UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE BASIC SCHOOL
MARINE CORPS TRAINING COMMAND
CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

RIFLE PLATOON IN THE DEFENSE W3F0011XQ STUDENT HANDOUT

Rifle Platoon in the Defense

Introduction

The Marine Corps' fighting doctrine is based on rapid, flexible, and opportunistic maneuver. As stated in MCDP 1, Warfighting, "Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope." Capitalizing on violence and shock effect, we must aggressively hunt to identify enemy gaps, continually seeking an opportunity for decisive action. When it arrives, "…we must exploit it fully, committing every ounce of combat power we can muster and pushing ourselves to the limits of exhaustion." (MCDP 1, pg.75)

Maneuver is not mutually exclusive to offensive operations. In fact, the offense and the defense cannot exist separately. The offense cannot exist indefinitely. At some point, a unit will reach their culminating point, or be ordered into the defense to facilitate decisive action elsewhere. Conversely, an effective defense must have offensive characteristics, striking when the enemy is most vulnerable. An effective unit is able to leverage the advantages of the defense, which is the more efficient form of combat, and the offense, which is the more decisive form of combat.

Importance

This student handout pertains equally to all Marine leaders, whether their duties entail combat service support (CSS), combat support, or combat arms. It applies tactics at the basic platoon level in the defense, which are used as building blocks for a larger unit. All Marines face tactical decisions in battle regardless of their roles. Tactical leaders must develop and hone their warfighting skills through study and practice.

In This Lesson

This lesson will give you a framework of how to make sound tactical decisions and begin to understand the tactical decision-making process in the defense at the platoon level.

This lesson covers the following topics:

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Learning Objectives

Terminal Learning Objectives

TBS-DEF-2101 Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, and an order from higher, conduct defensive operations to accomplish the mission.

TBS-DEF-1008 Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, a mission, and an order, lead a unit in defensive operations to accomplish the mission and meet the commander’s intent.

Enabling Learning Objectives

TBS-DEF-1008a Given an order from higher and a mental estimate of the situation, develop a defensive priority of work to accomplish the mission.

TBS-DEF-1008b Given a mission, a commander's intent, and a defensive position, select command post location to facilitate command and control.

TBS-DEF-1008c Given a mission, a commander's intent, and a defensive position, plan for counter attack to accomplish the mission.

TBS-DEF-1008d Given an order from higher, a mental estimate of the situation, and a defensive scheme of maneuver, develop a security plan to support the ground scheme of maneuver.

TBS-DEF-1008e Given a unit, a mission, a mental estimate of the situation, supporting engineer assets, and a commander's intent, plan for employment of engineer assets in support of defensive operations to accomplish the mission.

TBS-DEF-1008f Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, develop a platoon engagement area to accomplish the mission and meet the commander's intent.

TBS-DEF-1008g Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, a scheme of maneuver, supervise the establishment of defensive positions to support the defensive scheme of maneuver.

TBS-DEF-1008h Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, supervise the emplacement of sector bags to define individual unit sectors of fire.

TBS-DEF-2101a Given a unit, an assigned area or sector from which to defend, and an order from higher, develop a defensive operations order to accomplish the mission.

TBS-DEF-2101b Given a unit, a simulated combat environment, and a fighting load, reconnoiter a position defense to confirm or deny assumptions about the enemy and terrain.

TBS-DEF-2101c Given a defensive operations order, a unit, and a simulated combat environment, develop a direct fire plan for the defense that supports the mission.

Learning Objectives

TBS-DEF-2101d Given a defensive operations order, a unit, and a simulated combat environment, develop an indirect fire plan for the defense that supports the mission.

TBS-DEF-2101e Given a defensive operations order, a unit, and a simulated combat environment, employ a communications system for the defense to facilitate command and control.

TBS-DEF-2101f Given a defensive operations order, a unit, and a simulated combat environment, employ a least engaged unit to protect a flank or repel an enemy assault.

TBS-DEF-2101G Given a defensive operations order, a unit, and a simulated combat environment, establish a defensive security plan to enable adequate force protection and accomplish the mission.

Characteristics of the Defense

Purpose: According to MCDP 1, a defense is "A coordinated effort to defeat an attack by an opposing force and prevent it from achieving its objectives." Additionally, defensive operations can force the enemy to reach his culminating point without meeting his objectives, allowing friendly forces to gain and maintain the initiative. At the rifle platoon level, the "coordination of effort" is the responsibility of the platoon commander. Defensive operations may also be conducted to:

- Gain time.
- Retain key terrain or deny a vital area to the enemy.
- Counter surprise action by the enemy.
- Economize force, allowing combat power to be concentrated elsewhere.
- Increase the enemy's vulnerability by forcing him to concentrate forces.
- Attrite or fix the enemy as a prelude to offensive operations.
- Prepare to resume the offensive.

Fundamentals of the Defense

The platoon commander must consider the fundamentals of the defense when planning, preparing, and conducting defensive operations. The ten fundamentals described below should not be used as a checklist nor should they be thought of as hard and fast rules to be adhered to without exception. Rather, these concepts should help guide the commander's thinking and tactical planning process prior to engagement with the enemy with the platoon commander understanding that he may need to sacrifice one fundamental in order to maximize or enhance the utility of another.

Knowledge of the Enemy: A defender's options are dictated in large part by what the attacker does. Therefore, thorough knowledge of the enemy's capabilities, operational concepts, and habits is essential to a successful defense. A thorough tactical planning process, specifically enemy analysis, will provided valuable information on enemy assembly areas, assault positions, routes, firing positions for supporting arms units, axes of advance, and the area most advantageous for the enemy's main effort. When the defender can accurately anticipate the enemy's actions, he can trap the attacker within the defense and establish conditions for resumption of offensive operations.

Maneuver: Maneuver is as important in the defense as it is in the offense. While steadfastness and the tenacious holding of key terrain are essential in the defense, the defender must not become immobile. The defender must maintain freedom of maneuver. Maneuver is essential in generating the offensive power fundamental to a successful defense. Maneuver is essential throughout the defensive battlespace, both forward of and within the engagement area. The platoon commander must ensure that elements of the platoon are able to maneuver in depth, taking advantage of terrain and tactical developments to concentrate, disperse, and occupy positions from which they can bring more effective fire to bear on the enemy.

Local Security: All units provide their own local security measures to reduce exposure to the enemy, to include observation, electronic exposure, and fires. Communications procedures, camouflage, movement control, and other individual continuing actions are strictly enforced.

Characteristics of the Defense – Fundamentals (Continued)

Preparation: The defender usually organizes the defense on terrain of his choosing. While the attacker can choose the specific time and point of attack, the defender, through the proper selection of terrain and reinforcing obstacles, can direct the energy of the enemy's attack into terrain which is advantageous to the defender. The defender must take advantage of this by making the most thorough preparations that time allows. Preparations should begin as early as possible and be continuous. The platoon commander must be aware that these preparations may be made under constant observation by the enemy. The platoon commander should develop a security plan which utilizes patrols and LP/OPs to deceive the enemy as to the exact location of the main defenses.

a. Hasty Defense: A hasty defense is a defense normally organized while in contact with the enemy or when contact is imminent and time available for organization is limited. Reconnaissance of the defensive area must be curtailed and the defense assumed directly from the current positions of units. Depending on the situation, it may be necessary for the platoon commander to initiate a hasty attack to seize terrain suitable to his defense. Or, the platoon commander may employ patrols to delay the enemy while deploying the bulk of his force to more suitable defensive terrain. A hasty defense is improved continuously as the situation permits and may eventually become a deliberate defense.

b. Deliberate Defense: A deliberate defense is a defense normally organized when out of contact with the enemy or when contact with the enemy is not imminent and time for organization is available. A deliberate defense normally includes fortifications, strongpoints, extensive use of obstacles, and fully integrated fires. The platoon commander normally is free to make a detailed reconnaissance of the area to be defended, select the terrain on which to defend, and decide the best tactical deployment of forces. The instruction at The Basic School will focus more heavily on the deliberate defense.

Regardless of whether the defense is hasty or deliberate, it is incumbent upon the defender to utilize all the assets at his disposal to make all necessary preparations to allow for a successful defense. This means that the defender needs to understand that the defense is a logistically heavy operation which may require him to bring tools, obstacles, etc into the fight. Further, this means that the defender has to take the time he is given to ensure that all of his assets are working together towards a coordinated, integrated and synchronized defense.

Use of Terrain: The defender must exploit every aspect of terrain and weather to his advantage. In the defense, as in the attack, terrain is valuable only if a force gains advantage from its possession or control. In developing the engagement area, the platoon commander takes account of key terrain and visualizes all possible enemy avenues of approach. The platoon commander seeks to defend on terrain that maximizes effective fire, cover, concealment, movement, and surprise.
Obstacle integration multiplies the effects and capabilities of firepower. The combination of firepower and obstacles causes the enemy to conform to the platoon commander's scheme of maneuver. Obstacles also magnify the effects of firepower by increasing target acquisition time and creating exploitable vulnerabilities. When not properly integrated into the defensive scheme of maneuver, obstacles become either useless or a hindrance to the defender himself as they inhibit friendly maneuver while having a negligible effect on enemy maneuver.

Characteristics of the Defense – Fundamentals (Continued)

Surprise: The defense, no less than the offense, must achieve surprise. To preserve combat power, especially against a superior enemy, the defender must employ every means to mislead the enemy as to the true location of his positions and as to the strength and disposition of forces. The platoon commander must consider the use of patrols, early warning, and reverse slopes, maximizing available cover, concealment, camouflage, and dummy positions. The best defensive terrain will likely also be apparent to an attacking enemy, who will maneuver against it with caution and will mass fires on it. When possible, the platoon commander should select terrain that has good defensive qualities but is not conspicuous.

Mass and Concentration: The defender cannot defend everywhere in strength. The platoon commander must concentrate forces and fires at the decisive place if he is to succeed, while exercising economy of force in less critical areas. Some portions may rely more heavily on fires and obstacles rather than manpower. Also, a thorough patrolling effort can be employed along less likely avenues of approach to help reduce risks. The most important consideration to bear in mind when discussing this fundamental is the vital link between mass and concentration and combat power. Massing fires into non-decisive areas or engagements is wasteful. The successful defender must determine where and when he believes the critical battle will take place and he must ensure that he is superior to the enemy at that time and place.

The platoon commander designates the main effort based on the anticipation of the enemy's main effort. The defensive scheme of maneuver takes advantage of terrain essential to the integrity of the defense. Since the platoon commander cannot determine the exact enemy course of action, he must be prepared to shift the main effort. The platoon commander masses fires and concentrates combat power repeatedly to wrest the initiative from the attacking enemy. The platoon commander must be able to do this swiftly, since periods that allow him to deploy superior combat power will be brief. He may have to surrender some ground to gain the time necessary to concentrate forces.

Flexibility: While the platoon commander utilizes tactical cunning and a thorough tactical planning process to determine the enemy's course of action in advance, the plan must be flexible enough to deal with different enemy courses of action. The platoon commander must received detailed, accurate, and effective reporting from patrols and LP/OPs in order to determine when to adjust the plan based on enemy actions. Flexibility is created by:

- Detailed planning for contingencies (The platoon commander must be able to visualize the engagement before it occurs).
- Designating supplementary and alternate positions.
- Properly planning for the use of the least engaged unit.
- Designing counterattack plans.
- Preparing to assume the offense.
- Planning on-call fire support.
- Rehearsing employment of the least engaged unit, as well as movement between primary, alternate, and supplementary positions.

Characteristics of the Defense – Fundamentals (Continued)

Mutual Support: Mutual support strengthens any position. It is that support which units render each other. In the defense we seek to achieve mutual support by ensuring that no attacker can assault any of our positions without coming under the fires of another position, by ensuring that, if we were to lose one position, we do not lose the ability to affect that sector of fire and finally, we seek to ensure that we are able to cover the withdrawal or counterattack to/ from our primary positions. The degree to which we achieve mutual support depends on the terrain, range of weapons, and visibility. Ideally, the frontage a force must defend is directly related to its ability to provide mutual support between its units. To neutralize mutually supporting positions, an attacker must disperse fire away from his main objective thus weakening his overall attack. Mutual support is essential at all levels.

Defense in Depth: Defense in depth is the positioning of mutually supporting defensive positions throughout the defensive battlespace to absorb and progressively weaken an enemy attack. It provides maneuver space within the defensive area for the maneuver of subordinate units against the enemy's main effort. It is necessary to:

- Disrupt the momentum of the attack and prevent a breakthrough.
- Force the enemy into the engagement area.
- Allow the platoon commander time to determine the enemy's main effort and counter it.
- Force the enemy to commit his force before a non-decisive point.
- Disperse the effects of enemy fire.

The greater the enemy's combat power and the wider the frontage held, the greater the required depth of the defense. Defense in depth is achieved by:

- Engaging the enemy at the earliest opportunity with patrols and LP/OPs.
- Employing weapons at maximum effective range.
- Using blocking positions, obstacles, and supplementary positions throughout the engagement area.
- Planning for decisive use of the least engaged unit and fire support units at the decisive moment in the engagement.

Types of Defensive Operations

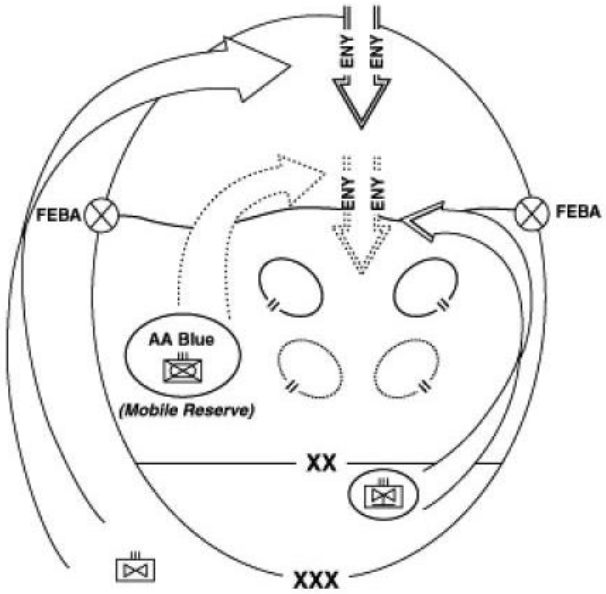
Types of Defensive Operations. Every defense contains two complementary characteristics: a static element and a dynamic element. The three types of defensive operations use varying degrees of both to ultimately achieve the mission's objectives.

a. Mobile Defense: In a mobile defense, the bulk of the force is held as a mobile striking force with strict economy applied to dedicated positional supporting efforts designed to canalize, delay, and disrupt the enemy's attack. In this case, the static positions help control the depth and breadth of enemy penetrations and ensure retention of ground from which to launch counterattacks (MCDP 1-0). The striking force, normally a mobile reserve, is the defensive main effort which ultimately destroys the enemy through Counterattack. This type of defensive operation is normally conducted by a division sized force or larger.

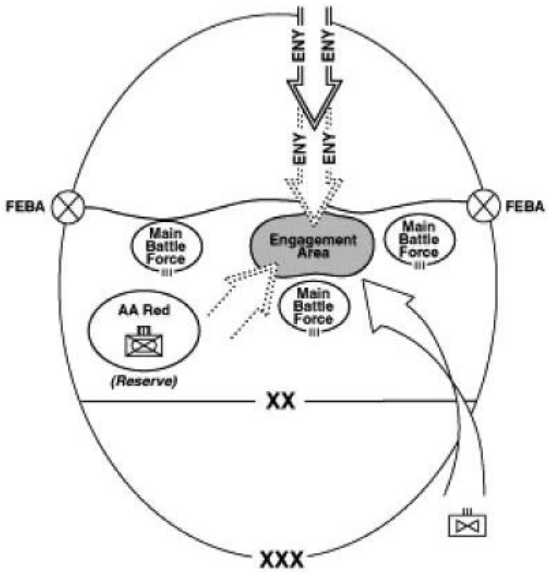
b. Area Defense: An area defense orients on retention of terrain by absorbing the enemy in an interlocking series of positions and destroying him largely by fires. Mutual support and positions in depth force the enemy to expose his force in the attack to each position (MCWP 3-1). In this instance, dynamic elements include patrols, intelligence units, and reserve forces to cover gaps among defensive positions, reinforcing those positions as necessary and counterattacking as directed (MCDP 1-0). These tactics will be covered in more depth throughout the class. While at The Basic School, the lessons will be concerned with position defenses.

c. Retrograde: Involves organized movement away from the enemy. A transitional operation, the retrograde defense occurs within a larger scheme designed to regain the initiative from the enemy. Three specific defensive methods – DELAY, WITHDRAWAL, and RETIREMENT – are associated with the retrograde.

d. Regardless of the type, a key characteristic of a sound defense is the ability of the commander to aggressively seek opportunities to take offensive action and wrest the initiative from the enemy (MCDP 1-0).



MOBILE DEFENSE



AREA DEFENSE

Defensive Methods

Through a thorough estimate of the situation and tactical analysis, the commander will determine the most effective means of establishing a position defense. The following are several defensive methods the commander has at his/her disposal given the mission, enemy situation, and available terrain. Regardless of how the commander ultimately decides to defend, the ten fundamentals of the defense should be used as a guide to defeat the enemy and accomplish the mission. Further explanations and images can be seen in *Infantry Company Operations.* MCWP 3-11.1 Chapter 7.

a. Sector: A defensive sector allows a unit freedom of action to accomplish its mission within assigned boundaries. This form of defense normally orients on the enemy force and not on retaining terrain. The size of the sector depends on the situation, but should generally be no larger than what can be influenced by the unit. Company commanders assign defensive sectors to platoons, giving them flexibility to operate in a decentralized manner.

b. Battle Position: A battle position is a defense position oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach from which a unit may defend or attack. It can be used to deny or delay the enemy the use of certain terrain or an avenue of approach. Because a battle position is oriented on a likely enemy avenue of approach, it will generally be linear in nature so that the defender is able to mass his fires and maximize effects. It is important to note that a battle position may often be part of a larger defense which may or may not also be linear in nature. There are four types of Battle Positions – Primary, Alternate, Supplementary, and Subsequent.
Further it is important to note that a battle position is assigned to the commander by a higher headquarters and signifies that the higher headquarters has already conducted the tactical planning and has given that specific location since it supports the larger scheme of maneuver. The size of a battle position can vary with the size of the unit assigned.

c. Strong Point: A strong point is a fortified defensive position designed to deny the enemy certain terrain as well as the use of an avenue of approach. Unlike BPs, strong points are occupied for an extended period. Established on critical terrain, the strong point must be held for the defense to succeed.

d. Linear: The linear defensive method allows interlocking and overlapping observation and fields of fire across the company's front. It is most normally associated with the area's type of defense. A linear defense orients in a single direction to take advantage of a linear terrain feature, such as a river line or ridge, or when a wide area must be defended.

e. Perimeter: Company commanders may choose a perimeter defensive method when conducting either area or mobile types of defenses. A perimeter defense focuses the energy of the defense in all directions. Patrolling and security operations are usually prerequisites for a successful perimeter defense.

Defensive Methods (Continued)

f. Reverse-Slope: A reverse slope is any slope which descends away from the enemy. A reverse slope defense is organized so that the main defensive positions are masked from enemy observation and direct fire by a topographical crest. A reverse slope aids the defender in bringing massed surprised fires to bear against an attacking enemy and may be particularly useful if the enemy possesses weapons with greater range and/or accuracy than the defender. While the crest is not occupied in strength, control of the crest by fire and employment of obstacles is key to success. When utilizing a reverse slope, the defender will typically utilize the battle position technique, with the preponderance of fires oriented towards the likely enemy avenue of approach (i.e., up the ascending slope).

Sequence of the Defense

A. Planning/Preparation Phase:

a. Estimate of the Situation: As with all operations, platoon defensive operations begin with the tactical planning process. More specifically, a detailed estimate of the situation will facilitate your situational awareness as a platoon commander. The analysis tools and METT-TC for defensive operations are no different from any other planning operations. It is important to understand our desired endstate for the planning and preparation phases of defensive operations: a detailed engagement area, integrating direct fires, indirect fires, and obstacles, to maximize the effects of our fires against the enemy.

The tactical planning process should allow the platoon commander to envision the defensive battle, facilitating the synchronization of all assets during the fight. The platoon commander is able to think through the way in which the battle will occur, as well as the ways in which engagement criteria for all weapon systems will be tied to specific tactical control measures and enemy dispositions. Integrating the effects of fires, coupled with synchronizing the timing of the engagement, allows the platoon commander to dictate the terms of the defensive battle

After completing the initial tactical planning process, the platoon commander should have the following:

- Detailed EMLCOA.
- Thorough CG-CV-Exploitation plan.
- Tentative Scheme of Maneuver.
- Publish Warning Order.
- Plan for Leader's Reconnaissance / Patrol Order.

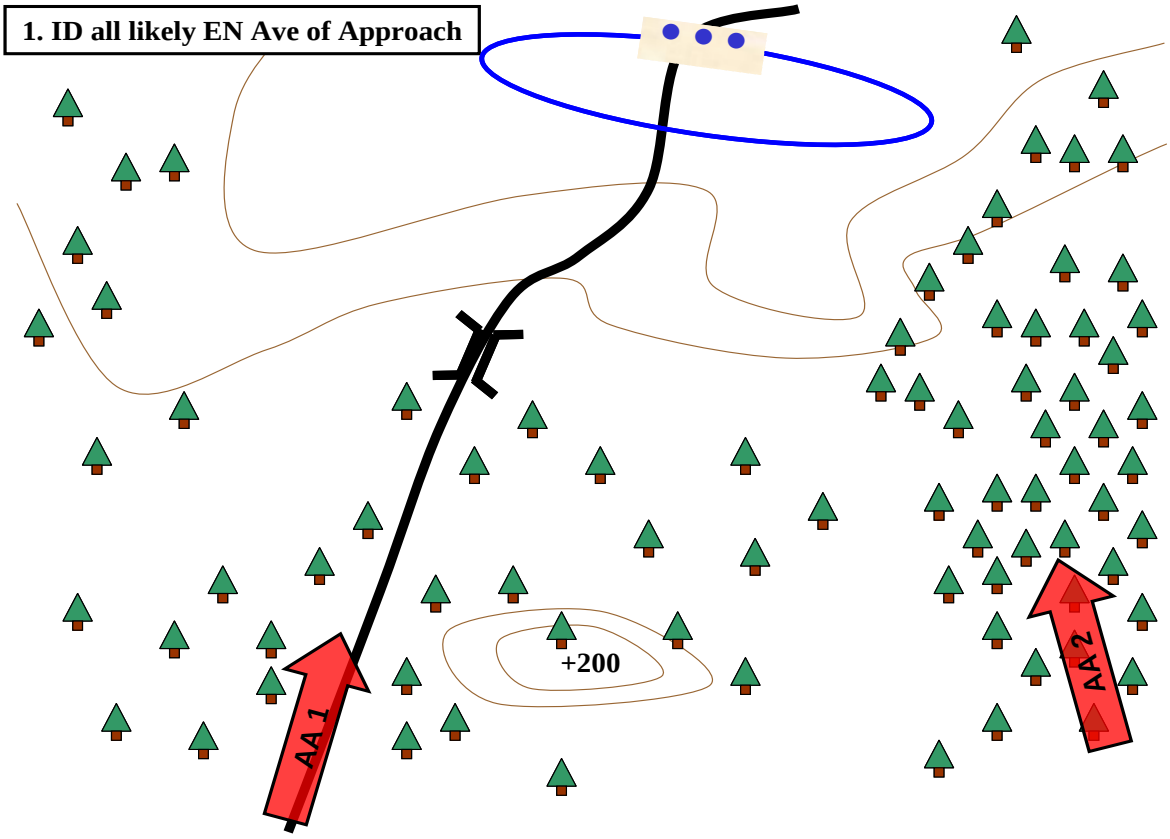
b. Developing an Engagement Area:

The engagement area (EA) is the location where the platoon commander intends to destroy an enemy force using the massed fires of all available weapons and supporting assets. The location of the engagement area is based on a detailed and thorough estimate of the situation and leaders reconnaissance by the platoon commander. The EA facilitates focus, mass and concentration, as well as economy of force in areas outside of it. The success of the engagement with the enemy depends on how effectively the platoon commander can integrate and synchronize the obstacle plan, indirect fire plan, and direct fire plan with one another and the terrain in the engagement area to achieve the platoon's purpose.

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

The following steps can be used for developing an EA:

1. Identify all likely enemy avenues of approach:
   Beginning with the initial estimate of the situation, the platoon commander conducts terrain analysis during the map reconnaissance and physical leader's reconnaissance. The platoon commander must identify key aspects of terrain which can be utilized by the enemy to gain a position of advantage. During this step, the platoon commander identifies the possible enemy avenues of approach without choosing a specific one.

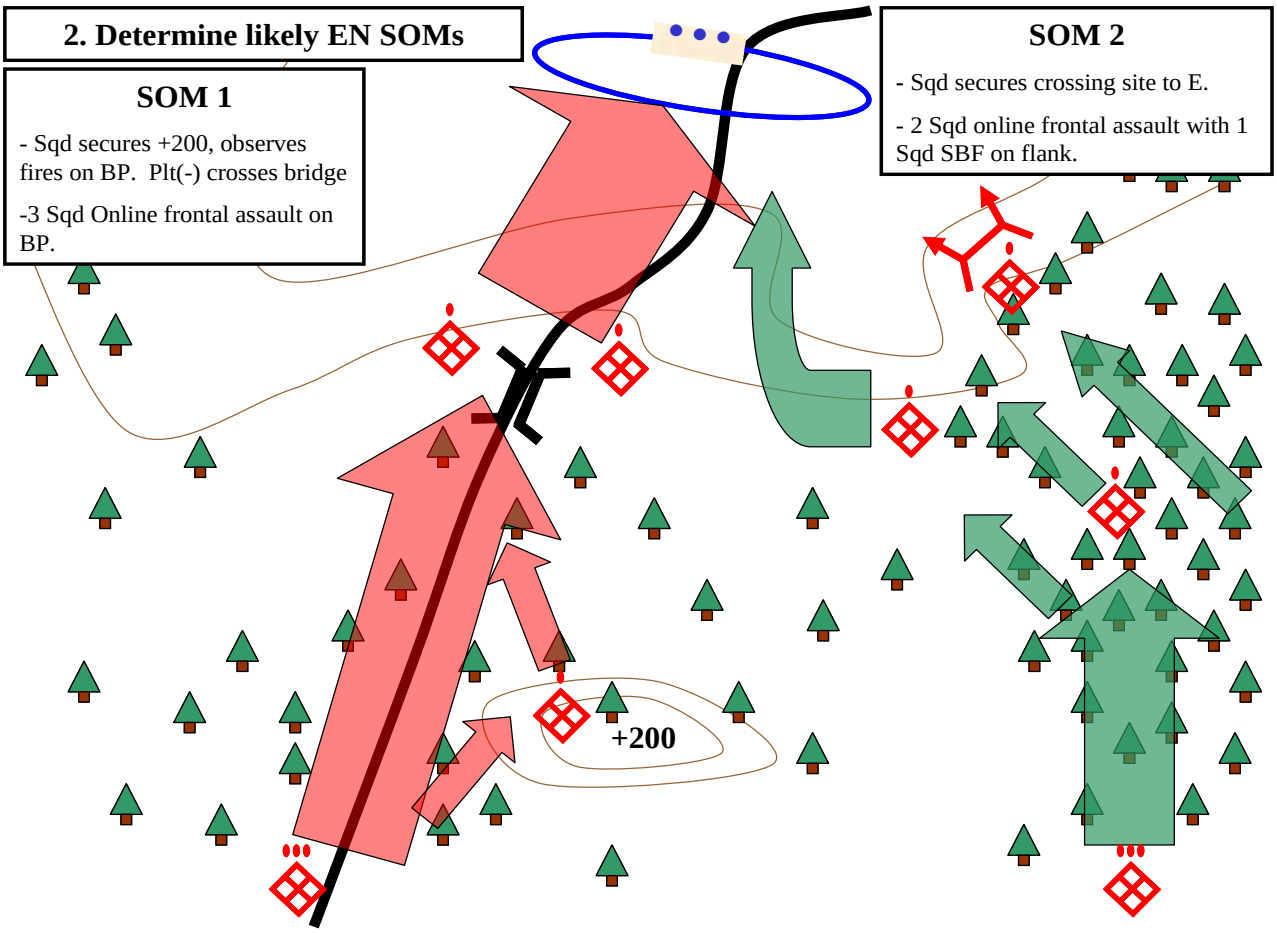


2. Determine likely enemy schemes of maneuver:
   Once the possible enemy routes towards an area are developed, the platoon commander uses them to develop likely enemy schemes of maneuver. The platoon commander identifies the ways in which the enemy can use the terrain along the respective routes to their advantage in order to accomplish their overall goals. The enemy's equipment, order of battle, weapons employment considerations, and capabilities at this time on the battlefield assist the leader during this step.
   This analysis enables the platoon commander to look at the advantages and disadvantages associated with each possible enemy scheme of maneuver.

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

The final element of this step is developing the enemy's most likely course of action (EMLCOA), i.e. what the enemy WILL do.
Looking at the following questions can assist during this portion of developing an EA:

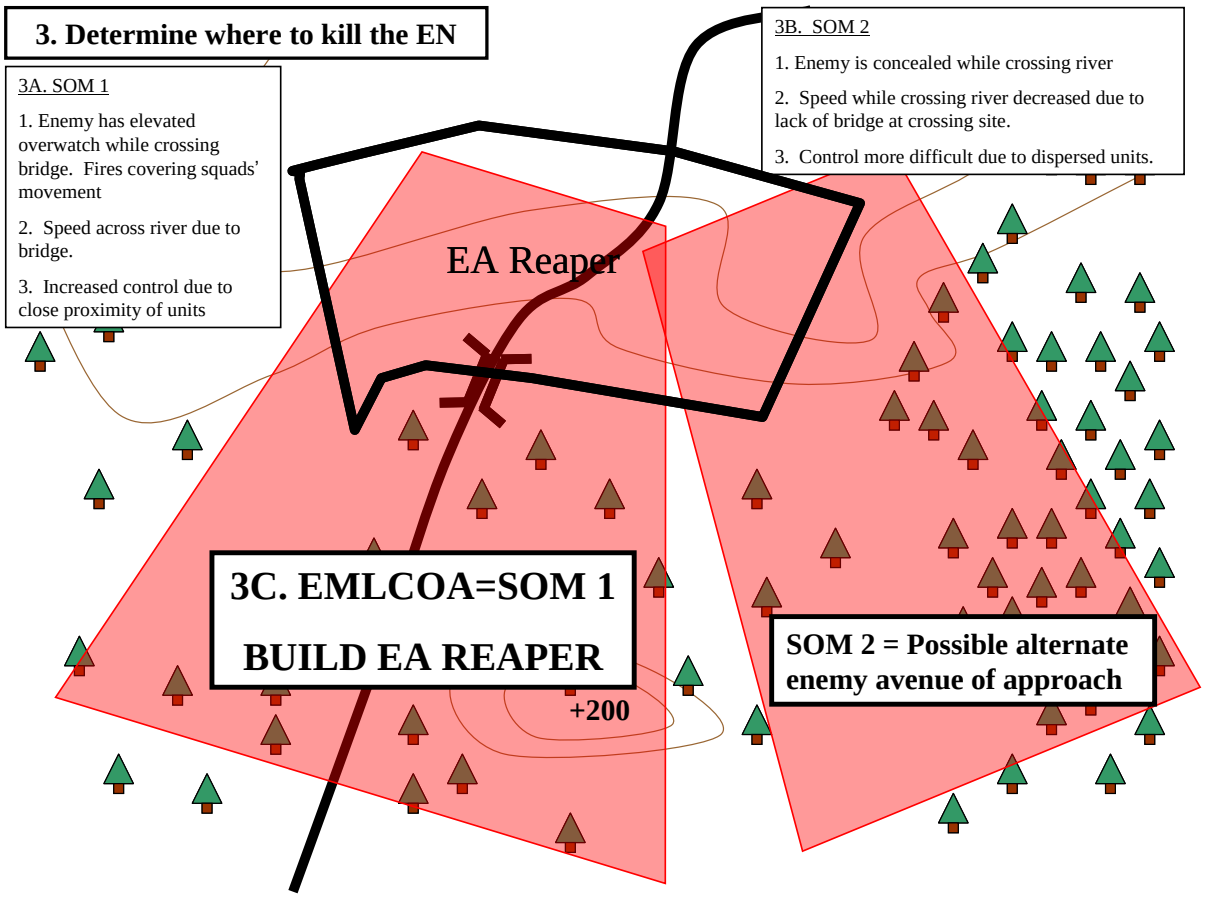
- Determine the enemy's form of maneuver. How does the enemy plan on using terrain to his advantage?
- How will the enemy use his reconnaissance elements?
- How will the enemy attempt to infiltrate?
- How does the enemy plan on using fires to support his maneuver?
- How does the enemy plan on negotiating our obstacle plan?
- What is the enemy's rate of movement?
- How will the enemy react to our scheme of maneuver?



Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

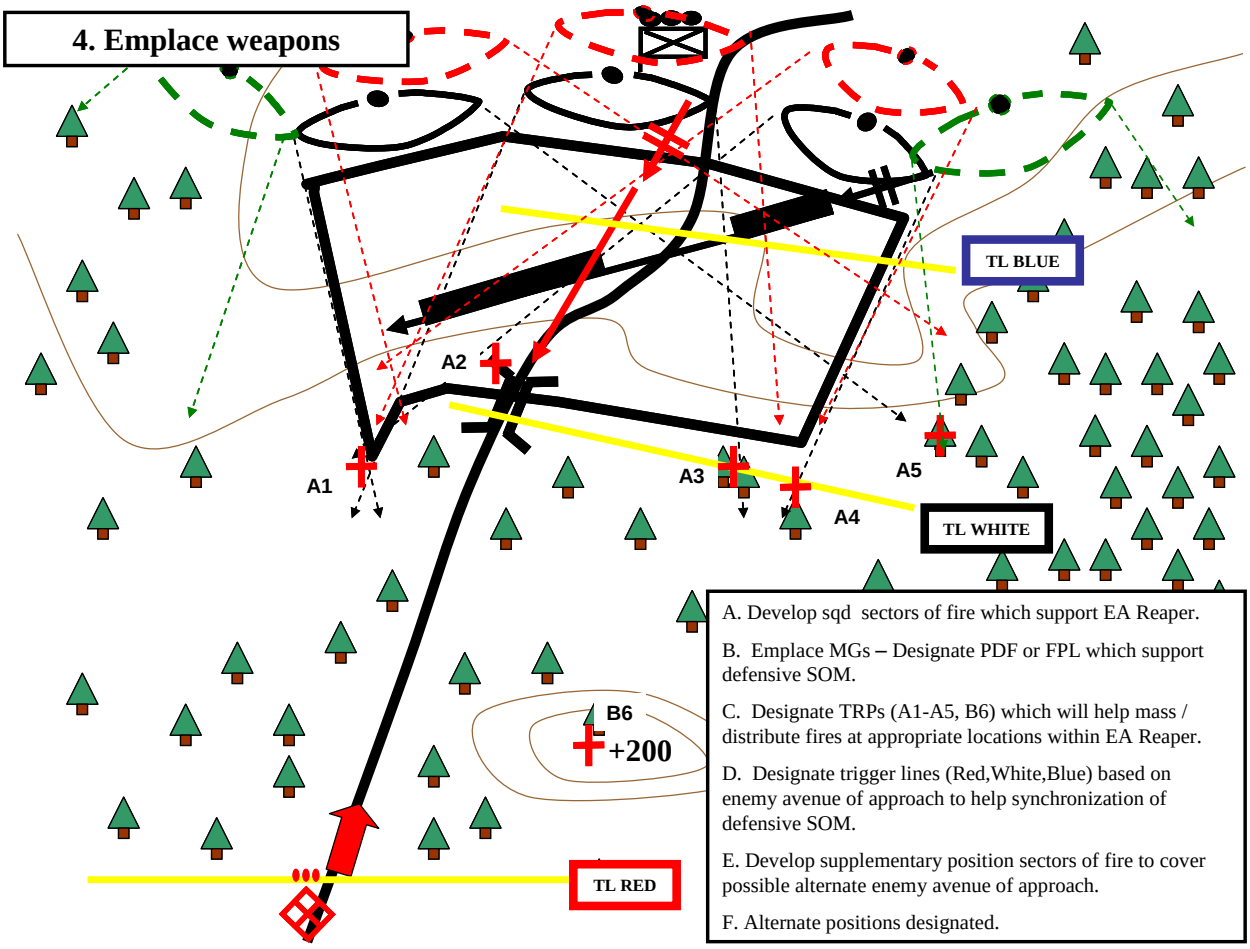
3. Determine where to kill the enemy
   The EA's location can be determined once the EMLCOA is developed (see above step). The platoon commander seeks to visualize the enemy's approach and engagement, allowing him/her to select the location which allows for the most advantageous use of terrain by the platoon.

   Once the engagement area is defined, the platoon commander can begin to identify control measures which will assist in executing the direct and indirect fire plans. Identifying sectors of fire, target reference points (TRPs), and trigger lines can facilitate control and distribution of fires in the defense. The platoon commander can also determine which weapons to use between certain TRPs to maximize their effectiveness.



Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

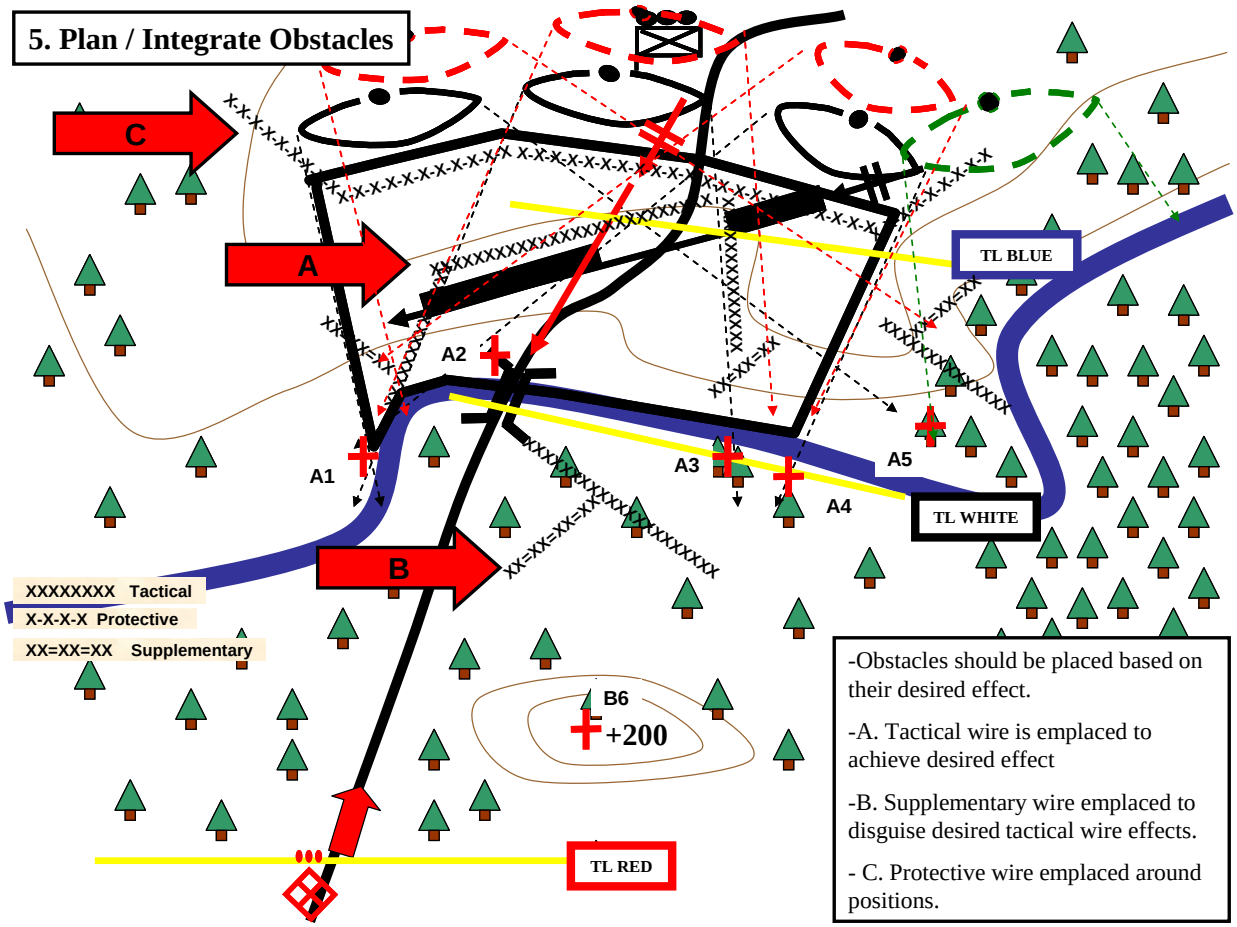
4. Emplace weapon systems
   The platoon's weapon systems must be placed to maximize their capabilities and weaponeering effects, as well as the terrain's effects on the employment of the weapons. The exact location of crew served weapons and squad sectors of fire are determined based on maximizing the weapons effects in the engagement area. The platoon commander should consider (not an exhaustive list):
   - M240B assigned FPL or PDF mission and the locations of the fighting positions.
   - Location of squad sectors of fire.
   - Hot and Cold Positions for rockets.
   - Integrating TRPs and trigger lines with the location of weapons.
   - Location of alternate and supplementary sectors of fire to cover possible alternate enemy avenues of approach.



Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

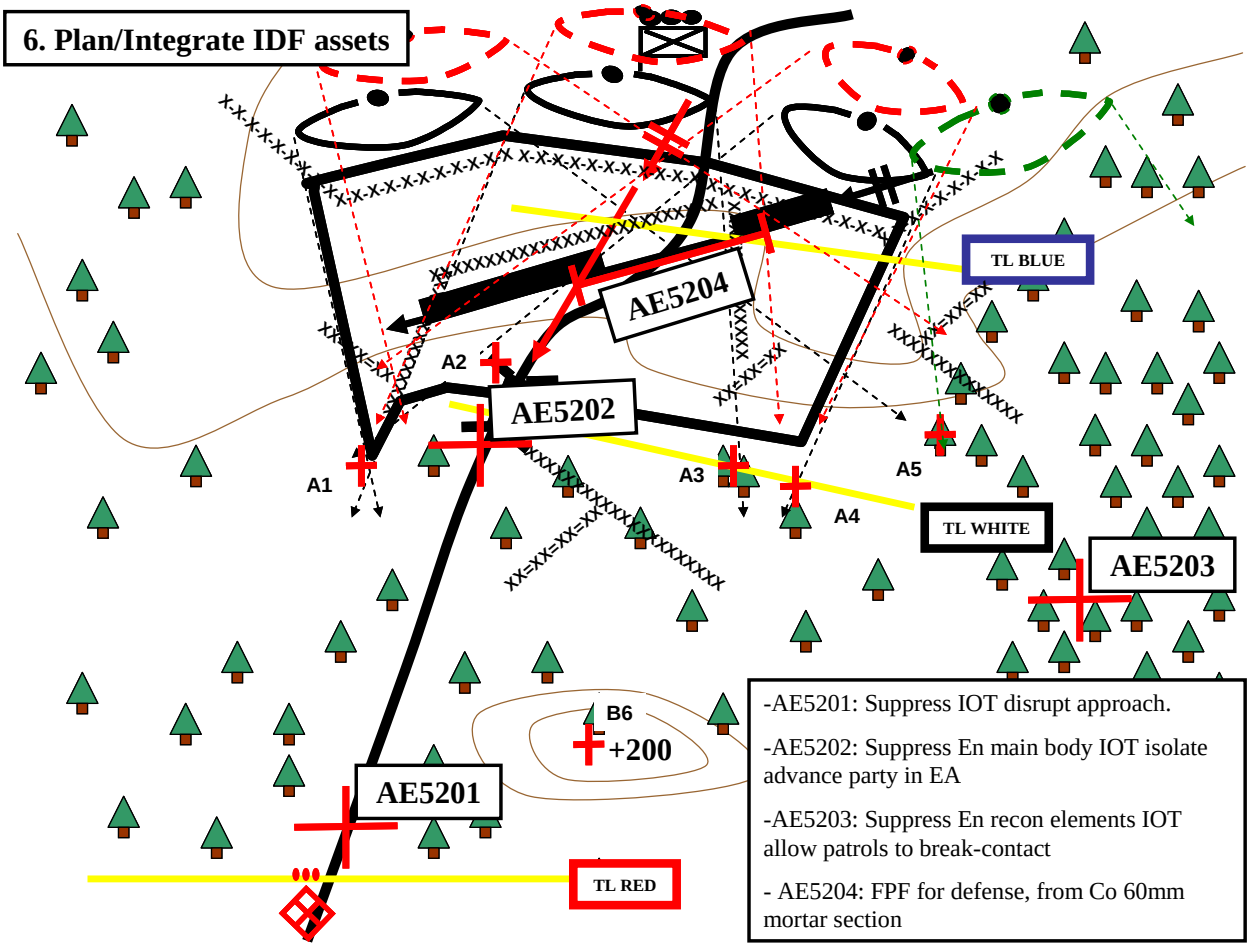
5. Plan and integrate obstacles
   In the defense, tactical obstacles must be integrated with the direct and indirect fire plans to be successful. The platoon commander must understand the desired effects of each obstacle, facilitating optimum emplacement to complement the overall plan for the engagement area. The platoon commander should conduct detailed coordination with engineers during the planning phase, leader's recon, as well as once obstacle construction begins. Obstacles multiply the effects of fires. Obstacle effects will be discussed later in this student handout.

   The platoon commander must ensure that the platoon obstacle plan follows the company commander's intent for the overall obstacle plan.



Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

6. Plan and integrate indirect fires (organic / non-organic)
   Indirect fires must be fully integrated and synchronized with the direct fire plan and obstacle plan. The platoon commander must develop the purpose for his fire support plan, as well as:
   - Determine the location of indirect fire targets that will best support the intent of the engagement area.
   - Determine the location of the observer for each target, ensuring that every observer can effectively communicate with the fire agency in a timely manner.
   - Obtain accurate target location.
   - Register appropriate targets.
   - Plan and register FPF. Location of FPF must be integrated with obstacles and machine gun FPLs.



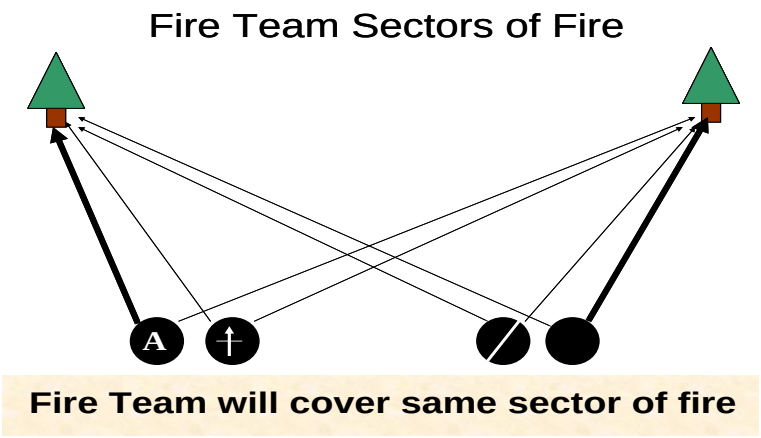
Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

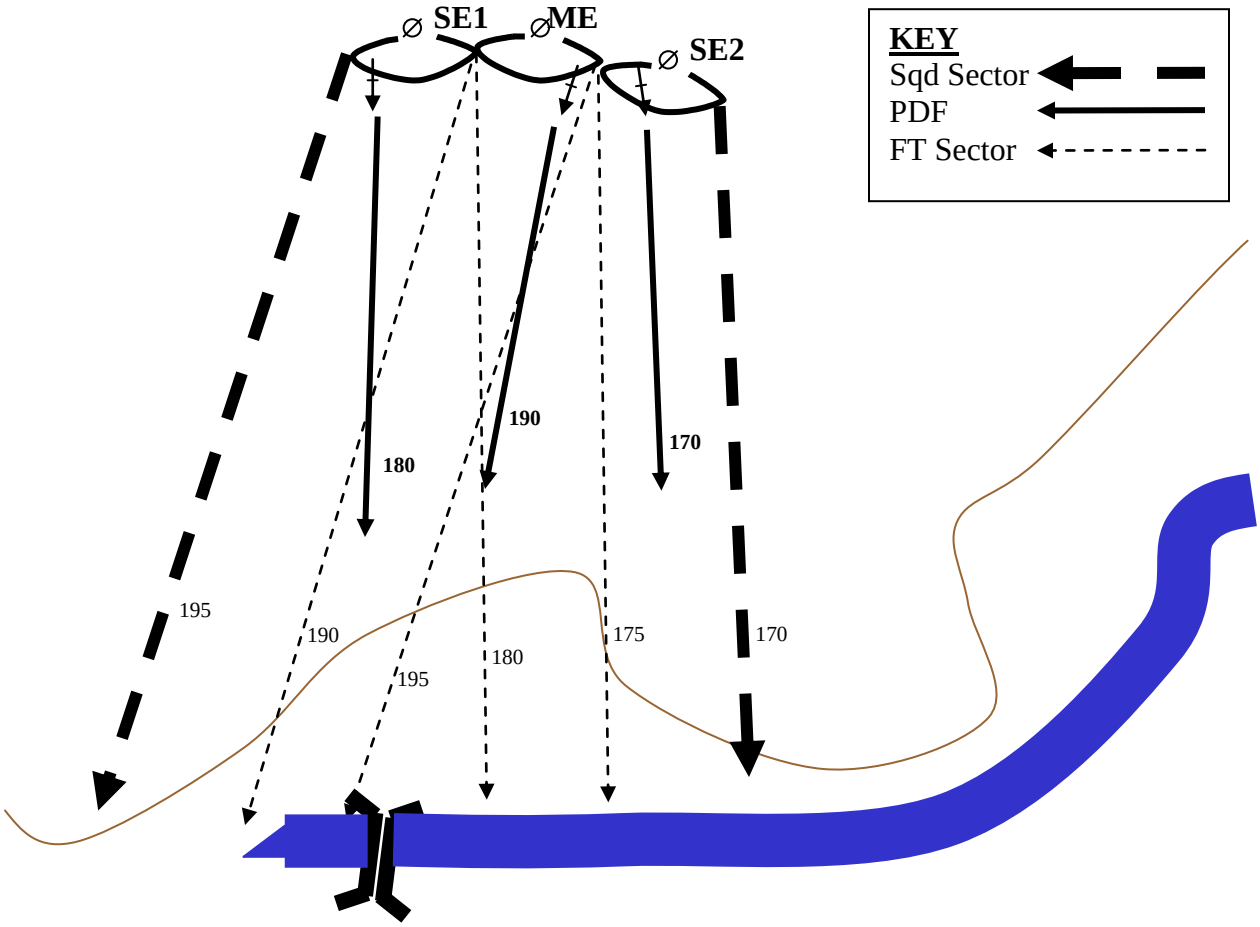
7. Conduct EA rehearsal
   The purpose of the rehearsal is to ensure that all Marines understand the plan, specifically the ways in which each unit and Marine are integrated. All Marines must understand the TRPs associated with their sectors, as well as the trigger lines that initiate their fires. Proper execution of the integration and synchronization of the fire plan ensures that the maximum effect of all weapon systems and obstacles are applied to the enemy in the engagement area. This can be done utilizing a terrain model and Rehearsal of Concepts (ROC) drills during the planning/preparation phase.

c. Direct Fire Planning:
   A defense's strength lies in the proper utilization of time during preparation to ensure effective use of terrain and maximizing weapons effects in the engagement area. Direct fire planning should assist in effectively distributing and integrating fires at all levels in the platoon.
   - Employment Considerations: The platoon commander must ensure that all weapons systems are being employed to maximize their effectiveness within their respective capabilities. For example, M203s should be used to cover dead space within fire team's sectors of fire while M249s are assigned to likely enemy avenues of approach within the sector.

   - Sectors of Fire: The platoon commander establishes sectors of fire in order to translate the concept of the engagement area into manageable portions for the rifle squads and crew-served weapons. Squad sectors of fire should overlap to avoid gaps in coverage. The platoon commander assigns sectors of fire based on the tasks given to subordinates in the operation order. The platoon's main effort squad should be assigned a sector of fire that will enable it to accomplish the platoon's assigned mission while the supporting efforts assist in facilitating the main effort. At the platoon level, the main effort squad will normally have a sector of fire in the middle of the platoon position. Once the platoon commander has distributed his forces and assigned squads sectors of fire. The platoon commander must select a location for his Command Post, which is generally located behind the Main Effort where they can see the engagement area and influence the fight. The squad leaders must divide their sectors into fire team sectors of fire. The squad leader should emplace the main effort fire team first during occupation, due to the fact that the main effort is the. squad leader's bid for accomplishing the mission. Within the fire team, the M249 should be emplaced first on the most likely enemy avenue of approach. The remainder of the fire team will be emplaced around the M249, ensuring adequate coverage of the sector. The squad leader inspects his Marines sectors continuously to ensure they meet the platoon commander's intent. The fire team is the smallest unit that gets assigned a sector of fire. Buddy pairs DO NOT get assigned a sector of fire. The fire team sector of fire ensures adequate coverage of the security in the event of casualties, as well as when executing the defensive priorities of work.

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

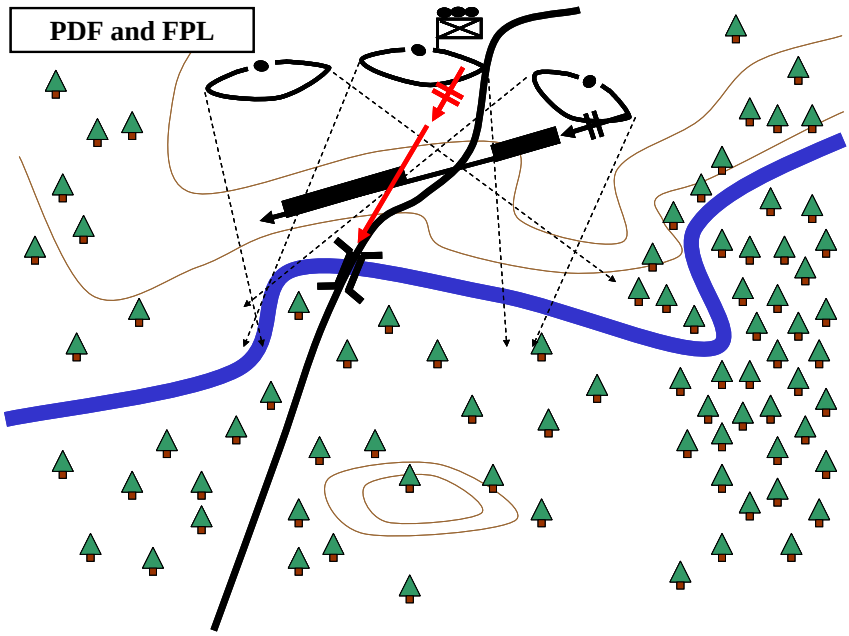




Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

- Principal Directions of Fire: M249 and M240B MMG can be assigned principal directions of fire to cover likely enemy avenues of approach. The location of PDFs must be integrated into the platoon commander's overall defensive scheme of maneuver.

- Final Protective Lines: Machine guns may be assigned a FPL mission in the defense when the platoon commander desires to achieve grazing fire across the defense's frontage. The FPL is utilized in concert with PDF's when the platoon commander believes his defense is in imminent danger of being overrun. (Refer to Machine Gun Employment SHO)



- Target Reference Points: Easily recognizable points on the ground (either natural or man-made) used to initiate, distribute, and control fires. Fire team and squad leaders must all understand their respective TRPs to ensure proper distribution of fires.

- Trigger Lines: A designated linear feature (selected along identifiable terrain) in an engagement area used to commence massed fires at a predetermined range. Trigger lines assist in synchronizing the defensive plan to maximize weapons effects in the engagement area. Units and weapon systems should understand which trigger line is used to commence their respective fires. These tactical control measures, both the trigger lines and the target reference points, may be naturally occurring or they may be marked by the defender. What matters most is that these tactical control measures are universally understood and provide a common frame of reference for the defending unit.

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

- Engagement Criteria: Normally associated with trigger lines or specific enemy elements, engagement criteria allows Marines to engage enemy targets at the proper time in accordance with the platoon commander's overall scheme of maneuver. Simplified engagement criteria tells Marines WHEN to engage. It facilitates decentralized execution and proper synchronization to maximize weapons effects in the engagement area. This control measure also assists in concealing friendly assets, such as machine guns, until the decisive time and place in the defensive scheme of maneuver despite enemy reconnaissance techniques.

- Target Precedence: When engagement criteria is met by multiple targets simultaneously, target precedence determines the order in which targets should be engaged. Each weapon system is given target precedence in accordance with its capabilities. Another control measure facilitating decentralized execution, the platoon commander should develop target precedence which maximizes weapons effects and which will most quickly disrupt the enemy's scheme of maneuver. While engagement criteria tells Marines WHEN to engage, target precedence tells Marines WHAT to engage.

d. Fire Support Planning (Refer to Fire Support Planning SHO)
Platoon defensive operations require detailed and thorough fire support planning. Indirect fires must be fully integrated with the obstacle and direct fire plans to ensure overlapping fires which complement one another and achieve the desired effects. Defensive fire support can be divided into three categories:

- Long Range Fires:
The platoon commander seeks to use long range fires to engage the enemy forward of the engagement area. These fires are developed to create confusion and cause the enemy to deploy early. The disruptive effects of long range fires should begin to cause the enemy to bend to our will and pick a course of action which is favorable to the friendly scheme of maneuver. Long range fires also support security patrols and LP/OPs which are operating forward of and adjacent to the platoon's engagement area. Indirect fire asset range, employment considerations, observer identification, and communications architecture are all considerations which the platoon commander must take into account while supporting the patrolling effort. The platoon commander must also have a plan for battle handover of fires from the patrolling elements when the enemy begins their final assault.

- Close In Fires
Close in fires are used to target the enemy in the engagement area prior to reaching the trigger for final protective fires. These massed fires should canalize and slow the enemy, as well as disrupt enemy breaching elements. Targets can be planned on the likely enemy avenue of approach, potential enemy over watch and support by fire positions, as well as targets which support the platoon commander's counterattack plan. Close in

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

- Final Protective Fire (FPF):

  The Final Protective Fires are prearranged barriers of fire designed to protect friendly troops by impeding enemy movement across defense lines or areas. They are coordinated with other fires and with natural and artificial obstacles. Final protective lines are positioned to cover gaps and dead spaces in the final protective fires of the machineguns. Normally, these fires are planned to cover dangerous avenues of approach into the battle area and break up enemy assaults against friendly positions. They take priority over all other fire missions. Artillery and mortar final protective fires are fired on order of the company commander whose battle are is protected by them. When delivered, they are fired continuously at maximum rate until ordered to discontinue. The final protective fire is registered.
  When firing the FPF, the enemy should be fixed, or at least be significantly slowed, by the obstacle plan. This will ensure maximum enemy casualties in the engagement area. The overall final protective fire for the defense encompasses all direct fire weapons and indirect fire assets which have the platoon as first on the priority of fires. The decision to fire the FPF is made by the platoon commander and must be tied to a specific trigger line.
  The figure on the next page indicates the widths of final protective fires for various weapons and units.

Final Protective Fires Indirect Target Dimensions			
Weapon	Unit	Width of FPF (ECR)	Length of FPF (# of tubes X ECR)
60mm Mortar	Squad	30 meters	30 meters
60mm Mortar	Section	30 meters	90 meters
81mm Mortar	Squad	35 meters	35 meters
81mm Mortar	Section	35 meters	140 meters
81mm Mortar	Platoon	35 meters	280 meters
155mm Howitzer	Battery	50 meters	300 meters

e. Obstacle Planning:

The platoon commander must understand obstacle effects in order to ensure all obstacles are fully integrated with the platoon defensive plan. Tactical obstacles and fires manipulate the enemy in a way that supports the commander's intent and scheme of maneuver. The four tactical obstacle effects are:

- Disrupt: These obstacles cause the enemy to break up formation and temp, interrupt the sequence of their attack, and cause the enemy to commit breaching assets early.
- Turn: Obstacles which divert an enemy formation toward an avenue of approach which facilitates the platoon's defensive scheme of maneuver.
- Fix: In this effect, obstacles and fires strive to slow the enemy within the engagement area.
- Block: These obstacles stop the enemy along a specific avenue of approach and/or prevent the enemy from passing through the engagement area.

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

Obstacle effects drive integration within the engagement area, help to focus crew served weapons and rifle squads' fires, focus the obstacle effort, and multiply the effects of firepower within the engagement area (MCWP 3-17). During the planning phase, the platoon commander should focus on determining which obstacle effects he/she wants at specific locations on the battlefield, not on specific obstacle construction.

By providing the attached engineer support with the overall commander's intent and the desired obstacle effects in relation to the engagement area, the platoon commander can facilitate decentralized execution, accomplishing concurrent tasks, as well as engineer logistics planning. Engineer attachments can also conduct reconnaissance with security from the platoon to provide the commander with information on the best location for obstacle to achieve the desired effect.

Obstacles must also take into account the platoon commander's counterattack plans. While the obstacle plan seeks to limit the enemy's ability to maneuver within the engagement area, the platoon commander must ensure that the obstacle plan does not inhibit friendly schemes of maneuver.

The two categories of obstacles are existing and reinforcing. Existing obstacles include natural and cultural obstacles, while reinforcing obstacles include examples such as mines, wire, early warning devices, ditches, and log cribs

Wire obstacles are classified in three categories:

- Protective: Wire obstacles which are designed to protect friendly fighting positions. They are designed to disrupt the enemy's final assault and should be placed just outside of hand grenade range from the enemy.
- Tactical: These wire obstacles are constructed to achieve the desired obstacle effect for a given location. For example, wire obstacles may be constructed forward of the engagement area to turn the enemy into the engagement area. Wire obstacles can also be designed to fix the enemy in the engagement area in front of machine gun FPLs and/or PDFs.
- Supplementary: Supplementary wire obstacles are designed to conceal tactical wire obstacles. These obstacles prevent the enemy from determining the platoon commander's desired obstacle effects before they come under to effects of the platoon's fires.

(For specific wire construction, see MCWP 3-17A Engineer Field Data)

The principals of obstacle employment should be applied at all times during the planning, preparation, and execution phases of the defense. (For more on principals of obstacle employment, refer to Engineers in the Offense and Defense SHO)

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

f. Offensive planning in the defense – Flexibility:

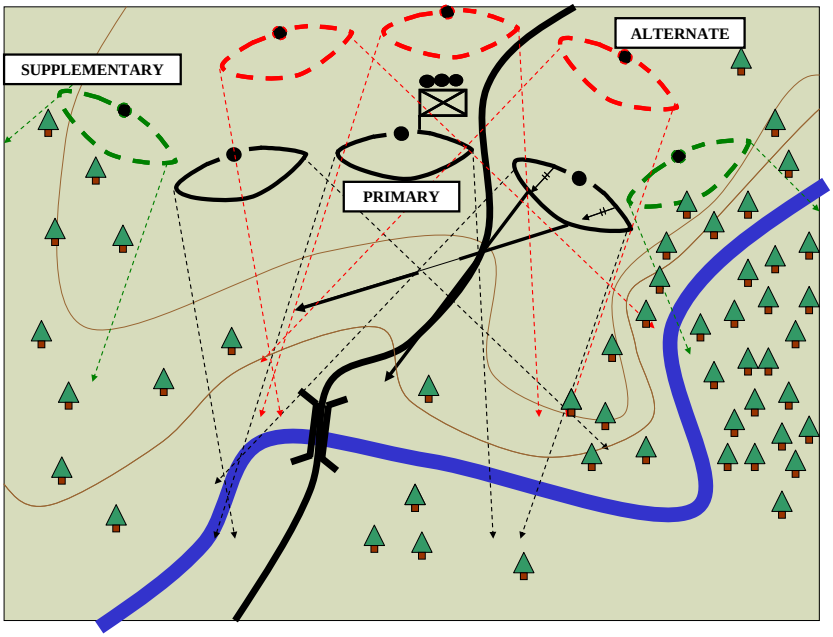
While the defense is the stronger form of combat due to the defenders' ability to choose the ground from which to defend, prepare an engagement area, and utilize terrain to his advantage, the defender must actively seek opportunities for offensive action. The platoon commander plans for flexibility in the defense, maintaining the ability to react to the enemy's scheme of maneuver. Flexibility in the defense is accomplished in several ways.

Types of Positions:

Primary Position: The primary position is the best available position for an individual or crew served weapon to accomplish the assigned mission. When the platoon occupies the defensive position, the primary positions are first to be occupied.

Alternate Position: Alternate positions are located so that individuals and crew-served weapons can continue to accomplish the assigned mission when the primary position becomes untenable or unsuited for carrying out the mission. These are normally located behind the primary positions.

Supplementary Position: These positions are prepared to guard against attack from directions other than those from which the main attack is expected, such as the flanks. A supplementary position is a secondary position and does not cover the same sector of fire as the primary and alternate positions.



Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

Least engaged unit:

Company level and above units utilize a reserve. At the platoon level, the least engage unit allows the platoon commander to incorporate offensive action in the scheme of maneuver once the enemy has committed his force in the engagement area. The least engaged unit is the unit which is under minimal enemy influence when the engagement begins based on their placement in the platoon's position. The least engaged unit can move to supplementary positions to protect the platoon's flank, or conduct a counterattack based on the commander's plan.

While the platoon commander can plan for the employment of the least engaged unit, it cannot be tasked to a unit in the platoon operation order. The enemy determines which element is the least engaged unit in the defense. During the planning phase, the commander must develop an employment plan for the least engaged unit and ensure that all squads know their respective responsibilities should they be designated as the least engaged unit.

g. Leaders' Reconnaissance:

The platoon commander conducts his/her leader's reconnaissance to validate (confirm or deny) the assumptions made about the enemy and terrain during his/her estimate of the situation, as well as to put the measures in place to facilitate a smooth occupation. The platoon commander must maximize the efficiency of the leader's reconnaissance due to the time compressed environment on the battlefield. The platoon commander develops a priority of reconnaissance prior to conducting the recon. This prioritized list of tasks provides focus to the reconnaissance element and assists in maximizing the recon's efficiency. **The number one priority for a defensive leader's reconnaissance is to identify/confirm the engagement area, where the platoon commander plans on killing the enemy. All other aspects of the defense will be based on the specific selection of an engagement area.** The platoon commander issues an order to all Marines going on the leader's recon patrol. At a minimum, this order needs to include EMLCOA, the scheme of maneuver for the patrol, the fire support plan, immediate action drills, priorities of reconnaissance, security plan for patrol will platoon commander is gathering recon information, lost Marine plan, and casualty evacuation plan. The senior Marine remaining with the main body of the platoon, most likely the platoon sergeant, should also be at the order and completely understand the patrol's plan. This will enable the main body to support the patrol should the leader's recon come under fire.
The platoon commander leaves a five point contingency plan (GOTWA) with the platoon sergeant prior to departing on the reconnaissance (refer to B2H0369, Scouting and Patrolling Operations).

Sequence of the Defense – Planning/Preparation Phase (Continued)

g. Leaders' Reconnaissance (continued):

A sample priority of reconnaissance is listed below (This list is meant to be used as a guide and is not all inclusive):

1. Identify / confirm the enemy's most likely avenue of approach and terrain which maximizes the weapons employment of the platoon. **This identifies the location of the engagement area.**
2. Visualize the ways in which the engagement area can be sub-divided into squad sectors of fire. Identify the locations of the squads which facilitate the above the described sectors.
3. Identify crew-served weapons locations. The location of machine guns in the defense should maximize the effects of the weapon system. Machine guns effectiveness can also be increased by integrating the weapons effects with the obstacle plan. (Refer to B3N0511 Machine Gun Employment)
4. Mark the sectors of fire and squad locations, ensuring the squads' representatives on the patrol understand the location and weapons employment considerations from the platoon commander.
5. Confirm and/or refine occupation plan, marking designated release points.
6. Identify command post location. The location should allow the platoon commander to effectively command and control the defense during contact with the enemy.
7. Emplace or leave behind LP/OP(s) to report on situation and assist in providing security for the platoon during occupation.

ENDSTATE: The leader's reconnaissance should validate and/or update the platoon commander's estimate of the situation, leading to the identification of the engagement area, and identify control measures which will facilitate a seamless transition to the defense during occupation.

h. Issue the Order
The platoon commander conveys his plan to his subordinates through the operations order. The platoon commander must determine to issue the order before or after the leaders' reconnaissance.

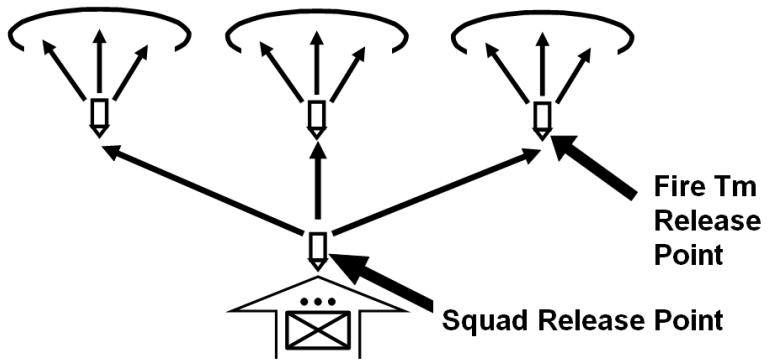
Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase

B. Execution Phase
Once the initial planning and preparation have been conducted, the platoon can move to its' defense and begin executing its' defensive scheme of maneuver. Defensive operations are LABOR INTENSIVE and require effective use of time to maximize the defender's advantages prior to the engagement with the enemy.

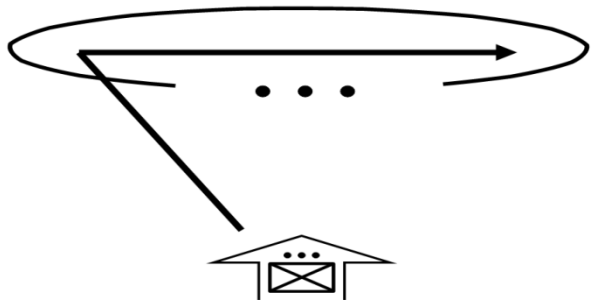
a. Occupation of the position: The platoon commander utilizes occupation methods in order to facilitate control while the platoon moves into position. Also, a poorly planned and orchestrated occupation will make the platoon vulnerable to enemy attack due to a low security posture. There are three techniques which can be used to occupy a position:

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

Crow's Foot: This technique utilized squad and fire team release point to move units into position while the units are oriented in the direction in the enemy. The advantage of the Crow's foot is the forward security posture which each element maintains during occupation, allowing for immediate reaction to premature enemy contact. However, due to the multiple release points, this technique is more difficult to control and demands that unit leaders at every level know the exact location of all release points. Using guides and marking release points can increase the control when using this method.

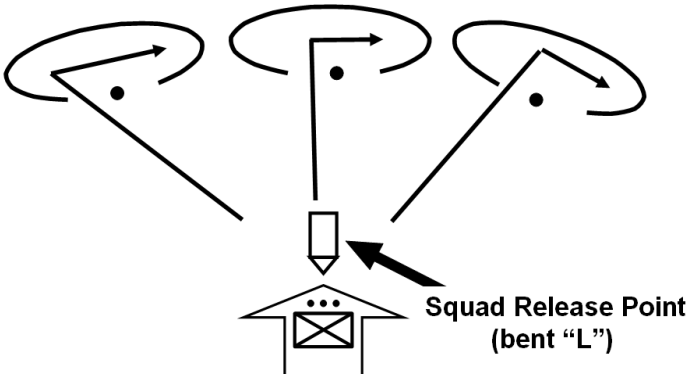


Bent L: This technique allows the platoon to remain centrally located throughout the occupation of the position. Utilizing an anchor point, the platoon moves in a column until the location of primary positions, then turns perpendicular to the direction of enemy approach and moves into position. The bent L technique increases the direct control by the platoon commander. However, the platoon is more vulnerable to attack until all elements have reached their primary positions.



Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

Combination: The combination technique uses a hybrid of both previous techniques to achieve a balance between control and security. Release points are identified until a certain point where the units move into position using the bent L.



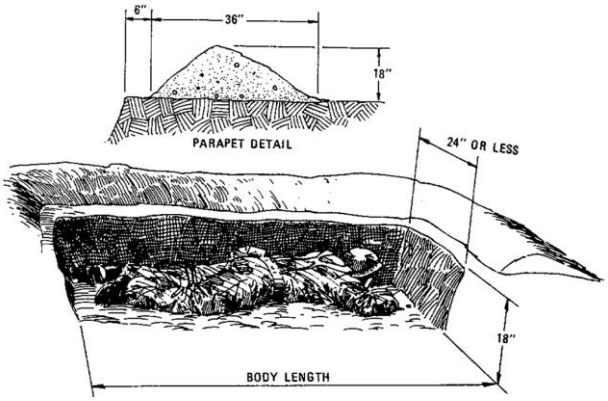
The platoon commander must choose the occupation technique, which facilitates the best control and deployability based on the enemy situation and terrain.

b. Sectors of Fire and Position development:

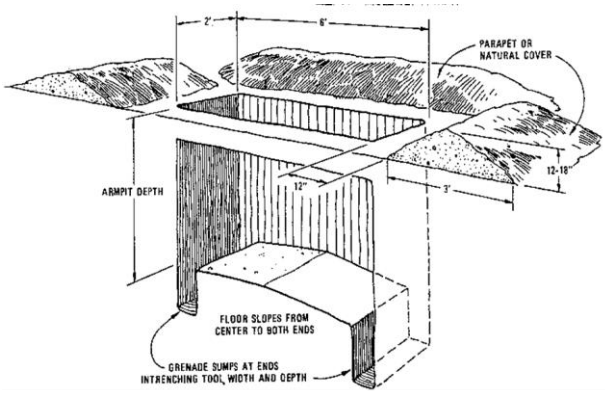
Once the primary positions have been occupied, the platoon commander, along with the squad leaders, should confirm the sectors of fire developed during the leader's reconnaissance. Once confirmed, all fire teams and above can begin to develop the positions which cover their respective sectors of fire. At the individual level during an enemy attack, the maintenance of sectors of fire is adhered to through sectors bags. Sector bags are seen in the diagram below. Sector bag construction will be covered in more depth at the Defensive Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT).

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

Fighting positions enable the defender to capitalize on preparation time, maximizing cover from enemy weapons' effects. A skirmishers trench and two man fighting position can be seen in the diagrams below. Their construction will be covered in more depth at the defensive TEWT.



Skirmisher's Trench



Two-Man Fighting Position

c. Security Plan:

Security must be maintained at all times when conducting operations. In the defense, the security plan not only ensures that the platoon is ready when the enemy attacks. It also facilitates the offensive action of the platoon in the defense. There are several aspects of the security plan which together help in conducting successful defensive operations.

- Alert Status: The alert status determines what percentage of the unit is manning their weapons in the primary positions in the defense. A platoon should never go below 25% security at any time, and should ensure that all squad automatic weapons and/or larger machine guns are manned. Upon occupation, the platoon should remain at 100% security until the platoon commander decides to begin the priorities of work. The alert status should be driven by the platoon commander's analysis of the enemy, specifically likelihood of enemy attack. The platoon commander must be constantly updating his METT-TC to determine with the increase or diminish the alert status. It facilitates the accomplishment of priorities of work, the patrolling plan, and the rest plan due to the fact that it frees marines from security responsibilities.

- Stand-To: During stand-to, all Marines are in full equipment with their weapons systems in their primary positions. Leaders at all levels should keep movement to a minimum. The platoon commander should designate brevity codes to signal stand-to and must ensure a timely transition from the priorities of work to stand to. The platoon commander can take the platoon to stand-to any time he/she determines the platoon is vulnerable to enemy observation/attack, or at pre-determined times. Most units go to stand to 30 minutes prior to and after sunrise and sunset, along with departure and re-entry of friendly patrols.

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

- LP/OPs: A listening post / observation post (LP/OP) is a location from which Marines can observe enemy movement, report to the platoon commander over appropriate communications assets, and/or call for and adjust indirect fire on enemy units. LP/OPs help to add depth to the defensive battle-space and help to update the platoon commander's estimate of the situation with regard to specific enemy courses of action. The location of LP/OPs must be de-conflicted with the platoon's direct and indirect fire plans and the Marines involved must have detailed knowledge of contingencies when enemy contact is made. LP/OPs are normally used to confirm or deny the enemy's approach along pre-determined routes known by the platoon into the engagement area.

- Patrols: A detachment of ground or air forces sent out for the purpose of gathering information or carrying out destructive, harassing, mopping up, or security missions against the enemy.

  In the defense, patrols provide the platoon commander with timely information on the enemy while denying the enemy the ability to gather information on the platoon's position. Platoons can investigate areas of interest, emplace LP/OPs, and conduct economy of force operations forward of and to the flanks of the engagement area. Patrols are normally used by the platoon commander on routes and areas other than those he/she believes will be most likely used by the enemy. Patrols can be used to notify the platoon commander that the enemy has adopted a different scheme of maneuver than the one planned. The platoon's patrolling effort adds considerable depth to the defensive battlespace and helps to maintain the initiative during defensive operations.

d. Priorities of Work/ Timeline/ Concurrent Planning:

In the defense, the platoon commander must capitalize on the preparation time allowed. When we are planning the tasks we will assign to our subordinates, we always need to keep in mind that our actions should be based on the enemy's most likely course of action and that we will never have enough time or personnel to accomplish all that we want to accomplish. For that reason it is imperative that the platoon commander constantly prioritizes and reprioritizes his priorities of work as he updates his METT-TC- the ever-changing situation on the ground.

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

There are numerous tasks, which must be accomplished in order for the platoon commander to effectively prepare for enemy contact. Priorities of work are a list of tasks associated with a timeline that state the order of accomplishment for every Marine in the defense. At the most basic level, the priorities of work begin with SAFE and continue on utilizing every opportunity for position improvement until the defensive engagement. A sample priorities of work is provided below:

- Assign sectors of fire and emplace machine guns on likely enemy avenues of approach. Begin sector bag construction.
- Emplace LP/OP covering most likely enemy avenue of approach for the platoon's defense.
- Verify crew-served weapons sectors of fire, specifically their assigned missions of FPL or PDF. Once verified, begin entrenching positions.
- Verify sectors of fire for all other weapons and emplace sector bags.
- Begin patrol operations.
- Prepare range cards and fire plan sketches.
- Construct primary positions.
- Clear fields of fire for all positions and continue entrenching primary positions until supporting efforts have skirmisher's trenches.
- Establish and register final protective fires.
- Construct supplementary positions on flanks by supporting efforts. Develop skirmisher's trenches.
- Establish and disseminate TRPs, trigger lines, etc.
- Once supplementary positions are at skirmisher trench depth, continue primary position construction.
- Emplace early warning devices on enemy avenues of approach not covered by LP/OP.
- Lay comm. wire and field phones. Bury communication wire.
- Establish rest plan.
- Construct alternate positions to skirmisher trench depth.
- Rehearse least engaged unit movement to supplementary positions.
- Continue supplementary position construction until positions are chest deep.
- Rehearse counterattack and other contingency plans.

The platoon commander expresses the priorities of work by marrying them to a timeline. The timeline is centered around occupation time, facilitating flexibility within the plan. An example is shown below:

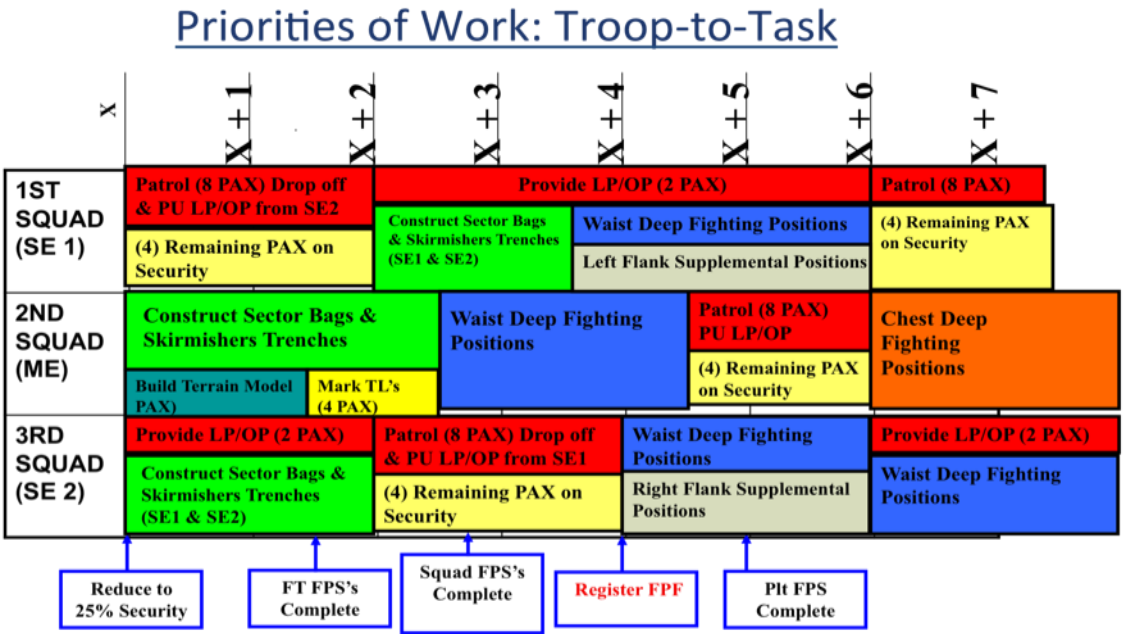
- X : Occupation of position
- X + 15: Initial SAFE conducted. Sector bags begun.
- X + 30: LP/OP emplaced on likely enemy avenue of approach.
- X + 35: CSWs sectors, FPLs, and PDFs verified and confirmed. Position construction begun.
- X + 50: Primary position sectors verified.
- X + 60: 1st patrol departs
- X + 90: Squad fire plan sketches submitted to platoon commander:
- X + 120: Primary position skirmisher's trenches complete.

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

The timeline continues with the priorities of work described above. The platoon commander will establish a tentative occupation time during the planning process.

However, the method described above takes into account events during occupation, which may unforeseeably prolong this portion of the operation. The platoon commander must take a realistic look at the time required for specific tasks and allot the requisite time accordingly. The platoon commander must also continually evaluate and adjust the timeline based on the situation. The platoon sergeant aggressively drives the timeline, maximizing preparation time and allowing the platoon commander to maintain an external focus.

An essential piece to consider when developing priorities of work and timelines are to account for the fact that not every member of our platoon needs to be doing the same task. As stated earlier, there will be more tasks than we can hope to accomplish and further, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the main effort's accomplishment of their mission needs to be facilitated by supporting efforts. For that reason we tie in the notion of concurrent planning to our defensive considerations. Below is an example of a matrix worksheet which accounts for priorities of work, as well as a timeline, but shows their completion in relation to one another and in relation to the platoon commander's overall estimate of the situation.



Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

e. Fire Plan Sketch:

The fire plan sketch is a to-scale, graphic representation of the defensive position that is used by the commander to visualize and coordinate the effects of his engagement area and to prevent gaps in his fires. Once the defensive plan has been established, leaders prepare fire plan sketches. 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 table at the end of this student handout demonstrates step-by-step how to construct a fire plan sketch.

** Attached at the end of this student handout is a sheet of graph paper with a scale and an operational graphics page with a range card for machine guns. Use these two items to aid you during your TEWT and in your field exercises to draw a fire plan sketch. Take the two pages copy them to become one page (back and front) and laminate it to use it in a tactical environment.*

f. Rehearsals:

The defensive platoon commander must actively and aggressively seek every opportunity for offensive action. Seizing fleeting opportunities requires seamless transitions by the platoon between executing the priorities of work, conducting stand to procedures, and then adjusting the scheme of maneuver based on enemy activity. Rehearsals facilitate these seamless transitions by ensuring that all Marines involved know exactly what to do and are able to accomplish the specified and implied tasks without continued, direct tasking by unit leaders. In the defense, rehearsals can continue following occupation, concurrent with priorities of work, in order to ensure that the unit is prepared for decisive enemy contact when it comes. Rehearsals must be PRIORITIZED with respect to the ENEMY. These rehearsals include, but are not limited to:

- Stand-to procedures.
- Communication procedures inside defensive position.
- Movement of least engaged unit to supplementary positions (Each element must rehearse actions as least engaged unit).
- Counterattack plans.
- Movement of platoon to alternate positions.
- Actions on contact during re-entry of friendly lines by a patrol.

The platoon commander must balance accomplishing priorities of work and preparing for the engagement with the enemy through rehearsals.

g. Logistics Planning in the defense:

The defense is labor and resource intensive. The platoon commander must put time and thought into the logistical support required and available for his defensive plan. Commanders at all levels must also plan for the ways in which resources will be moved to their primary positions. Platoon sustainment, position construction, obstacle construction, and survivability are just a few of the areas which need attention when conducting a logistical analysis of the platoon commander's defensive plan. Since the commander rarely knows exactly how long he will be in the defense, detailed and extensive logistics planning is absolutely essential.

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

C. Decisive Contact:

Up to this point, we have discussed all of the actions that must take place during the execution of the defensive scheme of maneuver to set the conditions for success during decisive contact with the enemy. Ultimately, all of the platoon's actions must be focused toward defeating an enemy attack. While preparing the defensive position is labor intensive and will take a large amount of the platoon's time, the platoon commander must realize that these actions are only worthwhile if they lead towards effectively defeating the enemy in contact. Actions during decisive contact with the enemy can be thought of using the following steps:

a. Gain and Maintain Enemy Contact: Gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy despite their efforts to destroy friendly reconnaissance elements is vital to the success of defensive operations. As the enemy's attack begins, the platoon commander's first concerns are to confirm the committed enemy unit's positions and capabilities, determine the enemy's intent and direction of attack, and gain time to react. The platoon commander accomplishes these elements through the platoon's patrolling effort forward of the engagement area. The platoon commander uses the available information, in conjunction with his military judgment, to determine the point at which the enemy is committed to a course of action. The platoon commander must plan for the actions of the patrolling effort once contact with the enemy is made, specifically prior to the platoon's primary positions beginning their fires. Detailed and well rehearsed plans will mitigate any potential for fratricide during this moment.

b. Disrupt the Enemy: After making contact with the enemy, the platoon commander seeks to disrupt his plan, his ability to control his forces, and his ability to employ supporting arms. Ideally, the results of the platoon commander's shaping operations should force a disorganized enemy, whose ability to synchronize its elements has been degraded, to conduct a movement to contact against prepared defenses. Actions during this step should force the enemy into avenues of approach which lead them into the engagement area. These actions destroy the enemy's cohesion and disrupt the tempo of his approach. Properly planned long-range defensive fires and the forward elements of the obstacle plan help to facilitate this step.

   The platoon commander must understand the importance of timing during these actions. The enemy cannot be allowed to recover from their effects prior to the decisive point in the engagement area.

d. Fix the Enemy: The platoon commander does everything in his power to limit the options available to the enemy when conducting a defense. The commander's plan should constrain the enemy into a specific course of action, control his movements, and/or fix him in a given location. The platoon commander's effective use of obstacles and fires should fix the enemy at a given location. These integrated plans help to ensure the enemy is slowed, potentially stopped, in the engagement area at the exact time and place where the effects of all of the platoon's fires are maximized.

Sequence of the Defense – Execution Phase (Continued)

e. Maneuver: Once the enemy has committed his forces to a given course of action, the platoon commander masses all available fires in the engagement area. Keeping an offensive mindset, the platoon commander is able to move the platoon's least engaged unit to the most effective location based on the enemy's action. The least engaged unit may move to supplementary positions to protect a flank, or may conduct a counterattack into the engagement area to destroy the enemy. All Marines involved in the counterattack must be aware of the obstacle plan to maximize friendly movement. The platoon commander plans for indirect fire assets to support the counterattack.

f. Finishing: Once the enemy has committed his forces in the engagement area, timing is critical. The platoon commander must capitalize on the enemy's decisions by quickly and violently destroying the enemy in the engagement area. Coordination and deconfliction of fires, through planning, shifting, and ceasing fires, is vital to ensuring weapons effects are maximized on the enemy. Once the enemy is completely destroyed, the platoon commander either continues the attack or moves into consolidation and reorganization.

Sequence of the Defense – Consolidation/Reorganization Phase

D. Consolidation / Reorganization

Any time contact is made with the enemy, the platoon conducts consolidation and reorganization. **Re-establishing security is the first priority** during this portion of the operation. The platoon commander must confirm that his sectors of fire are still covered and valid, or adjust sectors of fire based on an updated estimate of the situation (METT-TC) derived from the enemy's actions during contact. In addition, he must ensure that his machine guns are still manned, or if gunners have become casualties and need to be replaced. He may choose to reposition machine guns or other weapons based on his updated METT-TC and EMLOCA. He must supervise the redistribution of ammunition and other supplies based on his distribution of forces and ultimately must ensure that the defensive plan is still supportable with the available resources. Once the platoon commander is comfortable that he will be able to effectively defend a possible enemy re-attack, casualties and enemy prisoners of war must be taken care of and moved quickly to higher echelons. Casualty collection points (CCPs) and EPW collection points must be identified in the defensive position. Effective consolidation and reorganization ensures that the platoon remains at the highest possible level of readiness at all times. As always, the platoon commander must provide higher with a clear and concise situation report following contact and should be prepared to receive follow-on missions.

If appropriate and feasible, the platoon commander may decide to exploit a weakened, disorganized, and disoriented enemy following contact by conducting a counterattack or pursuing the enemy as it egresses. As previously discussed, the platoon commander should be willing to transition to the offense and seize the initiative if he is presented with a clear opportunity to do so.

Summary

This class has covered the doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures of platoon level defensive operations. Platoon commanders must always remember that the offense and defense must co-exist. A good leader is able to transition seamlessly between the two. While the defense is labor and resource intensive, the platoon commander must remember the overall goal of defensive operations: An integrated and synchronized plan in which the effects of all resources are maximized in the engagement area to defeat an enemy attack.

Annexes

A. Defensive Operations Order Considerations
B. Platoon Fire Plan Sketch

Annex A: Platoon Defensive OPORD Example

Mission Statement: 1st Platoon, you are the company ME. NLT 1400, BLOCK the enemy platoon south, in the vicinity of the Rawah Bridge, in order to prevent the enemy from interfering with the Bn ME attack to the north.

Example Defensive Scheme of Maneuver:
On order, we will conduct a platoon battle position in the vicinity of Hill 265 with one main effort and four supporting efforts. The defense will be oriented to the northeast. The ME will occupy the center of the battle position, SE 1 will occupy to the left of the main effort, while SE 2 occupies to the right of the main effort. SE 3 and SE 4 will provide direct fire and obstacle support for the platoon battle position.

The platoon will cross the Line of Departure in a platoon column. Order of movement will be the Main Effort followed by SE 1, SE 3, SE 4, then SE 2. The platoon will pass through Checkpoint 27 before consolidating in a 360 at the ORP. In the ORP, the ME will orient from 10-2, SE 1 from 6-10, and SE 2 from 2-6, with 12 o'clock being our direction of movement. In the platoon ORP, SE 3 and SE 4 will remain in the center position of the 360. Departing from the ORP, the leader's reconnaissance patrol will conduct the reconnaissance in accordance with the priorities stated in coordinating instructions. Upon the return of the leader's recon, I will pass any refinements in the scheme of maneuver to the squad leaders. O/O the platoon will proceed to the SRP in a platoon column, with the ME followed by SE 3, SE4, SE 1, then SE 2. At the squad release point, the platoon will execute a combination of the Crow's Foot and the Bent "L" to occupy the BP. Once beyond the SRP, the squads will execute individual Bent "L"s from left to right into their positions. The ME will occupy the primary positions first. Once the main effort is in position, SE 1, SE 2, and SE 3 will depart the SRP and will occupy. SE 4 will occupy last behind the ME. Upon occupation, all elements will stand-to. O/O squads will go to 25% security and begin to execute priorities of work. O/O, SE 1 will provide the first patrol and SE 2 will provide the first LP/OP. Once priorities of work begin, the ME's first priority is construction of their primary positions. O/O, SE 4 will also commence the implementation of the obstacle plan. O/O, the platoon will execute stand-to within the BP. O/S, the platoon will fire its FPF. O/S, the least engaged unit will occupy supplementary positions. The platoon will be prepared to occupy alternate positions.

Example Fire Support Plan:
The purpose of my fire support plan is to DISRUPT the enemy in Engagement Area Reaper in order to prevent the enemy from interfering with Bn ME attack to the north.
(In this example, 1st Platoon has priority of fire from the company 60mm mortar section)
I have four pre-planned targets:

AE 5202 (UT 1234 5678). Suspected enemy avenue of approach. Suppress the enemy IOT turn the enemy platoon towards Engagement Area Reaper. The LP/OP will be the observer and will contact L 3/11 over the artillery conduct of fire net when the enemy's lead elements cross trigger line red. L battery will fire HE/PD.

AE 5203 (UT 1242 5657). Likely enemy overwatch position. Suppress the enemy IOT prevent the enemy from observing their approach into Engagement Area Reaper. The LP/OP will be the observer and will contact the 81mm mortar section over the battalion mortar net when the enemy is spotted IVO of TRP 2. 81mm mortars will fire HE/PD.

AE5204 (UT 1258 5795). Enemy avenue of approach into Engagement Area Reaper. Suppress the enemy as they enter the engagement area IOT prevent the enemy's effective command and control during the engagement. I will be the primary observer and will contact the 81mm mortar section over the battalion mortar net when the enemy's lead squad crosses trigger line white. 81mm mortars will fire HE/VT.

Annex A: Platoon Defensive OPORD Example (Continued)

AE5205 (UT 1210 5605). Final Protective Fire. Neutralize enemy assault elements IOT prevent the enemy from assaulting through Engagement Area Reaper. I will be the primary observer and will contact the company 60mm mortar section over the company tac net when the enemy crosses trigger line blue. Company 60mm mortars will fire HE/VT.

Patrol leaders will submit a list of targets ISO their patrol routes to me during forward unit coordination for approval prior to departure.

Example Tasking Statements:

1st Squad: You are the ME. NLT 1200, BLOCK the enemy south in the vicinity of the Rawah Bridge in order to prevent the enemy from interfering with the Bn ME attack to the north. You have one assault squad attached effective immediately.

2d Squad: You are SE 1. NLT 1200 BLOCK the enemy south IVO of Rawah Bridge from the east of 1st Squad IOT prevent the enemy from exploiting the eastern flank of the platoon's main effort. You will provide Marines for the first patrol to depart friendly line approximately 30 minutes after occupation. BPT assume the mission of the main effort. BPT assume the role of least engaged unit.

3d Squad: You are SE 2. NLT 1200 BLOCK the enemy south IVO Rawah Bridge from the west of the 1st Squad IOT allow the main effort to fix the enemy in Engagement Area Reaper. You will provide Marines for the first LP/OP, which will be inserted during the leader's recon. BPT assume the mission of the main effort. BPT assume the role of least engaged unit.

MG Squad: You are SE 3 and in general support of the platoon. Refer to B3N0511XQ-DM Machine Gun Employment.

Engineer Team: You are SE 4. Utilizing wire and existing obstacles, TURN the enemy into Engagement Area Reaper IOT deny the enemy freedom of movement. Also, FIX the enemy in Engagement Area Reaper IOT prevent them from closing with the platoon's primary positions. Priority of obstacle construction goes to obstacles in the engagement area, obstacles forward of the engagement area, and then to supplementary wire and other dummy obstacles. Actively seek opportunities to employ existing obstacles into the plan to maximize our resources. Coordinate with me throughout the course of the operation for security support during obstacle construction.

Coordinating Instructions (Not an all inclusive list):
Timeline
Leader's Recon Patrol task organization
Priorities of Reconnaissance for Leader's Recon
Method for Marking
- Squad Release Point
- Squad BPs
- Command Post
- Casualty Collection Point
- Enemy Prisoner of War Collection Point
- Latrine

Priorities of Work
Security Plan
Patrol Plan
Obstacle Plan

Annex A: Platoon Defensive OPORD Example (Continued)

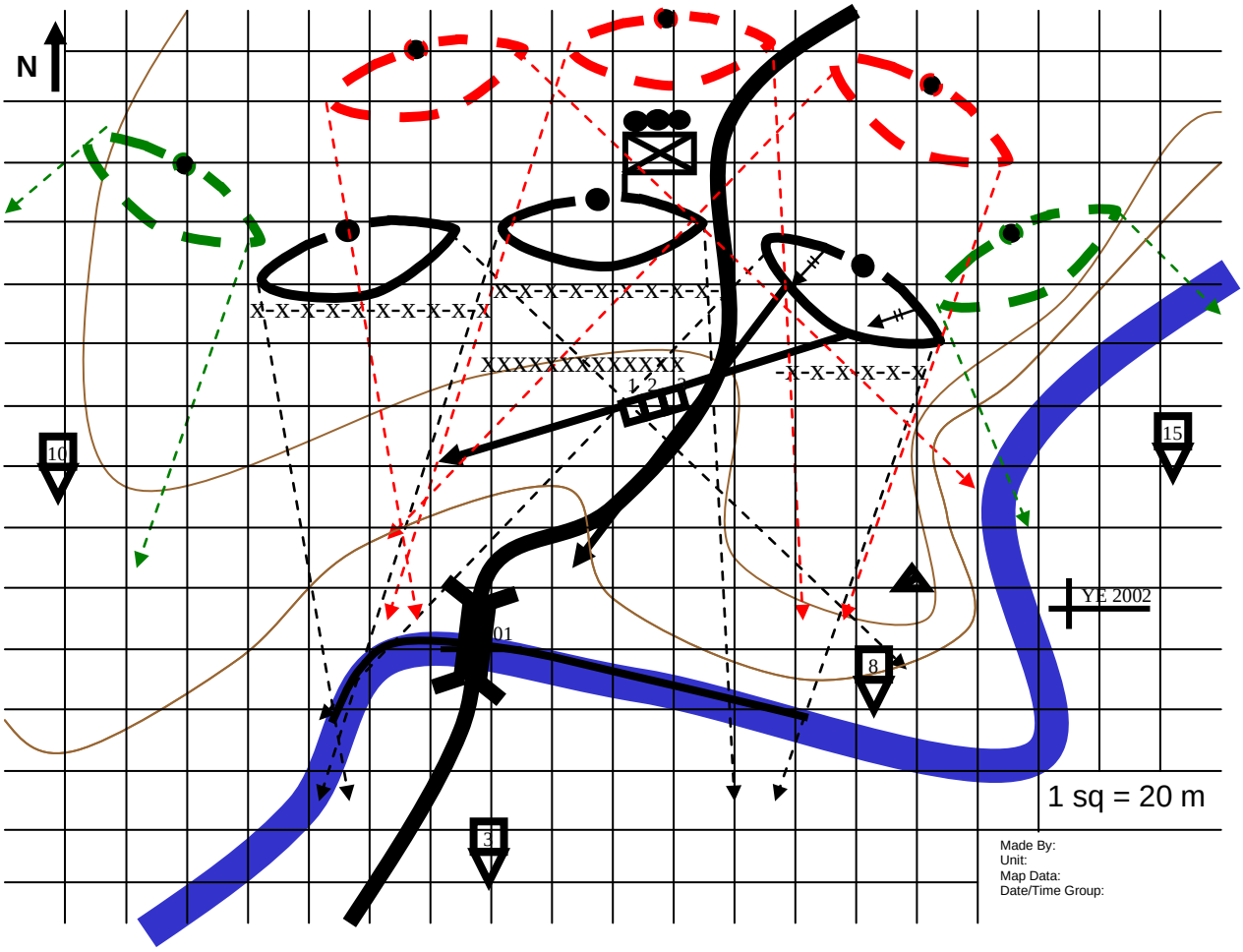
Coordinating Instructions (Continued):
Target Precedence
Engagement Criteria
Immediate Action Drills
- Actions on enemy contact during occupation
- Actions on enemy contact during departure / re-entry of friendly lines by a patrol.

Plan for employment of least engaged unit
MOPP Level
ROE
Platoon Insertion Plan (Helos, trucks, AAVs, etc…)
Platoon Extraction Plan (Helos, trucks, AAVs, etc…)
Lost Marine Plan
Missing Marine Plan
Tactical Control Measures
- Assembly Area
- Tentative ORP
- SRP
- Tentative primary defensive position
- TRPs (tentative)
- Trigger Lines (tentative)
- Etc…

Annex B: Step-by-step to create a fire plan sketch

Step	Action
1	Determine appropriate scale required for creation of your platoon fire plan sketch. This means determining the dimensions, in meters, of each box on your graph paper. (remember that the ratio of your scale should grow as the FPS progress from FT to Sqd to Plt).
2	Ensure that you know the length of each squad battle position (pace it off to be exact) as well as the attitude of the position. This will allow you to be precise when you place it on the grid lines. (You can also use a GPS to get the 8-10 digit grid for each position, or the left and right most holes for the fire teams/squads sectors. This info can also be used to place the positions on the grid lines.)
3	Use the grid lines available to orient the grids north. Reference the squad fire plan sketches and, based on the attitude and size (measure both with a protractor), draw your ME and both SE squads' primary positions. Repeat for alternate and supplementary positions as necessary.
4	Draw and label the platoon CP. Your company commander may need this information later on.
5	Use the protractor to measure and draw each squad's left and right limits (Magnetic Azimuths) using a dotted line Primary Positions Alternate Positions Supplementary Positions Write the azimuth for each sector along its associated line
6	Use the protractor to draw: For Plt – MG PDFs and FPLs; do not include M249 PDFs (The platoon commander may choose to include some M249 PDFs based on the M249s' location in the defense and importance in the overall fire plan.) FPLs are depicted with a bold line for grazing fire; where grazing fire cannot be achieved, dead space is shown by a thin line. FPLs have a magnetic azimuth For Sqd – M249 and M203 PDFs for each fire team; M249 PDF has magnetic azimuths M203 has magnetic azimuth and range to target/dead-space in meters Write the azimuth for each PDF/FPL along its associated line
7	Annotate key terrain on the sketch (large fingers or draws, roads, steams and large amounts of dead space. Try not to clutter the sketch. Ensure the terrain matches what you see in front of you. (This portion falls under the art of developing the sketch. The platoon commander must balance the need for detail with avoiding clutter/confusion on the sketch).
8	Draw and number Target Reference Points (TRPs) and trigger lines Are TRPs recognizable? Do they make sense? Do all the Marines know their respective TRPs/trigger lines?
9	Annotate targets (maintain grids to targets on another piece of paper) ensure FPF target is drawn with boxes. Each box is labeled with a number that corresponds to a gun on the gun-line. Annotate whether or not the FPF has been registered.

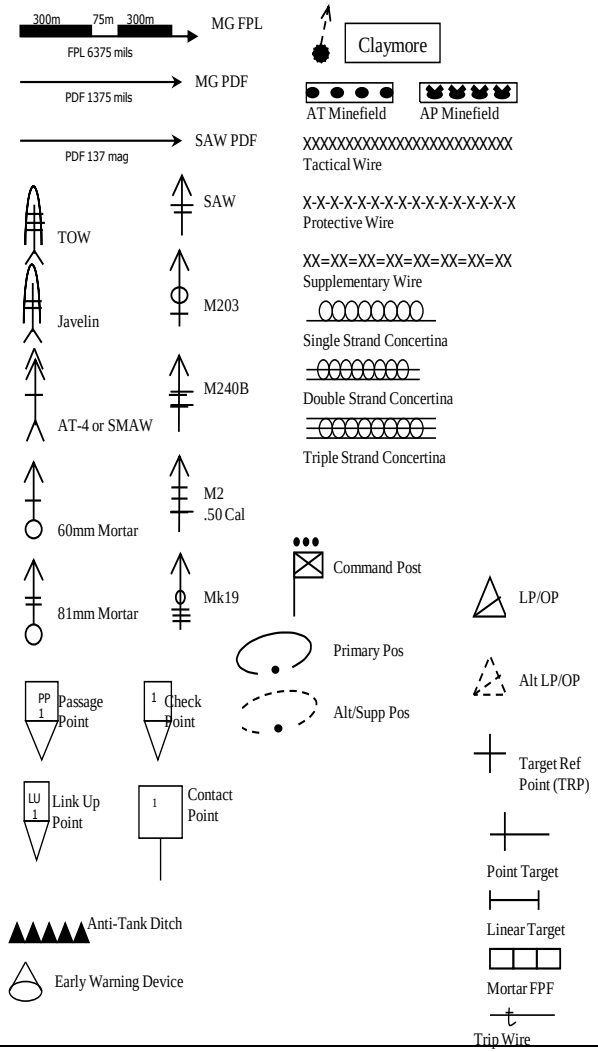
10	Annotate obstacles. This includes both existing and reinforcing obstacles. (Maintain grids to obstacles on another sheet of paper; this includes early warning devices)
11	Draw Passage Points for patrols Draw Check Points for patrols if applicable Draw LP/OPs
12	Complete the marginal information
13	Create a copy of the fire plan sketch. You will keep one and turn the other one over to your company commander. Ensure to update as required.

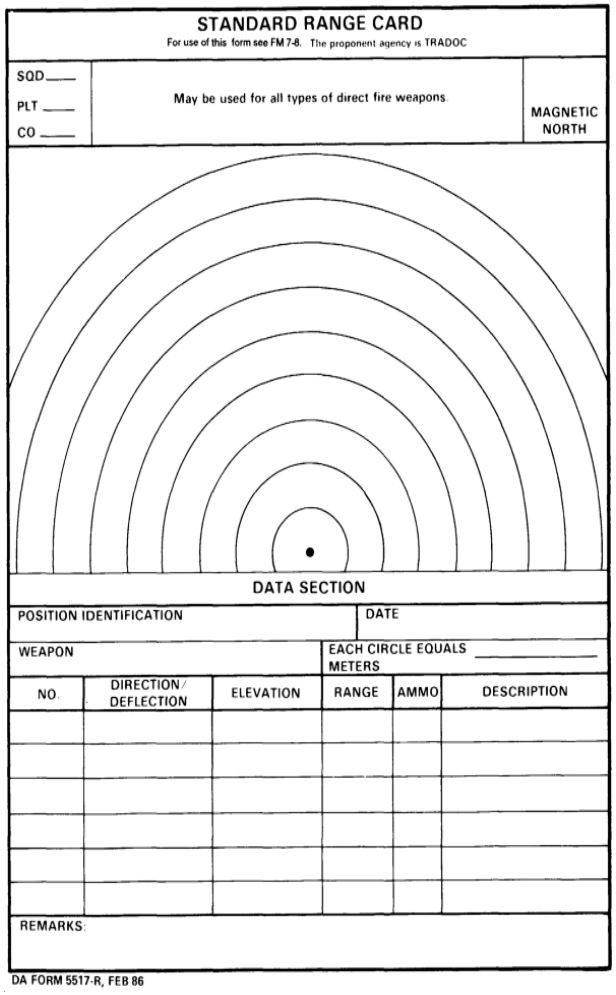


PLATOON FIRE PLAN SKETCH CHECKLIST

1. Significant terrain annotated on the sketch?
   a. Streams?
   b. High Ground?
   c. Trails?
2. Left and Right Grids and Sector Limits for Squads (Magnetic Azimuths)
   a. Primary Positions?
   b. Alternate Positions?
   c. Supplementary Positions?
3. Center Grid for the Squad position?
4. Left and Right Grids and Sector Limits for the Platoon (Magnetic Azimuths)
   a. Primary Positions?
   b. Alternate Positions?
   c. Supplementary Positions?
5. Center Grid for the Platoon positions?
6. Final Protective Fires for MGs
(Principle Direction of Fire – PDF, or Final Protective Line – FPL)
and Rockets/ Missiles (Hot/ Cold Positions)
   a. M249 has magnetic azimuths?
   b. M240G has magnetic azimuths for PDF/FPL?
      i. Length of Dead Space annotated?
      ii. Have you attached copies of the Range Cards to the Sketch?
      iii. Do you have a copy of the Range Card at the CP?
   c. Mk153 hot/cold positions marked?
      i. Have you attached Range Cards to the sketch?
      ii. Do you have a copy of the Range Card at the CP?
   d. Vehicles/other attachments marked?
      i. Grids to positions?
      ii. Sectors of Fire/PDFs/FPLs marked?
      iii. Have you attached Range Cards to the sketch?
      iv. Do you have copies of the Range Cards at the CP?

7. Target Reference Point (TRP) Grids and Descriptions?
   a. Are TRPs recognizable?
   b. Do they make sense?
   c. Marked in Additional Information?
8. OP/LP positions marked?
   a. Grids?
      i. Primary?
      ii. Alt?
9. Targets annotated on sketch?
Grids to targets?
FPLs noted for all fire support agencies (60mm, 81mm, Arty, NGF)
10. Wire, Natural Obstacles, Claymores, Booby Traps, Trip Flares, etc.?
   a. Annotated on map in relation to terrain?
   b. Grid marked in marginal info?
11. IS IT CURRENT?
Is it updated for new additions to the defense?
Have you changed the date/time group (DTG) to reflect the new changes?
Name, Rank, Unit, and DTG on Margin?





STANDARD RANGE CARD

For use of this form see FM 7-8. The proponent agency is TRADOC

SQD ____ PLT ____ CO ____

May be used for all types of direct fire weapons.

MAGNETIC NORTH

DATA SECTION

POSITION IDENTIFICATION | DATE

WEAPON | EACH CIRCLE EQUALS ____ METERS

NO.	DIRECTION/ DEFLECTION	ELEVATION	RANGE	AMMO	DESCRIPTION

REMARKS:

DA FORM 5517-R, FEB 86

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
FMFM 2-7	Fire Support in MAGTF Operations
JP 1-02	Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms
MCDP 1	Warfighting
MCDP 1-0	Marine Corps Operations
MCIP 3-11.01A	Rifle Platoon and Company Publication
MCRP 3-11.1A	Commander's Tactical Handbook
MCRP 3-11.1B	Small Unit Leader's Guide to Weather and Terrain
MCRP 3-11.2A	Marine Troop Leader's Guide
MCRP 3-16A	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process
MCRP 3-16C	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Fire Support for the Combined Arms Commander
MCRP 5-2A	Operational Terms and Graphics
MCWP 3-1	Ground Combat Operations
MCWP 3-11.1	Marine Rifle Company/Platoon
MCWP 3-11.2	Marine Rifle Squad
MCWP 3-11.3	Scouting and Patrolling
MCWP 3-15.1	Machine Guns and Machine Gun Gunnery
MCWP 3-15.5	Antiarmor Operations
MCWP 3-16	Fire Support Coordination in the Ground Combat Element
MCWP 3-17	Engineering Operations

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
AA	Assembly area
ACE	Ammunition, Casualties, and Equipment
AO	Area of operations
ASAP	As soon as possible
BAMCIS	Begin planning, arrange for reconnaissance, make reconnaissance, complete the plan, issue the order, and supervise
CASEVAC	Casualty evacuation
CFF	Call for fire
COC	Combat Operations Center
COG	Center of gravity
CCP	Casualty collection point
CP	Command post
CSS	Combat service support
CV	Critical vulnerabilities
EA	Engagement area
EMLCOA	Enemy's most likely course of action
EN	Enemy
EPW	Enemy prisoner of war
FEBA	Forward edge of the battle area
FEX	Field exercise
FLOT	Forward line of own troops
FPF	Final protective fires
FPL	Final protective lines
FSP	Fire support plan
IA	Immediate action
IOT	In order to
KIA	Killed in action
LP/OP	Listening post/Observation post
MBA	Main battle area
ME	Main effort
METT-TC	Mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available-time available, time and cultural considerations
MLG	Marine Logistics Group
NLT	No later than
MLG	Marine Logistics Group
OAR	Original, Appropriate, and Redundant
PDF	Principle direction of fire
Recon	Reconnaissance
SAW	Squad automatic weapon
SE	Supporting effort
SOM	Scheme of maneuver
TBS	The Basic School
TCM	Tactical control measures
TRP	Target Reference Points
TTP	Tactics, techniques, and practices
US	United States

Notes