· Coordinating all security measures with adjacent squads and the platoon commander.

· Inspecting fighting positions to ensure that camouflage and overhead cover are satisfactory.

· Supervising the preparation of supplementary fighting positions.

· Establishing a system of signals for fire control.

**a. Signal to Commence Firing.** Normally, a forward limit is established to designate the range at which the fire teams are to engage selected targets. For rifles and automatic rifles, this may extend as far forward as their maximum effective range. A terrain feature should be selected to locate the forward limit. As the attacker passes this limit, he is brought under fire. This establishes a positive means of fire control to ensure that small arms fire does not commence prematurely or is withheld too long. The squad leader may desire the fire teams to hold their fire until the enemy gets closer than maximum effective small arms range, and then deliver a heavy volume of surprise fire. In this case, he will establish a signal for commencing fire. When the squad commences fire, rifles and M203s are fired at the average rate; automatic rifles are normally fired at the sustained rate. The squad leader determines what rate of fire is appropriate for the situation. As the enemy comes closer, the rate of fire is increased. Another option is to deliver massed surprise fires on signal to surprise and trap the enemy e.g. ambush.

**b. Signal to Commence Final Protective Fires.** Final protective fires consist of machine gun fires, mortar and artillery fires, automatic rifle and rifle fires, and M203 fires. The signal to commence these fires is a prearranged pyrotechnic or audible signal and is normally passed to the squad from the platoon commander. When this signal is given, the rifles and M203s continue to fire at the average rate; the automatic riflemen increase their volume of fire to the rapid rate of fire if they have not already reached it. Since the squad has been increasing its rate of fire as the enemy closes, the automatic rifle may already be firing at the rapid rate, or close to it, by the time the signal to fire the final protective fires is given.

**c. Signal to Cease Final Protective Fires.** Predetermined signals are used to cease final protective fires. When the enemy assault is repulsed, the signal to cease final protective fires is given. When this signal is given, rifles and M203s may continue to fire at the average rate; the automatic rifles may return to the sustained rate. The rates of fire will be determined by the squad
leader and must be sufficient to destroy the enemy remaining to the squad front. The squad leader will determine when it is safe to cease-fire entirely.

5203. Squad Security
The rifle squad provides for its own local security by maintaining constant observation to the front, flanks, and rear. Enough men are kept alert at all times to maintain an effective warning system against enemy air and ground activity. In open terrain during daylight, one sentinel per squad is usually sufficient. Under conditions of reduced visibility, one sentinel per fire team is usually assigned. Sentinels should be relieved every two hours, day or night, in order to ensure they remain alert and effective. Prior to posting, they must be briefed on the location and activity of friendly and known enemy forces (including patrols), the password and countersign, the location of the squad leader, and the location of the platoon and company command posts. Sentinels normally man the automatic rifle.

5204. Organization of the Ground
a. General. The organization of the ground begins as soon as individual members of the squad have been assigned sectors of fire. It includes the following tasks and or remembered by the acronym SAFE:

- Security
- Automatic weapons
- Fields of fire
- Entrench

- Posting security (listening posts, observation posts, patrols). Security is continuous.
- Positioning automatic weapons.
- Clearing fields of fire.
- Digging fighting holes.
- Constructing obstacles.
- Selecting supplementary fighting positions.
- Camouflage measures.

b. Posting Security. Local security consists of measures taken to prevent surprise and to deny the enemy information concerning the plan of defense. All round security and protection against surprise are achieved by--

- Posting a sentinel for surveillance.
- Enforcing noise and light discipline.
· Keeping movement within the squad fighting position to minimum.

"Establishing a listening/observation post LP/OP.

c. Positioning Automatic Rifles. Automatic rifles are positioned to cover the most likely avenues of approach into the squad area. Their positions should enable them to cover the fire team's sector of fire, provide support for adjacent fire teams, and effectively deliver final protective fires.

d. Clearing Fields of Fire. In clearing fields of fire forward of each fighting position, the following guidelines should be observed:

(1) Do not disclose the squad's fighting position by excessive or careless clearing. (See fig. 5-9.)

Figure 5-9. Clearing Fields of Fire.

(2) Start clearing near the fighting position and work forward to the limits of effective small arms fire.

(3) In all cases, leave a thin natural screen of foliage to hide fighting positions.

(4) In sparsely wooded areas, remove the lower branches of scattered large trees. It may be desirable to remove entire trees that might be used as reference points for enemy fire.

(5) In heavy woods, complete clearing of the field of fire is neither possible nor desirable. Restrict work to thinning undergrowth and removing lower branches of large trees. In addition, clear narrow lanes of fire for automatic weapons.

(6) If practical, demolish buildings and walls forward of the fighting position which may obstruct fields of fire or provide cover and concealment to the enemy.

(7) Move cut brush to locations where it will not furnish concealment to the enemy or disclose the squad's fighting position.

(8) Extreme care must be taken by the fire team leader to ensure that fields of fire are cleared of obstructions that might cause premature detonation of the M203 projectile. The leader must always look at his position from the anticipated enemy direction to see how well the position is camouflaged.

e. Digging Fighting Holes. Fighting holes are dug by Marines at their fighting positions. Fighting holes provide excellent protection against small arms fire, shell fragments, airplane strafing or bombings, the effects of nuclear detonations, and the crushing action of tanks. If not prescribed by higher authority, the squad leader will designate either one or two-man fighting holes. The type of fighting hole used is based upon squad strength, fields of fire, size of squad
sector of fire, and morale. However, the two-man fighting hole permits one Marine to rest while
the other maintains security over the assigned frontage.

(1) One-man Fighting Hole

(a) Dimensions. The size and shape of the fighting hole are affected by certain
important considerations. It is as small as practicable, exposing a minimum target to enemy fire;
wide enough to accommodate the shoulders of a man sitting on the fire step; long enough to
permit the use of an entrenching tool; and at least 4 feet deep to the fire step. Standing on the
fire step, the Marine should be able to aim and fire his weapon.

1 Water Sump. A water sump, below the fire step, is dug at one side of the fighting hole to
collect water and provide a space for the Marine's feet while he's seated on the firing step. (See
figs. 5-10 and 5-11.)

Figure 5-10. One-Man Fighting Hole
   (Horizontal View)

Figure 5-11. One-Man Fighting Hole.
   (Vertical View)

2Grenade Sump. A circular grenade sump is dug into the wall of the fighting hole facing the
enemy, at the lower part of the water sump. The grenade sump should be cone shaped, with the
opening measuring approximately as wide as the spade of the entrenching tool, narrowing to
about five inches in diameter at the end; it should be sloped downward at an angle of 30 degrees;
and it should be as deep as the Marine can make it. (See fig. 5-10.)

(b) Details of Construction. In most types of soil the fighting hole gives protection against the
crushing action of tanks, provided the occupant crouches at least 2 feet below the ground surface.
(See fig. 5-12.) In sandy or soft soils it is necessary to revet the sides to prevent caving in. The
soil is piled around the hole as a parapet, approximately 3 feet thick and 1/2 foot high, leaving a
berm or shelf wide enough for the Marine to use as an elbow rest while firing. If turf or topsoil is
used to camouflage the parapet, the Marine first removes sufficient ground cover and sets it aside
until the fighting hole is completed. Once complete, the ground cover can then be laid on the top
and sides of the parapet, so that it will better blend in with the surrounding ground.

Figure 5-12. One-Man Fighting Hole Protects Against Tanks.

(c) Fighting Hole With Camouflaged Overhead Cover. It is desirable that the soil be
removed to an inconspicuous place and a camouflaged overhead cover be improvised. Branches,
supporting sod, or other natural material in the vicinity may be used for this purpose. The
overhead cover may be reinforced to provide protection from overhead bursts of artillery fire.

(2) Two-man Fighting Hole. The two-man fighting hole consists essentially of two adjacent
one-man fighting holes. Since it is longer than the one-man type, the two-man fighting hole
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offers somewhat less protection against a tank crossing along the long axis, as well as less
protection against strafing, bombing, and shell fragments. (See fig. 5-13.) Some advantages of
the two-man fighting hole are that it allows continuous observation, mutual assistance and
reassurance, and the redistribution of ammunition between the occupants.

Figure 5-13. Two-Man Fighting Hole.

f. Constructing Obstacles. The squad may be ordered to construct obstacles such as barbed
wire, log and brush barriers, ditches, and hasty protective mine fields; and may be ordered to
improve natural obstacles such as creek beds and river banks. Usually antitank and other
extensive obstacles are constructed by engineers. When obstacles that affect the squad’s fighting
position are constructed, the squad leader ensures that--

· The obstacle is located beyond hand grenade range of the individual fighting positions of
  squad members.

· The obstacle is covered by fire.

g. Selecting Supplementary and Alternate Fighting Positions. The squad prepares
supplementary fighting positions organized the same as the primary fighting positions but
oriented in a different direction. If crew served weapons are attached to the squad or
employed in the squad fighting position, alternate fighting positions should also be prepared for
the crew served weapons.

h. Camouflage Measures. Concealment from enemy ground and aerial observation is very
important in selecting and organizing each fighting position. The squad must take advantage of
natural concealment whenever possible. Camouflage measures are begun from the moment the
position is occupied and are continued as long as the Marines are there. Specific camouflage
measures are:

(1) Do not disclose the position by excessive or careless clearing of fields of fire.

(2) Use the same turf or topsoil that has been removed from the area of the fighting hole to
camouflage the parapet.

(3) Dispose of all soil from the fighting hole not used on the parapet. Carry the soil away in
sandbags or shelter halves. Dispose of it under low bushes, on dirt roads or paths, in streams or
ponds, or camouflage it.

(4) Avoid digging in next to an isolated bush, tree, or clump of vegetation.

(5) Conceal the fighting hole from observation by the use of a camouflaged cover. Construct the
cover from natural materials.

(6) Replace natural material used in camouflage before it wilts or changes color.
(7) Avoid creating fresh paths near the position. Use old paths or vary the route followed to and from the position.

(8) Avoid littering the area near the position with paper, tin cans, and other debris.

5205. Squad Defense Order

The squad leader follows the standard five paragraph order format in presenting his squad defense order. (See app. E.) A sample defense order given by the squad leader, 3d squad, commencing with a terrain orientation, follows:

(Terrain Orientation) "That direction is north (pointing). Notice the streambed to the front, that road on the left, that destroyed bridge, and the woods on the left.

(Situation) "An enemy force supported by tanks, artillery, and aircraft is expected to attack from that direction (pointing), sometime after midnight tonight.

"Our platoon will defend this high ground from just this side of the road (pointing) to a point 500 meters to the right (pointing). Our fighting position runs along the forward slope of the high ground (pointing).

"The 2d squad is on our right and the 2d platoon on our left.

"There is a machine gun squad in the 2d platoon area that fires to the right, across our front, and another in the 1st squad area that fires to the left, across our front. Two SMAW t eams are located in our area just to the right of the road and fire down the road. Mortar final protective fires will fall in the streambed to our front and an artillery final protective fire will fall in the vicinity of the road.

"A platoon size security force now in position to our front will withdraw along the road, probably sometime tonight, if the expected enemy contact proves too strong. I'll get the word to you as soon as I find out. Make sure all your men know they're out there.

(Mission) "The mission of our squad is to organize and defend a part of the platoon battle position from the right side of the road over to and around this finger, over to and including the draw to the right. Our sector of fire is the area between that bend in the stream on our right (pointing) and the break in the woods on our left (pointing).

(Execution) "Our squad will organize our defense with three fire teams on line. One automatic rifle's principal direction of fire will be down the drainage ditch along the right side of the road. One automatic rifle PDF will fire down the path in the center of the finger. The PDF of the other automatic rifle will be down the draw to the right.

"that fire team, on the right, will defend from that draw (pointing), around the right side of the finger to, and including, that tree stump. Your sector of fire will extend from that bend in the stream in second squad's area (pointing), left to the other side of that large rock (pointing). Your
automatic rifleman will fire his PDF down the draw. I want it to be fired from this position 
(pointing) to that old dead tree there (pointing).

"2d fire team, in the center, will defend from that tree stump, to and including, that bush 
(pointing) at the left center of the finger. Your sector of fire is from the demolished bridge on the 
left to that clump of cattails there in the streambed (pointing). Place your automatic rifleman here 
and have him fire his principal direction of fire down the path running the center of the finger. 
Your fire team will post one-man to act as security for the squad while we are digging in. Have 
him remain on this high ground, and have him watch that streambed in particular. Give him the 
automatic rifle. I will have him relieved in one hour.

"3d fire team, on the left, will defend from that bush at the left center of the finger to the road. 
The road itself is in 2d platoon's area. Your sector of fire is from that large rock in the streambed 
(pointing) to that large tree in 2d platoon's area (pointing). The PDF for your automatic rifle is 
down the drainage ditch on the right side of the road.

"I will point out supplementary fighting positions protecting the rear later.

"After I have checked each man's fighting position and his coverage of the fire team's sector of 
fire, we'll clear fields of fire, dig one-man fighting holes with overhead cover, and camouflage 
them at the same time. Fire team leaders assign tasks. I have already coordinated the overlap of 
sectors of fire with 2d squad on the right and 2d platoon on the left.

"Open fire on the enemy when they come out of the woods to our front. We will use the woods 
as the forward limit.

(Administration/Logistics) "Water and rations will be issued before sunset. Make sure all hands 
have four grenades.

"The battalion aid station is along that road about 800 meters to the rear. The platoon corpsman 
is near the platoon CP over there (pointing).

"Send POWs back to me.

(Command and Signal) "The challenge is 'September' and the password is 'Beacon'.

"Signal to commence firing the final protective fires is a red star cluster. Signal to cease firing 
the final protective fires is a green star cluster.

"The platoon commander is in the edge of the woods to our right rear (pointing).

"My position will be here on this finger just behind the 2d fire team.

"Any questions?

"It is now 1400.
"Move out!"

5206. Conduct of the Defense

a. Enemy Preparatory Bombardment. The enemy may precede his attack with fire from any or all of the following weapons, artillery, naval gunfire, mortars, machine guns, tanks, and aircraft. During this incoming enemy fire, the squad will take cover in its fighting holes, maintaining surveillance to the front, flanks, and rear to determine if the enemy is advancing closely behind their supporting fires.

b. Opening Fire and Fire Control. The squad withholds its fire on approaching enemy troops until they come within effective small arms range of the squad's fighting position. Squad members open fire on the approaching enemy on command of the squad leader, or when the enemy reaches a predetermined line, normally the forward limit of the fire team sector of fire. When the squad opens fire, rifles are fired at the average rate. When the enemy enters the range of the M203, the fire team leader delivers grenade launcher fire at the average rate. Automatic riflemen normally fire at the sustained rate. The squad leader determines the appropriate rate of fire for the situation. Automatic riflemen's priority of fire goes to enemy automatic weapons, rocket launchers, and other crew-served weapons. Once the squad opens fire, direct control passes to the fire team leaders. The fire team leaders, in accordance with the squad leader's previous plan, designate new targets, change rates of fire when necessary, and give the order to cease-fire when the attack is defeated. The goal of the squad may be to defeat the enemy attack as far forward of the squad fighting position as possible. If the enemy is not stopped and he continues to close on the squad fighting position, the automatic riflemen will continue to increase their rate of fire as the enemy comes closer.

c. Final Protective Fires. If the enemy's attack is not broken and he begins his assault, final protective fires are called. Final protective fires are the final attempt to stop the enemy attack before he reaches the platoon's battle position. When final protective fires are called for, all squad members fire in their assigned sectors (normally the fire team's sector of fire). Rifles and M203s continue to fire at the average rate; the automatic riflemen will increase their volume of fire to the rapid rate, if they have not yet reached this rate prior to the calling for final protective fires. Riflemen engage enemy personnel within the fire team sector; fire team leaders fire the M203 at the largest concentration of enemy personnel within the fire team sector. Normally, the largest concentrations will be along the PDFs of the automatic rifles if the PDFs were properly positioned.

d. Enemy Reaches the Fighting Squad's Position. Enemy infantry reaching the squad's fighting position are driven out by fire, grenades, the bayonet, and hand-to-hand combat. The success of the defense depends upon each rifle squad defending in place. A stubborn defense by front line squads breaks up enemy attack formations and makes him vulnerable to counterattack by reserve units. The squad does not withdraw except when specifically directed by higher authority. The squad is prepared to fight from all around when the enemy has penetrated.

5207. Defense Against Mechanized Attack
When tanks or other armored vehicles support an enemy infantry attack, the primary target of the squad is the hostile infantry. This holds true whether the enemy infantry is on foot (dismounted), mounted in armored personnel carriers (APCs) or in trucks. If the enemy infantry is mounted in trucks, they can be engaged with small arms; if in APCs, they can be engaged with small arms using armor piercing ammunition (if available) and anti-tank weapons. The goal is to slow down the infantry movement by making them dismount. This will either separate the enemy infantry from the tanks or force the tanks to slow down to keep pace with the dismounted infantry. When hostile infantry does not afford a target, the squad may direct its small arms fire and anti-tank weapon against the aiming devices and vision slits of enemy armor. Anti-tank weapons are used to destroy enemy tanks or to damage the tracks and suspension system to the point where the tank can no longer move (mobility kill). Under no circumstances will the squad be diverted from its basic mission of engaging and destroying the hostile infantry. Every effort is made to separate the enemy tanks from the enemy infantry because the tanks, even if they pass through the squad defensive position, are very vulnerable to crew served antitank weapons once they are stripped of the supporting infantry. Tanks are vulnerable from the rear.

5208. Movement to Supplementary Fighting Positions
If the fighting position of an adjacent squad is penetrated by the enemy, the squad leader shifts a part of the squad's fire into the penetrated area, and, if necessary, moves some men to supplementary fighting positions protecting the threatened flank. If the squad fighting position is threatened by attack from the rear, the squad leader moves some men to supplementary fighting positions protecting the rear. In open flat terrain, the squad leader simply orders his men to shift their fire to the rear. Prior to moving men to supplementary fighting positions, the squad leader, if possible, requests the approval of the platoon commander. When it is not possible to request permission, the squad leader notifies the platoon commander of his action as soon as possible. The squad leader avoids moving an entire fire team to supplementary fighting positions, but instead moves one or two men from each fire team, depending on the number required to protect the flank or rear. In any case, men moving to supplementary fighting positions follow the route that affords the best cover.

5209. Local Security for Platoons and Companies
The squad often furnishes local security for the platoon and company. Security posts from two to four men are stationed by the platoon commander or company commander up to 460 meters (effective small arms range) forward of the platoon battle position. Small patrols are often used to cover the ground between security posts or as a substitute for security posts. The company commander or platoon commander designates the general positions to be occupied by the security posts and the routes to be covered by the patrols. The squad leader may find his squad divided into small security posts and patrols covering the platoon or company front and flanks. His duties then include--

· Checking to see that security posts are well concealed and permit observation of the ground over which the enemy is expected to advance.

· Checking to see that patrols are following the prescribed routes.

· Passing on to his men all available information regarding both friendly and enemy forces.
· Instructing his men as to what action to take in case of enemy attack.

· Instructing the platoon commander or company commander immediately of enemy activity.

When the enemy approaches, security posts and patrols take the following actions:

· Notify the platoon commander or company commander immediately of the enemy's strength, actions, direction of advance, and weapons and equipment.

· On order, withdraw along a predetermined route to the platoon battle position in sufficient time to prevent being engaged in close combat. After reaching the platoon battle position, report all information regarding the enemy to the commander who originally ordered the patrol or security element.

5210. Security Forces

a. The squad may serve as part of a security force. Security forces are assigned one of three types of missions--screen, guard, or cover.

(1) A screen is a security element whose primary task is to observe and report information, avoiding decisive engagement with the enemy. A screen accomplishes the following tasks:

· Provides early warning of enemy approach.

· Gains and maintains enemy contact and reports enemy activity.

· Within capabilities, destroys or repels enemy reconnaissance units.

· Impedes and harasses the enemy with indirect fires.

· Guides reaction forces.

(2) A guard protects the main force from attack, direct fire, and ground observation by fighting to gain time, while also observing and reporting information. A guard accomplishes the following tasks:

· Provides early warning and maneuver space to the front, flanks, and rear of the main force.

· Attacks, defends, or delays, within its capabilities, to protect the main force.

(3) A covering force is a force that operates apart from the main force for the purpose of intercepting, engaging, delaying, and deceiving the enemy before he can attack the main force. A covering force accomplishes the following tasks:

· Gains contact with the enemy.

· Protects the main force from engagement.
Denies the enemy information about the size, strength, composition, and objective of the main force.

Destroys enemy reconnaissance and security forces.

Develops the situation to determine enemy disposition, strengths, and weaknesses.

b. The location and composition of the security force is determined by the commander of the main force. He will organize the security force according to the mission he gives it—screen, guard, or cover.

c. Generally, the role of the rifle squad as part of a security force will be the same, regardless of the mission assigned to the security force. The squad will report enemy sightings, take the enemy under fire, and withdraw only on orders from the platoon commander or the commander of the security force.

d. Withdrawal routes will have been previously determined and reconnoitered. Upon withdrawal and passage through the forward friendly unit, the squad will return to its parent platoon (if the squad had been operating independent of the platoon), which is normally part of a reserve unit.