

APPENDIX D. AMBUSH FORMATIONS

Formations discussed here are identified by names which correspond to the general pattern formed on the ground by deployment of the assault element.

Line Formation

The assault element is deployed generally parallel to the route of movement of the enemy. This positions the assault element parallel to the long axis of the killing zone and subjects the target to heavy flanking fire. The size of the force which can be trapped in the killing zone is limited by the area the assault element can effectively cover. The enemy is trapped in the killing zone by natural obstacles, mines, demolitions, and direct fires. (See fig. D-1.)

A disadvantage of the line formation is the chance that lateral dispersion of the target may be too great for

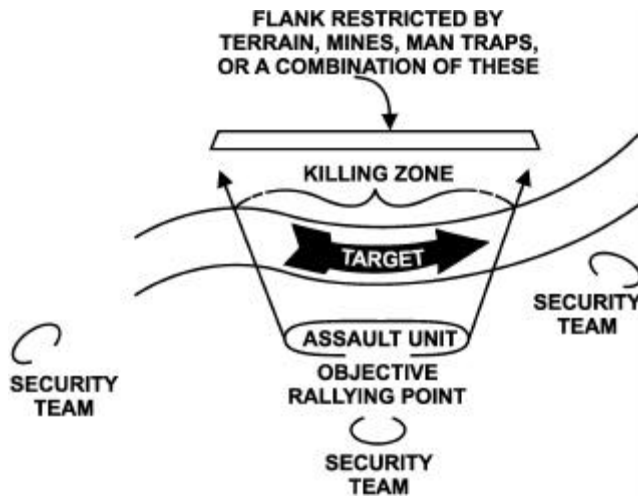


Figure D-1. Line Formation (Harassing or Destruction Ambush).

effective coverage. The line formation is appropriate in close terrain that restricts enemy maneuver, and in open terrain where one flank is protected by natural obstacles or can be protected by mines and demolitions. Similar obstacles can be placed between the attack force and the killing zone to provide protection from possible enemy counter attack. When an ambush is deployed in this manner, access lanes are left so that the enemy can be assaulted. (See fig. D-2.)

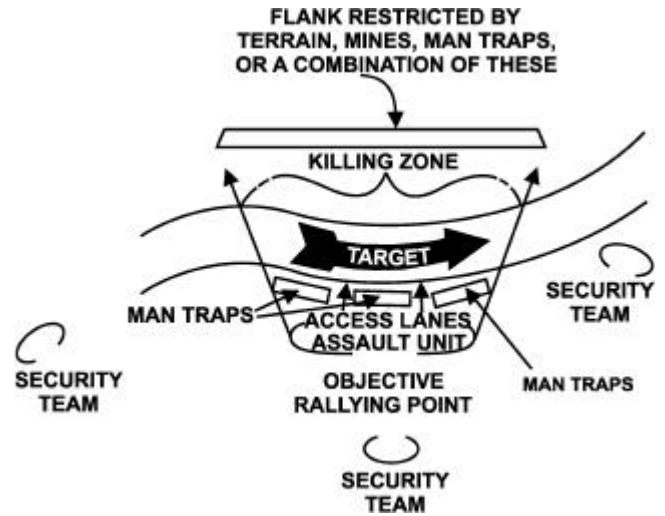


Figure D-2. Line Formation (Access Lanes for Assault of Target).

The main advantage of the line formation is its relative ease of control under all conditions of visibility.

L Formation

The "L" shaped formation is a variation of the line formation. This formation is very flexible because it can be established on a straight stretch of a trail or road (see fig. D-3) or at a sharp bend in a trail or a road (See fig. D-4 on page D-2). The long side of the assault element is parallel to the killing zone and delivers flanking fire. The short side of the attack force is at the

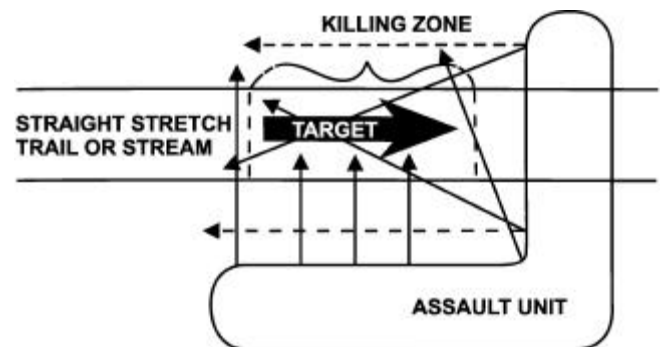


Figure D-3. "L" Formation (Destruction Ambush).

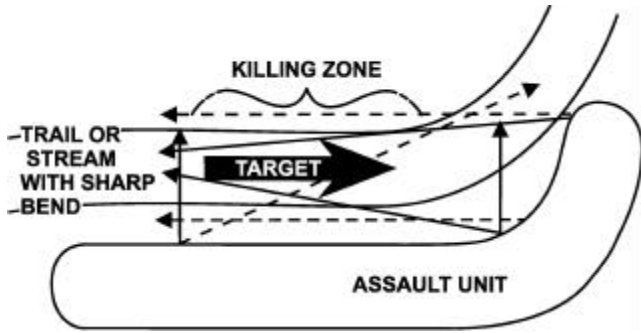


Figure D-4. "L" Formation (Bend of Trail or Stream).

end of, and at right angles to, the killing zone and delivers enfilading fire that interlocks with fire from the long side. When appropriate, fire from the short side can be shifted to parallel the long side if the enemy attempts to assault or escape in the opposite direction. In addition, the short side prevents escape and reinforcement. (See fig. D-5.)

"Z" Formation

The "Z" shaped formation is another variation of the line formation.

The assault element is deployed as in the "L" formation, but with an additional side so that the formation resembles a "Z". (See fig. D-6).

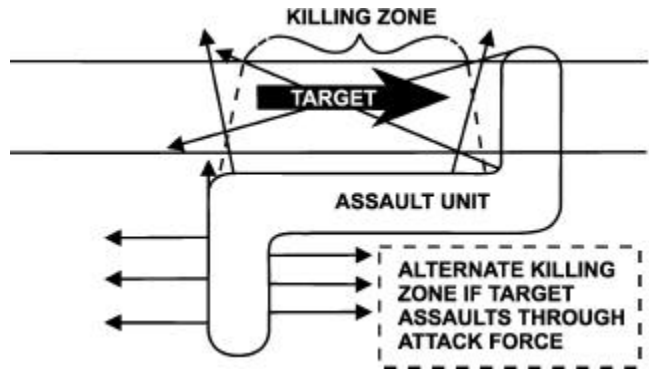


Figure D-6. "Z" Formation.

The additional wing may serve any of the following purposes:

- | To engage an enemy force attempting to relieve or reinforce the enemy unit engaged in the kill zone.
- | To seal the end of the killing zone.
- | To restrict a flank.
- | To prevent an envelopment.

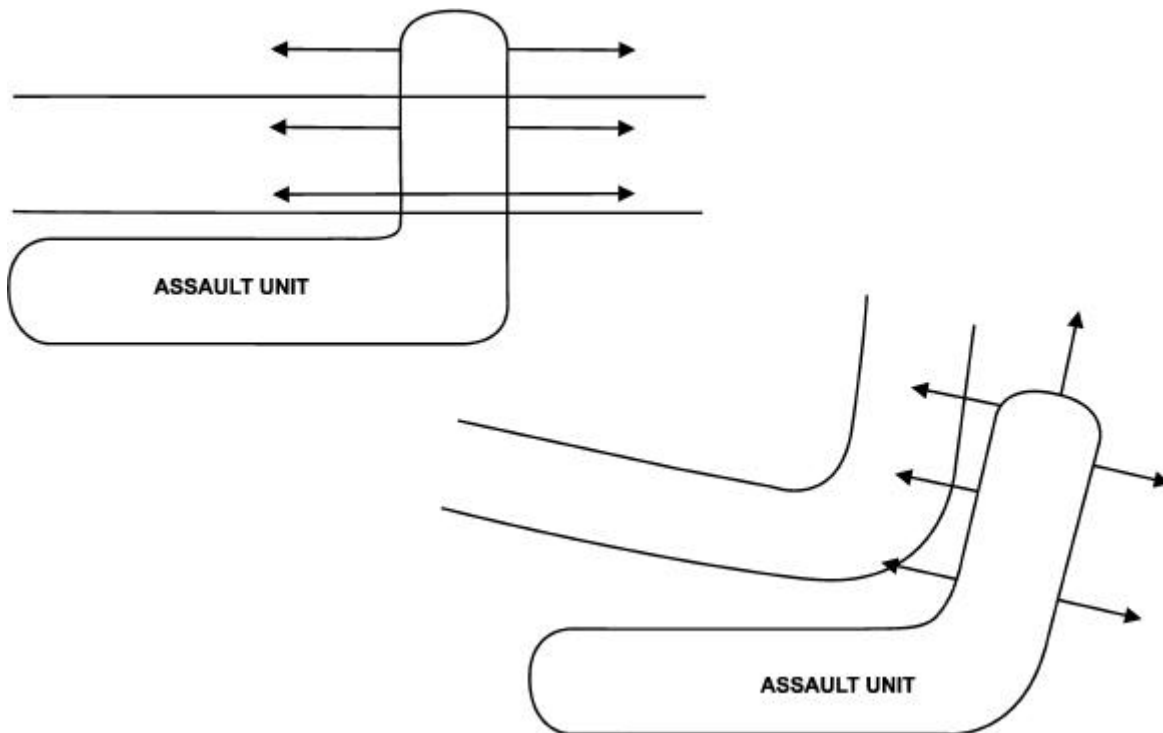


Figure D-5. "L" Formation.

“T” Formation

In the “T” shaped formation, the assault element is deployed across (perpendicular to) the enemy’s route of movement so that its position forms the crossing of a “T” at the top. (See fig. D-7.)

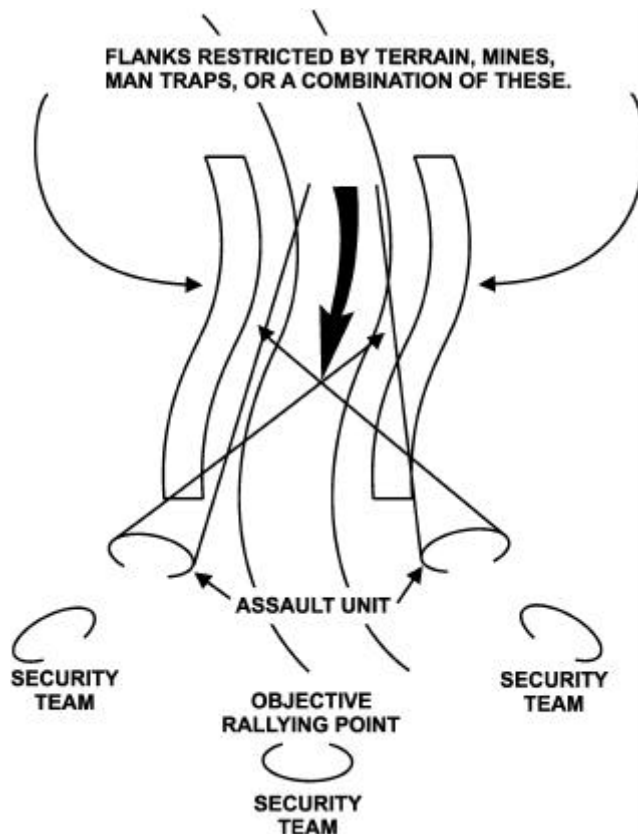


Figure D-7. “T” Formation.

This formation can be used day or night to establish an ambush to interdict movement through open areas that are hard to seal off.

A small force can use the “T” formation to harass, slow, and disorganize a larger force. When the lead elements of the enemy are engaged, they will normally attempt to maneuver right or left to close with the ambush. Mines and other obstacles placed to the flanks of the killing zones slow the enemy’s movements and permit the ambush force to deliver heavy fire and withdraw without becoming decisively engaged.

The “T” formation can be used to interdict small groups attempting night movement across open areas. For example, the assault element is deployed along an avenue of approach with every second man facing the

opposite direction. The attack of the enemy approaching from either direction requires only that every second man may shift to the opposite side of the formation. Each man fires only to his front and only when the enemy is at a very close range. Attack is by fire only and each man keeps the enemy under fire as long as it remains to his front.

If the enemy attempts to escape in either direction along the killing zone, each Marine takes the enemy under fire as the enemy comes into the Marine’s sector of fire. The “T” formation is very effective at halting infiltration. But it has one chief disadvantage; there is a possibility that the ambush will engage a superior force at night while spread out. (See fig. D-8.)

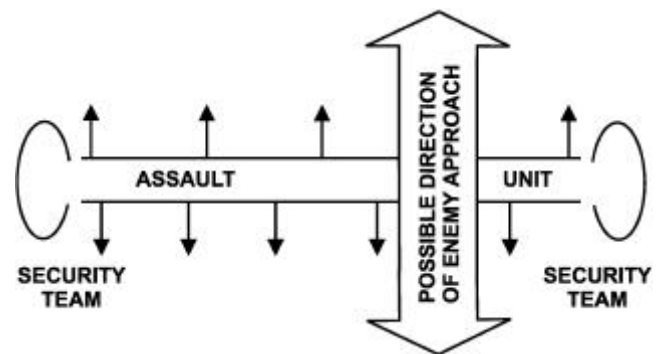


Figure D-8. “T” Formation (Target Approaching from Either Direction).

The “V” Formation

The “V” shaped formation is deployed along both sides of the enemy’s route of movement so that it forms a “V”; care is taken to ensure that neither group (within the “V”) fires into the other.

This formation subjects the enemy to both enfilading and interlocking fire. The “V” formation is best suited for fairly open terrain but can also be used in close terrain. When established in close terrain, the legs of the “V” close in as the lead element of the enemy force approaches the apex of the “V”, and opens fire at a close range.

Here, even more than in open terrain, all movement and fire must be carefully coordinated and controlled to ensure that the fire of one wing does not endanger the other wing. The wider separation of forces makes this formation difficult to control, and there are few sites that favor its use. Its main advantage is that it is

difficult for the enemy to detect the ambush until it is well into the killing zone. (See figs. D-9 and D-10.)

Triangle Formation

The triangle is a variation of the “V” formation and can be varied in three ways:

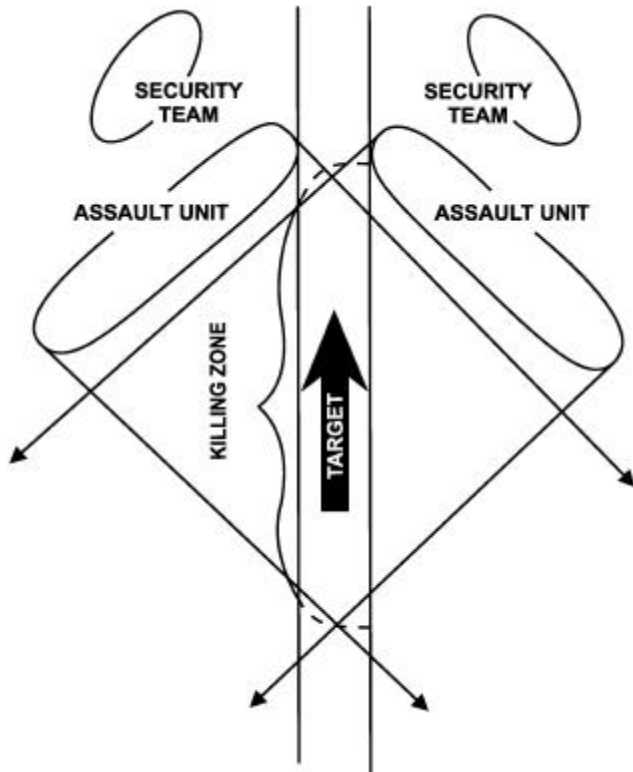


Figure D-9. “V” Formation (Open Terrain).

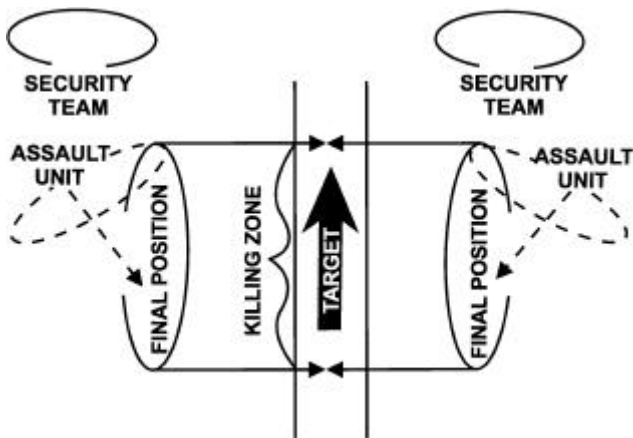


Figure D-10. “V” Formation (Close Terrain).

Closed Triangle Formation

(See fig. D-11.) The assault element is deployed in three teams, positioned so that they form a triangle (or closed “V”). An automatic weapon is placed at each point of the triangle and positioned so that it can be shifted quickly to interlock with either of the others. Men are positioned so that their sectors of fire overlap. Mortars may be positioned inside the triangle.

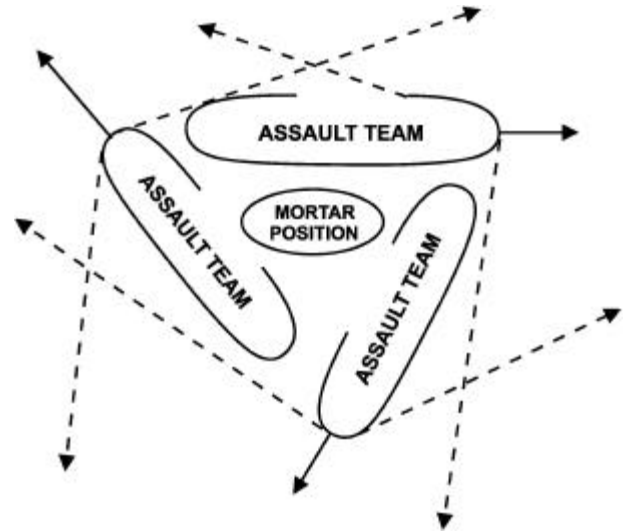


Figure D-11. Closed Triangle Formation (Night Ambush).

When deployed in this manner, the triangle ambush is used to interdict night movement through open areas. When enemy approach is likely to be from any direction, this formation provides all-around security, and security forces are deployed only when they can be positioned so that if detected by an approaching enemy, they will not compromise the ambush. Attack is by fire only, and the enemy is allowed to approach within close range before fire is initiated.

The advantages of the closed triangle formation are ease of control, all-around security, and the enemy can be brought under the fire of at least two automatic weapons, regardless of the direction they approach.

Disadvantages are that it requires a force of platoon size or larger to reduce the danger of being overrun by an unexpectedly large force and that one or more sides of the triangle may come under enfilade fire. The lack of dispersion, particularly at the points, increases the danger from enemy mortar fire.

Open Triangle Harassing Formation

This variation of the triangle ambush enables a small force to harass, slow, and inflict heavy casualties upon a large force without itself being decisively engaged. The assault element is deployed in three teams, positioned so that each team becomes a corner of a triangle containing the killing zone. (See fig. D-12.)

When the enemy enters the killing zone, the team to the enemy's front opens fire on the leading element. When the enemy counterattacks, the group withdraws and the team on the enemy's flank opens fire. When this team is attacked, the team to the opposite flank opens fire. This process is repeated until the enemy is

pulled apart. Each team reoccupies its position, if possible, and continues to inflict the maximum damage possible without becoming decisively engaged.

Open Triangle Destruction Formation

The assault element is again deployed in three teams, positioned so that each team is a point of the triangle, 200 to 300 meters apart. The killing zone is the area within the triangle. The enemy is allowed to enter the killing zone; the nearest team attacks by fire. As the enemy attempts to maneuver or withdraw, the other teams open fire. One or more teams, as directed, assault or maneuver to envelop or destroy the enemy. (See fig. D-13 on page D-6.)

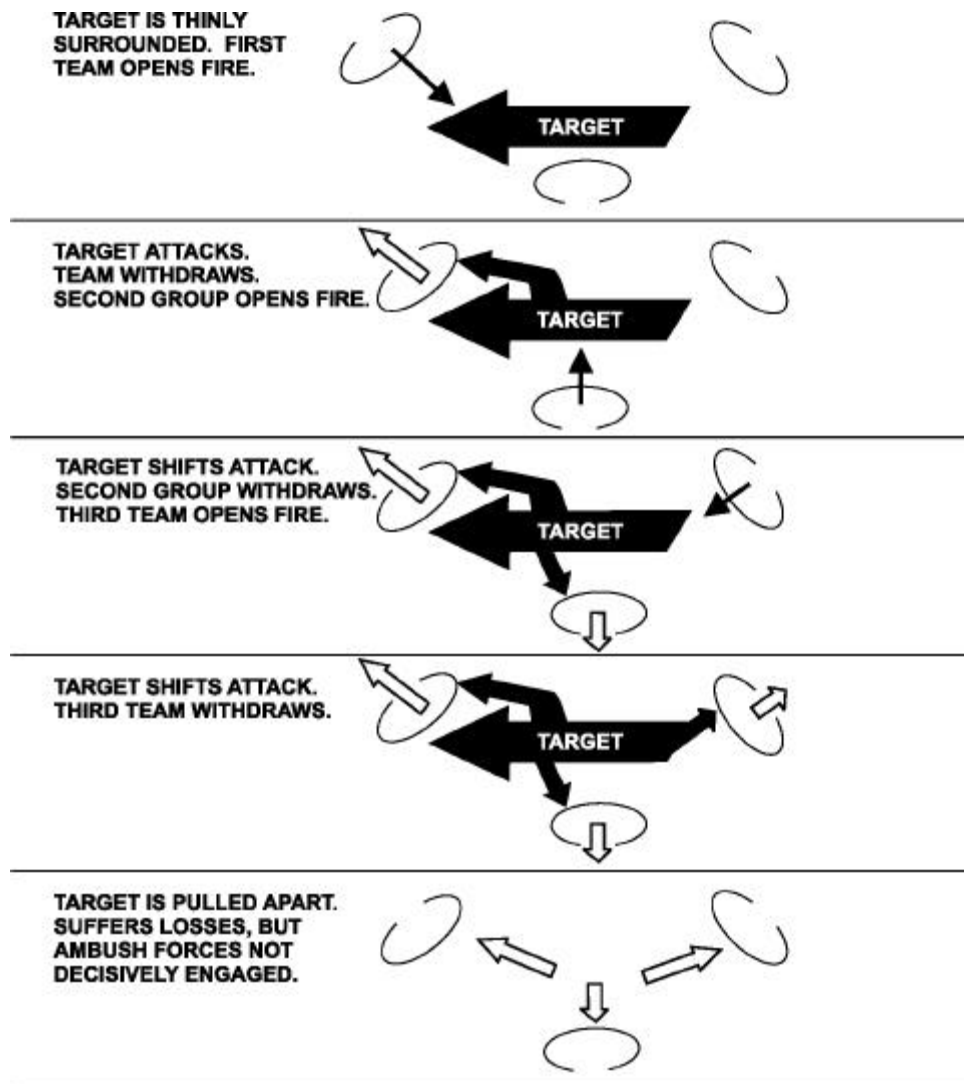


Figure D-12. Open Triangle Formation.

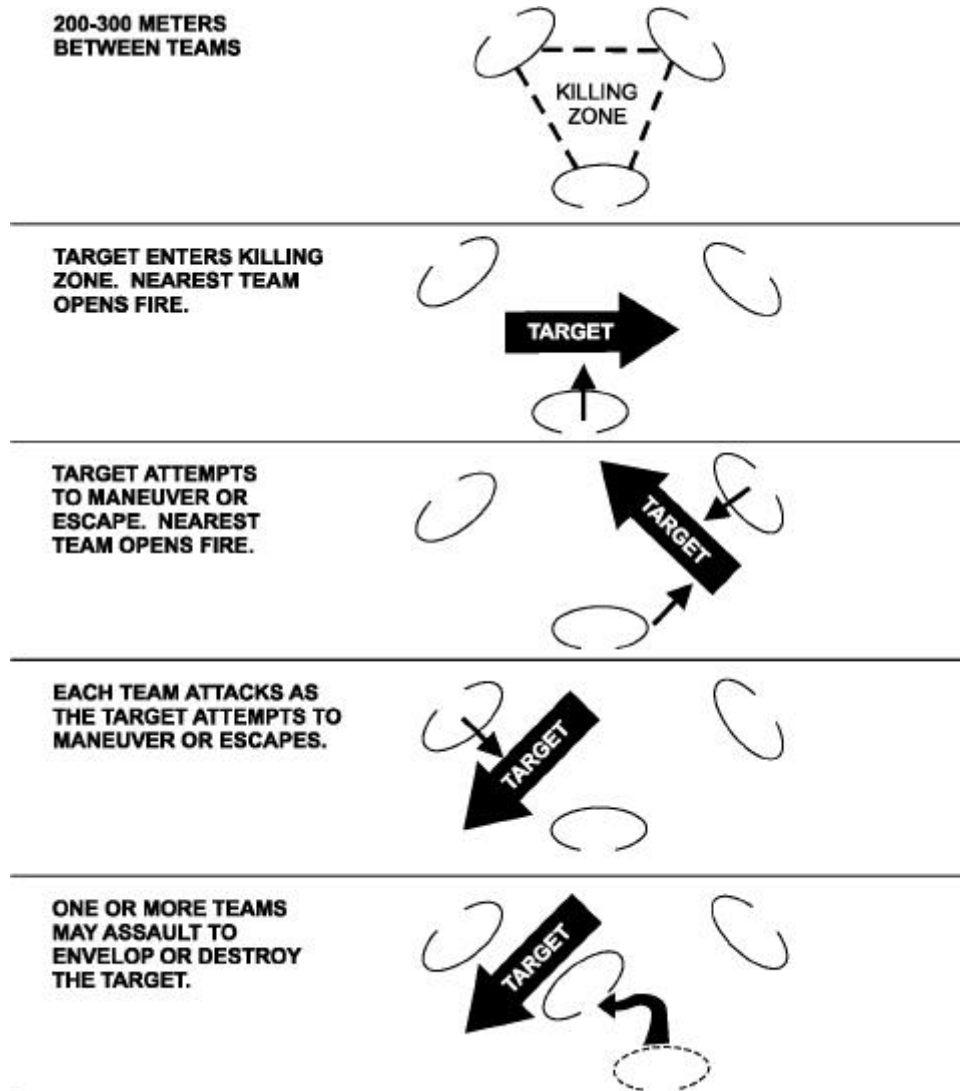


Figure D-13. Open Triangle Formation (Destruction Ambush).

This formation is suitable for platoon-size or larger ambush forces. A smaller force would be in too great a danger of being overrun. Another disadvantage is that control, in assaulting or maneuvering, is very difficult. Very close coordination and control are necessary to ensure that assaulting or maneuvering teams are not fired on by another team. The ambush site must be a fairly level open area that provides concealment around its border for the ambush force.

The Box Formation

The "box" formation is similar in purpose to the open triangle ambush. The assault element is deployed in four teams, positioned so that each team becomes a corner of a square or rectangle containing the killing zone. It can be used for a harassing or destruction ambush in the same manner as the variations of the open triangle formation. (See figs D-14 on page D-7 and D-15 on page D-8.)

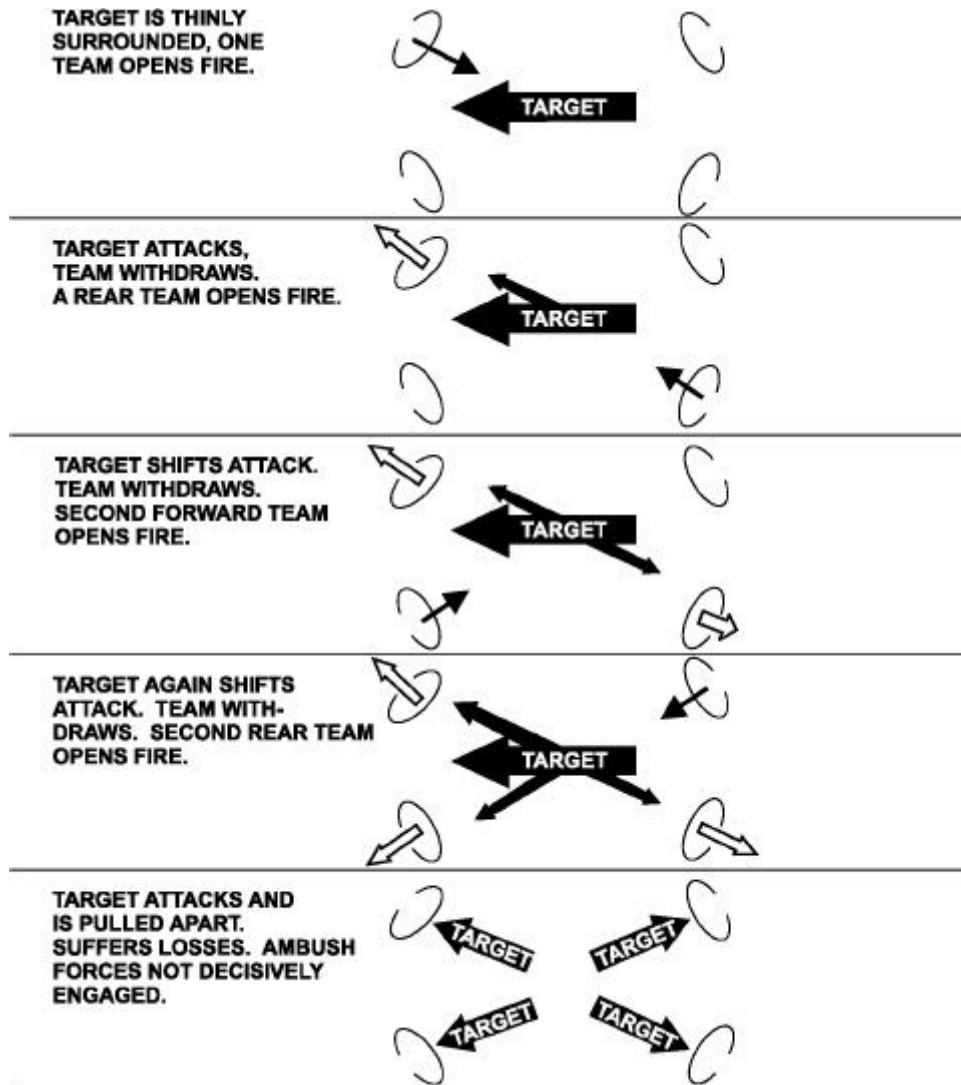


Figure D-14. Box Formation (Harrassing Ambush).

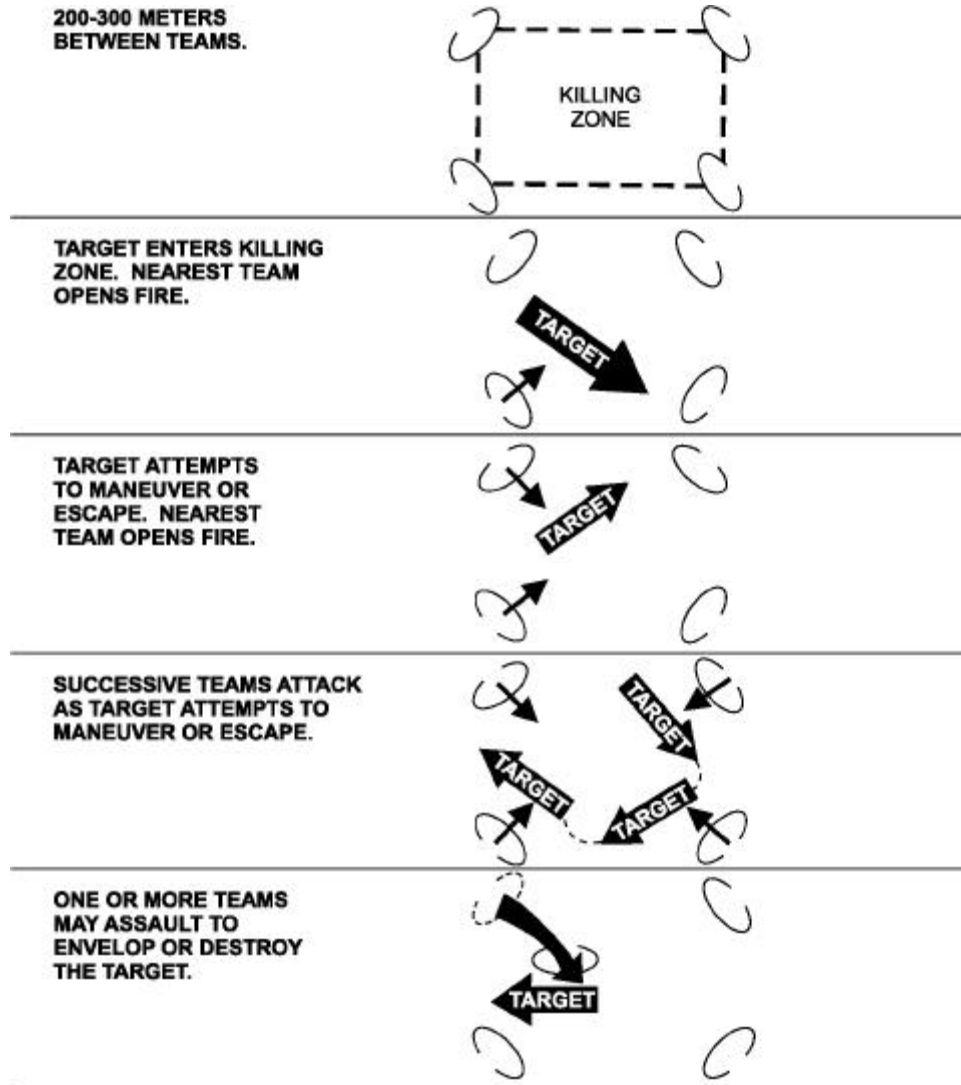


Figure D-15. Box Formation (Destruction Ambush).