

LESSON TWO

DEFENSE PLANS, OPERATION ORDERS, AND FIGHTING POSITIONS FOR SQUAD MEMBERS

Soldiers Manual Tasks:

- 071-326-5750 Prepare and issue an oral platoon operation order for a defensive mission.
- * NSMT Identify plans for conduct of the defense by a forward rifle platoon.
- 071-326-5710 Designate fighting positions for squad members (less crew-served weapons) defense.

* No Soldier's Manual Task.

OVERVIEW

Task Description: Defense plans, operation orders, and fighting position for squad members.

TASKS: Identify, prepare, and issue an oral platoon operation order for a defensive mission, identify plans for conduct of the defense by a forward rifle platoon, and designate fighting positions for squad members (less crew-served weapons) in the defense.

CONDITIONS: You will be given the subcourse material for this lesson, and a training scenario. You will complete the practice exercise at the end of this lesson.

STANDARDS: The student will demonstrate his comprehension and knowledge by identifying, preparing, and issuing an oral platoon operation order for a defensive mission, identify plans for conduct of the defense by a forward rifle platoon, and designate fighting positions for squad members (less crew-served weapons) in the defense.

REFERENCES: The material contained in this lesson was derived from the following publications:
FM 7-7
FM 7-8
STP 7-11B24-SM

PART A - PREPARE AND ISSUE AN ORAL PLATOON OPERATION ORDER

1. General.

You are responsible for keeping your men informed through the squad leaders. A primary way of doing so is through the platoon order. Your platoon order is based on the operation order given by the company commanders. It must be altered to delete information that does not concern the platoon and to add sufficient detail to allow proper planning by the squad leaders.

As part of your troop leading procedure you must develop a clear and concise oral platoon order for the defense and issue it to your squad leaders. In issuing the order, you must make sure the squad leaders understand their mission and the specific coordinating instructions that apply. The order must contain the following items, properly placed in the five-paragraph format:

- The mission of the company.
- The mission of the platoon.
- The mission of each squad, to include specific areas of responsibility and provisions for security.
- Locations for machine guns and antitank weapons.
- The order and route march to the defensive area.
- Critical signal instructions.
- Locations of platoon and company command posts.

2. Operation Order.

The company commander issues an OPORD to his subordinate leaders in order to explain how the mission is to be conducted. The OPORD is issued using a five-paragraph format. This format helps the commander organize his thoughts and insures that nothing is overlooked. It also helps his subordinate leaders understand and follow the order.

The oral platoon order should follow the same basic five-paragraph format used in the company order.

PLATOON OPERATION ORDER FORMAT

- **TASK ORGANIZATION**

The task organization (TO) indicates the internal organization or tactical groupings for mission accomplishment. TO will also depict command and support relationships between units or elements and may also list names or titles assigned to tactical groupings.

1. SITUATION (paragraph 1): This paragraph provides an overview of the general situation.

a. Enemy forces (subparagraph 1a):

(1) Situation. Composition, disposition, location, movement, morale, strength, status of supply, etc.

(2) Capabilities. Types of vehicles, weapons, special training, NBC, etc.

(3) Most probable course of action. Attack, defend, or delay.

b. Friendly forces. (subparagraph 1b): This subparagraph contains the verbatim mission statements of higher, adjacent, and supporting or reinforcing unit's listed in the following sequence:

(1) Higher headquarters. The mission of the company.

(2) Adjacent units. Listed in sequence left, right, front, rear.

(3) Supporting or reinforcing units. Those units supporting or reinforcing the platoon (for example, engineers or ground surveillance radar team).

c. Attachments and detachments: List here units attached to or detached from the company and platoon with the effective time.

2. MISSION (paragraph 2): The mission is a clear, concise statement of the task(s) to be accomplished by the issuing unit and its purpose. The mission statement is derived from the commander's mission analysis during the decision process and it addresses the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY of the operation. All of the mission-essential tasks (critical to the success of the operation, as determined by the commander) to be accomplished are normally addressed in chronological sequence in the mission statement. The mission is always stated in full and must stand alone without reference to any other documents except a map. Additionally, the mission statement, in addressing the "WHERE" of the operation, will always list the terrain feature (for example, "HILL 302" or "Road Junction") and grid coordinates. The terms "OBJECTIVE" and "Battle Position" may also be included if desired, but must be related to terrain features or grid coordinates.

3. EXECUTION (paragraph 3): The execution paragraph contains the "How to" information needed for mission accomplishment. This paragraph will consist of three elements: concept of the operation, subordinate unit subparagraphs, and coordinating instructions.

a. Concept of the operation (Subparagraph 3a):

(1) Scheme of maneuver. This is the statement of your visualization of the execution of an operation chronologically from start to completion. It accurately provides the subordinate elements with your intent in order that mission accomplishment is possible in the time available, and in the absence of additional communications or further instructions. The scheme of maneuver describes the employment of maneuver elements (for example, formation, order of march, a route, and actions on the objective). It includes all objectives, sectors, or battle positions for maneuver elements. Designation of a reserve will also be included in this part of the concept for any type mission.

(2) Fires. (plan fire support). Complements and supports the scheme of maneuver. It includes the priority of fire, priority targets, final protective fire (FPFs), preparatory fires (to include start time and duration) and any special fires, such as nuclear, chemical, smoke operations, or close-air support. Only indirect fires are addressed in this portion of the concept.

(3) Obstacles, mines, and fortifications. This subparagraph is always included for defensive operations. It may be included in the concept for offensive operations. Include a brief discussion of your intent or general thrust of the obstacle plan, and how it directly relates to your scheme of maneuver. Also includes priorities of obstacle work and types of operations (mobility, countermobility, and survivability may also be addressed).

(4) Intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW). May be included in the concept and includes a brief discussion of intelligence collection priorities and electronic warfare priorities. You may direct any attached surveillance assets to prioritize their efforts that are directly related to the success of the platoon operation.

b. Subordinate unit instructions (subparagraph 3b): Identifies the specific task to be accomplished by each subordinate element of the platoon; instructions presented in concept of operation may be repeated. All subordinate units must be listed. If no further instructions are to be issued, state "NONE".

c. Coordinating instructions: Last subparagraph of EXECUTION is entitled "coordinating instructions." It contains details of coordination and control applicable to two or more elements of the command issuing the order (with the exception of signal items, which are normally addressed in paragraph 5b). When there are no coordinating instructions, the word "NONE" is indicated. Typical items included in coordinating instructions are:

(1) Reports to be made other than standing operating procedure (SOP).

(2) Nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) troop safety instructions and operational exposure guidance (OEG).

(3) Mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) levels (if different from SOP).

(4) Air defense criteria.

(5) Consolidation/reorganization instructions.

(6) Priority intelligence requirements (PIR) (if not stated in an intelligence annex).

(7) Coordination of passage of lines.

(8) Effective date-time group (DTG) of attachments/detachments (if not listed in TASK ORG or paragraph 1c).

(9) Effective DTG or conditions. The DTG order or operation plan (OPLAN) becomes effective when the order or plan is not effective upon receipt.

4. SERVICE SUPPORT (paragraph 4): This paragraph contains combat service support (CSS) instructions and information relating to the operation. (NOTE: Reference may be made to unit SOP if appropriate; items not required are omitted.)

- a. Material and service. Status of classes of supply; transportation, services, and maintenance.
- b. Medical evacuation and hospitalization.
- c. Personnel. Unit strengths, replacements, maintenance of morale, discipline, law and order, and headquarters management.
- d. Civil-military cooperation. Limitations or restrictions concerning local area; psychological operations.
- e. Miscellaneous. Prisoner of war (PW) procedures.
- f. Combat service support facilities. The locations and proposed locations of CSS facilities (combat or field trains) may be indicated; however, this may not be necessary if shown graphically on an overlay.

5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL (paragraph 5): This paragraph contains instructions and information relating to command and to functions of communications-electronics (CE). It will contain two subparagraphs entitled "command" and "signal" in that sequence. Items addressed are as follows:

- a. Command (subparagraph 5a). As a minimum, will include the initial location of the commander (to facilitate messenger operations if it becomes necessary). It may also include the command post (CP) locations (required if CP locations are not shown graphically) and CP axis of displacement. Succession of command may be indicated if different from SOP.
- b. Signal (subparagraph 5b). As a minimum, will list the Communications-Electronics Operations Instructions (CEOI) index by specific number in effect for the operation as well as any changes scheduled during the period of the operation. May also list alternate or emergency signals (pyrotechnics, etc.) and any signal restrictions, such as "radio listening silence." Detailed signal instructions normally will be included in a CE annex.

As the platoon leader, you must look for items in the company order that must be altered to fit the platoon's mission. For example, assume that paragraphs 2 and 3 of the company order are given as:

"2. MISSION: Company A defends by 251400 Jun from FL140810 to FL160810.

"3. EXECUTION: The company will defend employing 1st Platoon on the left, 2d Platoon on the right, and 3d Platoon in reserve...."

You might alter those paragraphs as follows:

"2. MISSION: 2d Platoon defends by 251400 Jun from FL159810 to FL160810.

"3. EXECUTION: 2d Platoon will defend in sector, with 1st Squad on the left, 2d Squad in the center, and 3d Squad on the right. 1st Squad will occupy from

Paragraph 1 of the platoon order should contain the mission of the company that was stated in paragraph 2 of the company order. Paragraphs 4 and 5 will be similar to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the company order, but narrowed down to apply only to the platoon. For example, if paragraph 4 of the company order gives the location of the battalion field trains, the platoon order will probably not contain that information because it does not directly affect the squads. Your responsibility is to give the men the information that pertains to them. The five-paragraph order format should be used as a checklist to prevent omitting important information. It is not all inclusive, however, and may be modified as necessary.

Whenever possible, you should give the order to the squad leaders from a vantage point on or near the ground to be defended. From such a point, it is possible to orient the squad leaders by pointing out important terrain features. However, many times this will not be possible, and you will have to sketch the terrain on the ground. Terrain models are easy to construct, and they allow you to relate the order to terrain features.

3. Summary.

This concludes the discussion on preparing and issuing an oral platoon operation order. During this portion of the subcourse we discussed the platoon leader's responsibility to issue the order, formats, elements and how to alter the company order to fit the platoon's mission. We also discussed the importance of developing a clear and concise oral platoon order that covers the situation, mission, execution, service support and command and signal instructions. Specific guidance of what each of these elements must contain was discussed. We will now move to the next phase which is planning the defense for a forward rifle platoon.

PART B - PLAN DEFENSE FOR A FORWARD RIFLE PLATOON

1. Defense Plan.

After receiving the mission to defend, and after considering METT-T, you must develop a defense plan. Your defense plan includes:

- the deployment of squads,
- the deployment of machineguns and Dragons,
- the use of indirect fire,
- the use of mines and obstacles,
- security measures, and
- the selection and operation of a command post-observation post (CP-OP).

2. Deployment of Squads.

Your squads are generally deployed abreast so they all can shoot toward the expected direction of attack. On ideal terrain, a squad is capable of defending a front of about 100 meters. About 25 meters is added to the squad front for each machinegun in its sector. The distance between two-man positions should be about 20 meters; between one-man positions, 10 meters.

You give each squad a position to defend and a sector of fire. The center squad's sector of fire overlaps the sectors of fire of the flank squads. Each flank squad's sector of fire overlaps the sector of fire of the center squad and that of an adjacent platoon ([Figure 2-1](#)).

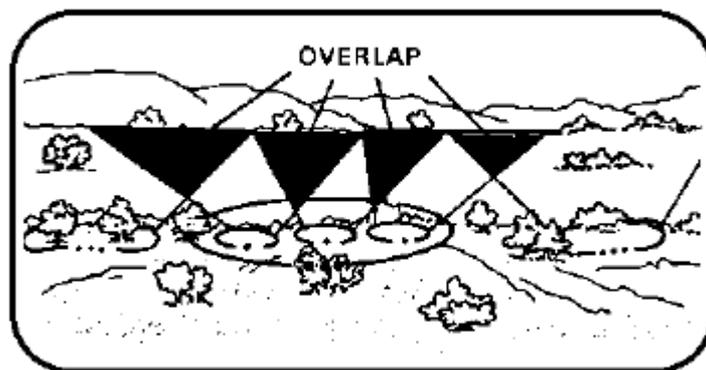


Figure 2-1. Sectors of Fire Overlap.

The squads prepare and occupy primary positions. They may also prepare supplementary positions. These are prepared the same as the primary positions, but are oriented in a different direction. In time, trenches are dug to provide covered routes to supplementary positions. Squads do not normally have alternate positions, but they do have a portion of the platoon's alternate position ([Figure 2-2](#)).

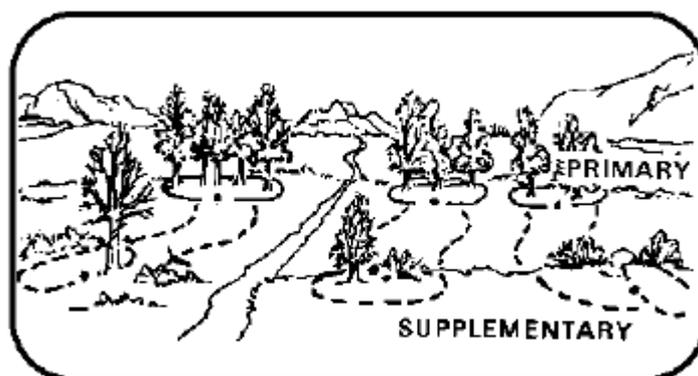


Figure 2-2. Positions.

3. Deployment of Machineguns and Dragons.

You pick the machinegun and Dragon positions.

- Machineguns. Your machineguns are the platoon's main weapons for stopping infantry

attacks. Positions and sectors of fire should:

- cover infantry avenues of approach, and
- shoot the most grazing fire possible across the platoon's front.

Their sectors of fire should overlap each other and those of adjacent platoons.

Each gun is given a primary and secondary sector of fire. A gunner shoots in his secondary sector only if there are no targets in his primary sector, or if ordered to. Each gun's primary sector includes a final protective line (FPL) or a principal direction of fire (PDF).

- Final protective line. Where terrain allows, you assign a machinegun an FPL. The FPL is a line on which the gun shoots grazing fire across the platoon's front. Grazing fire is no more than 1 meter above the ground (about hip high). Fire on a gun's FPL is its final protective fire (FPF). It is fired on your command and in conjunction with the FPF of indirect fire weapons.

Deadspace on the FPL is found by having a man walk the FPL ([Figure 2-3](#)). The gunner watches the man walking down the line and marks spaces which cannot be grazed. The deadspace is covered with obstacles, grenade launcher fire, or mines, and is recorded on the range card.

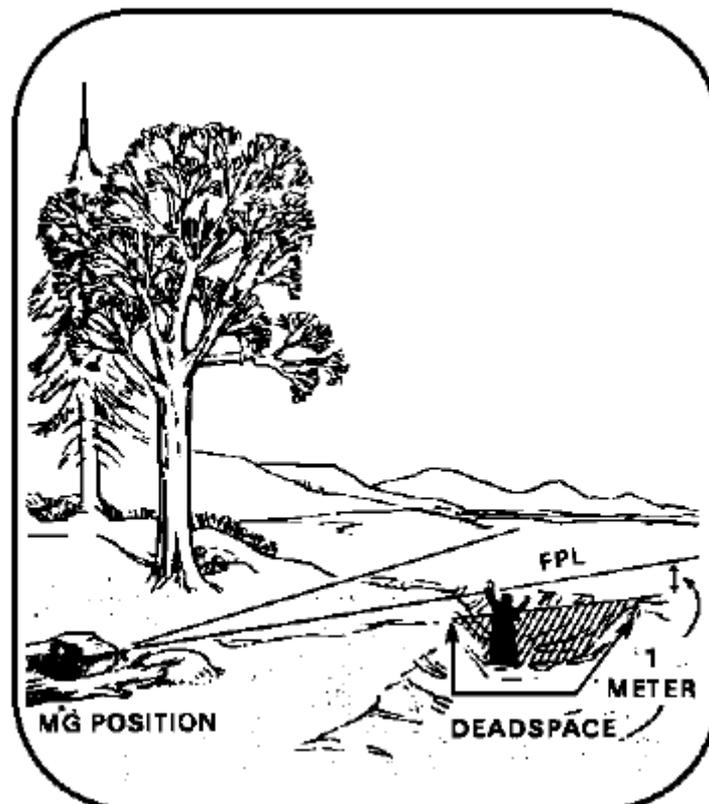


Figure 2-3. Finding Deadspace on FPL.

Principle direction of fire. When the terrain does not lend itself to an FPL, you assign the machinegun a PDF instead. This should be toward a gully or down a ditch which leads into the position. The gun is positioned to fire directly down this approach rather than across the platoon's

front ([Figure 2-4](#)).

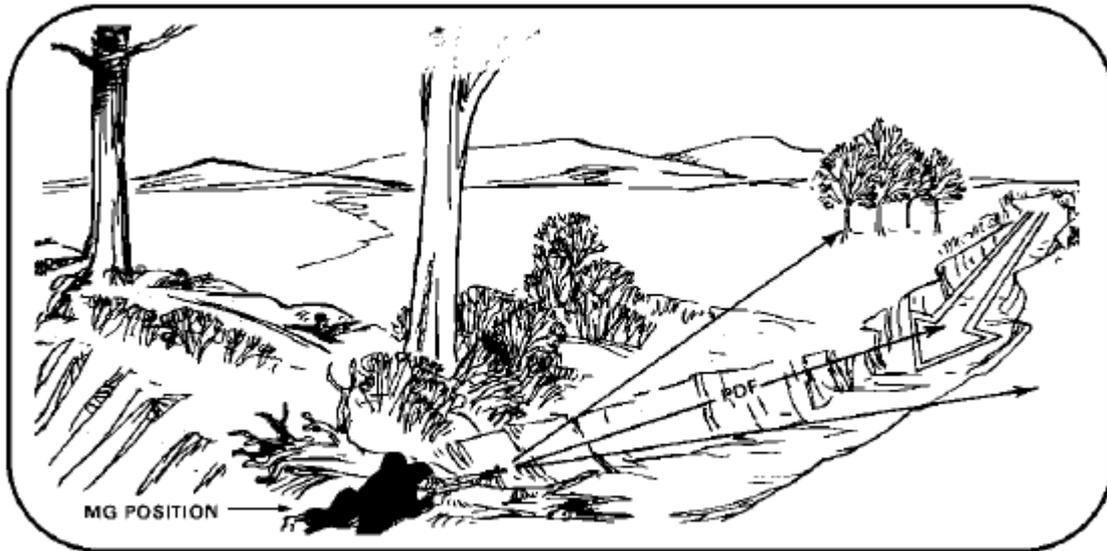


Figure 2-4. Principal Direction of Fire.

Gunners lay the machineguns on their FPL or PDF when not shooting. Once the machineguns are sited, the squad leader positions riflemen to protect them and to cover areas not covered by their fire.

- Dragons. Dragons are the platoon's main antiarmor weapon. They are positioned to cover armor avenues of approach. You pick a position and a sector of fire for each Dragon. You may also pick alternate and supplementary positions for them. Each position should allow flank fire and have cover and concealment. Dragons need covered routes between their positions.

4. Range Cards.

A range card is a rough sketch of the terrain around a weapon ([Figure 2-5](#)). It is prepared for each machinegun and Dragon. The card shows sectors of fire, FPL or PDF of the machineguns, targets and ranges to them, and, in the case of the Dragons, target reference points. Gunners prepare a least two copies of a range card. The gunner keeps one copy with the gun and gives one copy to you to help you make a platoon sector sketch.

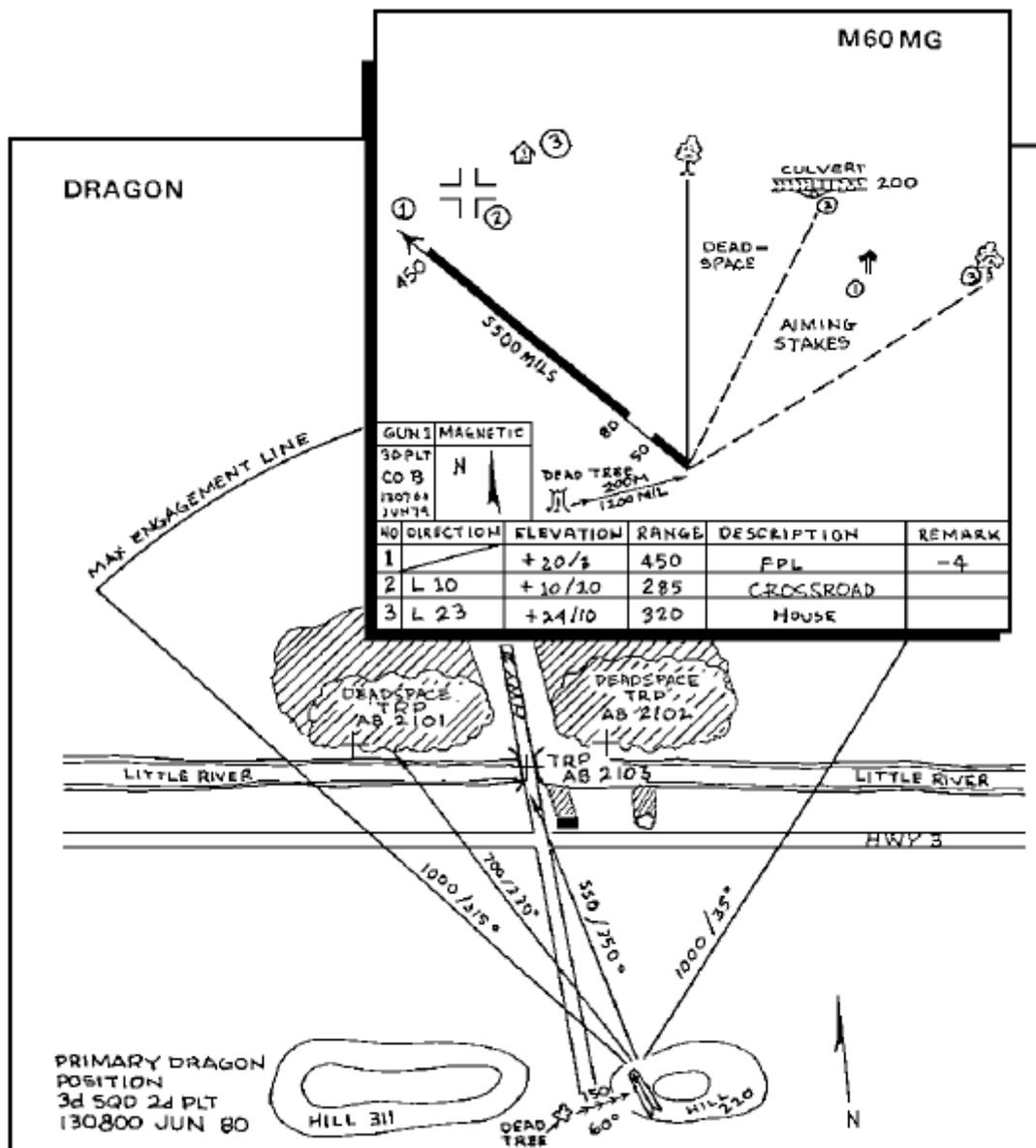


Figure 2-5. Range Cards.

5. Use of Indirect Fire.

Most indirect fire planning is done by the company commander and the fire support team (FIST) chief. A copy of the planned target list will be given to you. You and your FO check the target list to insure that fire is planned on all enemy avenues of approach and on known or likely enemy positions in the platoon sector of fire. If additional targets are needed, the FO requests them through the FIST chief. The targets that are planned to control and direct the Dragons and any other direct fire weapons are called target reference points (TRPs).

The company commander may assign an FPF to a platoon. An FPF is a prearranged barrier of fire. You must plan its location with the FO and the FIST chief. It should cover the most threatening approach. The FPF is planned close to the platoon position, but not so close that it endangers troops. When assigned an FPF, you will have the authority to call for it if the company commander does not retain this authority. It should only be fired to stop an enemy assault. On signal, it is fired continuously until it is ordered stopped. All other platoon weapons will fire while the FPF is being

fired.

6. Use of Mines and Obstacles.

You improve your defense by the use of mines, barbed wire, and tripflares. Antipersonnel (AP) mines are emplaced on infantry avenues of approach. Both antitank (AT) and AP mines are emplaced on armor avenues of approach. The AP mines are needed to protect the AT mines and cover the likely avenues of approach for enemy infantry.

7. Security Measures.

You must establish a security system for your platoon to keep the enemy from observing or surprising the platoon. You base this system on orders received from your company commander, the enemy situation, and the terrain and visibility conditions. The system provides for both active and passive measures.

- **Active Security Measures.** A company commander may require a platoon to have a set number of OPs and a set number of men on security. If he does not, you decide what you need. There should be at least one OP per platoon. In close terrain, there may be one per squad.

You also establish security within the platoon's position. You require a set number of men to be on security at all times. The number will vary with the enemy situation, terrain, and visibility. As a guide, at least one third of the platoon's troops should be on security at all times.

When an attack is expected, the entire platoon should be on security. This degree of security should not be maintained for extended periods. You must keep in mind that your men need rest in order to function in future operations. Security, however, cannot be sacrificed for rest.

A man on security must be awake, fully dressed, manning his weapon, observing his primary sector of fire, and listening for enemy activity. In Dragon and machinegun positions, the man on security mans the weapon even if it is not his assigned weapon. You must explain to men on security what to do if they hear or observe enemy activity.

A stand-to is held both morning and evening to insure that every man adjusts to the changing light and noise conditions, and is dressed, equipped, and ready for action. The stand-to should start before first light in the morning and continue until after light. It should start before dark in the evening and last until after dark. The starting and ending times should vary to prevent establishing a pattern, but the stand-to must last long enough to accomplish its purpose.

- **Passive Security Measures.** Passive security measures include camouflage of positions, control of movement, light and noise discipline, and limiting radio traffic.

8. Selection and Operation of a Command Post-Observation Post.

You locate your CP-OP in a place from which you can best see and control the platoon. If you cannot see and control all of it from one place, locate the CP-OP so that you can see and control that part of the platoon covering the most likely enemy approach. An alternate CP-OP is located in a place from which to see and control that part of the platoon that cannot be seen or controlled from the primary CP-OP.

Your platoon sergeant operates the alternate CP-OP ([Figure 2-6](#)).

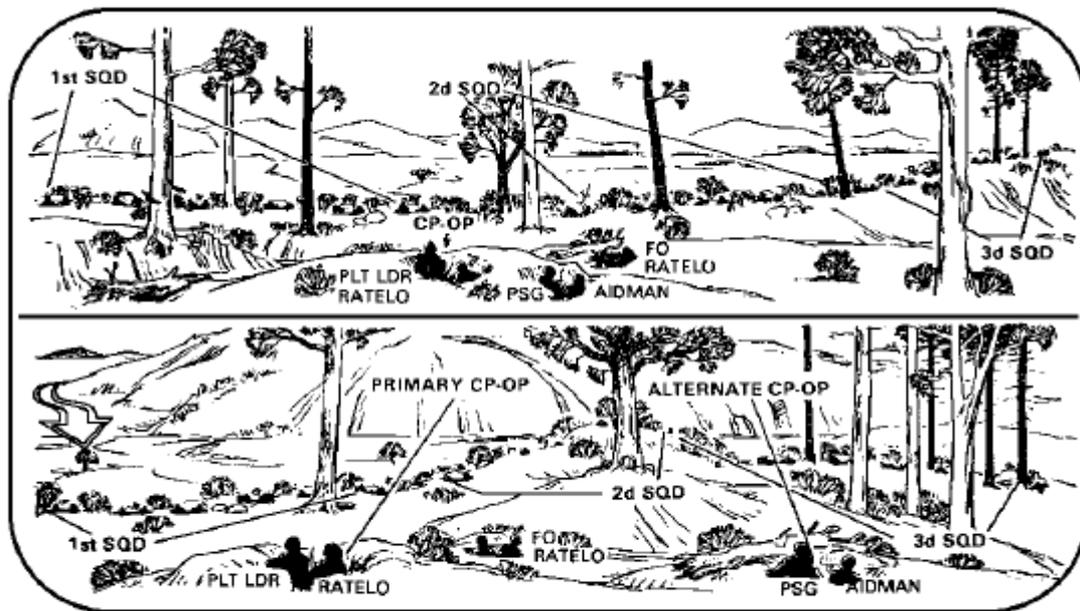


Figure 2-6. Command-Post-Observation Post.

The platoon CP-OP is tied into the company wire net by a TA-312 field phone, and into the company radio net by a AN/PRC-77 radio. The platoon has its own platoon radio and wire nets.

Additional phones may be issued to the platoon for use on OPs. The primary means of communication between the platoon leader and squad leaders is wire. Messengers, visual signals, personal contact, or whistles may be used when more appropriate than phones and radios, or when phones and radios do not work.

Squad leaders communicate with their fire team leaders and their men by personal contact (oral orders), or by sound and visual signals.

9. Sector Sketches.

A sector sketch consists of a rough drawing, as close to scale as possible.

- Squad Sector Sketch. Each squad leader prepares a sector sketch to help him plan his defense and to help him control fire. It shows:
 - the main terrain features in his sector of fire and the ranges to them;
 - each primary fighting position;
 - the primary and secondary sectors of fire of each position;
 - the type weapon in each position;
 - OPs and squad leader's positions;
 - deadspace; and
 - obstacles.

PART C - DESIGNATE FIGHTING POSITIONS FOR SQUAD MEMBERS

General

As discussed in lesson one, a well built fighting position gives the defender a marked advantage over the attacker and enhances his weapons' firing capability. Fighting positions must provide cover and concealment against aerial and ground fire and observation, and provide for mutual support among fighting positions', observation, and fields of fire.

As a platoon leader, you give each squad a requirement to occupy a specified area within the platoon defensive position and to cover a specified sector of fire.

The squad occupies the specified area and can fire into the assigned sector. The squad's firing positions are such that:

- Each position's fires interlock at a point beyond hand grenade range (35 meters).
- Flank weapon fires tie in with adjacent squads.
- Each position has cover and concealment (natural, if available) and good fields of fire.
- All positions are sited so that they are mutually supporting.
- Automatic rifle fires cover areas not covered by the M60 machinegun.
- Grenade fires cover deadspace in the squad sector.
- Claymores supplement all other fires.
- The squad leader's position is located where he can observe and control the fires of his squad.

When you designate fighting positions, you must ensure that:

- Each position has cover, concealment, and good fields of fire. To ensure this, try to position weapons so that their fires overlap, mutually support each other, and can be integrated, so that you can place heavy surprise fire on the enemy. Look for routes that will provide the attacker cover and positions from which he can mass his fire on your position. Be sure your entire squad sector is covered so that you can repel any assault.
- When your key weapons have been positioned, the men in the squad are positioned to protect those weapons from a dismounted assault. You must consider the number of men available, then position each one so that he can support the men on his right and left. Each sector of fire must cross in front of another position at a point, as stated, beyond hand grenade range. Site each fighting position using natural cover and concealment, then:
 - Clear fields of fire to allow each man to do the job for which he is positioned. Do not overclear.
 - Build artificial cover, such as a parapet, if required.

- Hide everything.
- Insure that all enemy approaches into a squad's sector are adequately covered by automatic weapons fire.
- Prior to digging in, you must move to the front of the position to insure that each fighting position has frontal cover from enemy fire and all positions are mutually supporting.
- As discussed in lesson one, a good fighting position should allow you to see and fire to the front when not receiving effective direct fire. But, if effective direct fire is received, the soldier can move behind frontal cover and fire to the oblique (Figure 2-8).

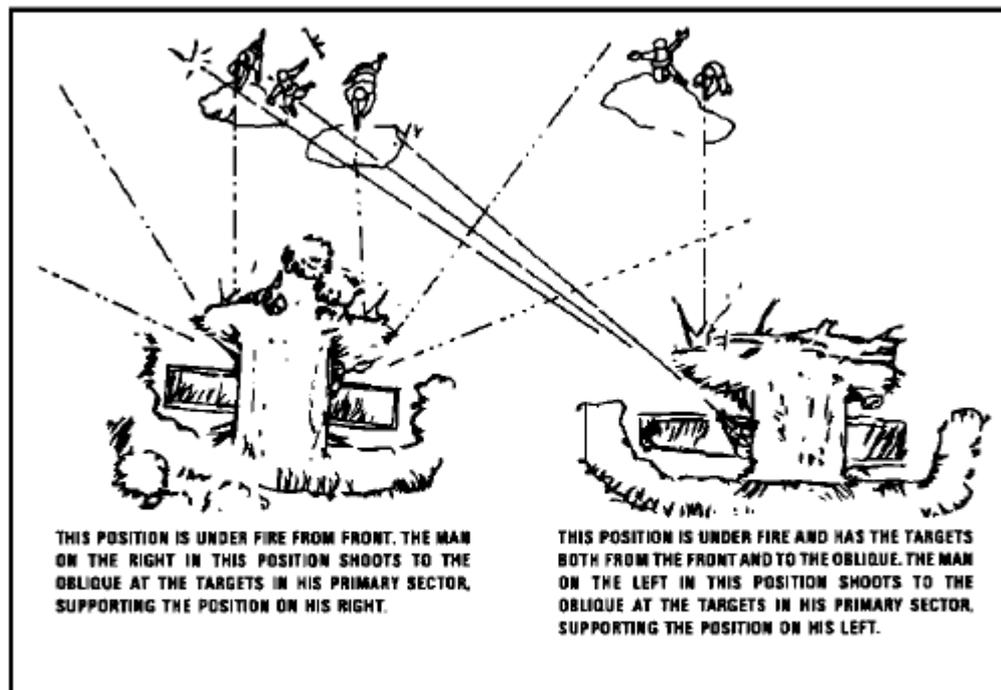


Figure 2-8. Fighting Positions.

When you are positioning each weapon of a rifle squad, you should follow the procedures outlined below:

- Automatic Riflemen. Identify dismounted avenues of approach, such as ravines, draws, and heavily wooded or brush areas, that are not covered with the machinegun. In areas covered by the machinegun, find out what deadspace the machinegun has and cover it with automatic rifle (AR) fire, if possible. If there is no deadspace, assign a sector that will interlock with and overlap the machinegun's sector and final protective fire.
- Grenadiers. Position grenade launchers to cover the deadspaces of the automatic weapon's final protective fire. They must also be positioned to cover the entire squad's sector.
- Riflemen. Position riflemen between the remaining positions to give continuous observation and fire throughout the squad sector. They provide mutual support between positions and identify targets for the squad's and platoon's key weapons (grenade launchers, ARs, machineguns, and Dragons).

- Claymore Mines. Use these to cover any deadspace that cannot be covered with 40-mm grenade launchers, and to supplement the fire of your riflemen.

The squad leader must select a position from which he can control the fires of his squad. He uses his weapon only when necessary to protect himself, to direct fire, or to influence the action at a critical point. If he has enough men, he positions himself slightly behind the squad so that he can observe and contact the squad, or at least his team leaders. If his squad's strength is reduced, or the terrain does not permit him to establish a position to the rear, he must man a forward position. In this case, he may have to construct a single position to be able to observe his squad's sector. The squad leader must be able to maintain contact with you and his fire team leaders from whatever position he selects. He should look for covered routes that he can use to move to his team leader's positions and to your position.

This completes lesson two. You should know how to prepare and issue an oral platoon operation order, plan defense for a forward rifle platoon and how to designate fighting positions for squad members (less crew-served weapons). After reviewing all the material in this lesson, you should complete the practice exercise for lesson two. Answers and feedback for the question in the practice exercise will be provided to show you where further study is required.