

Small Unit Tactics from Fm 3-21.8 The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad



Fire Team Formations

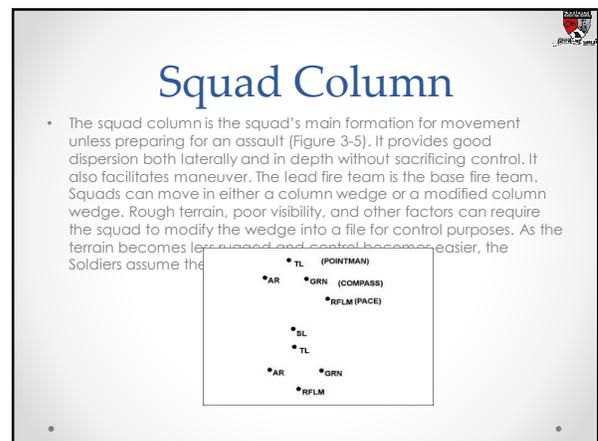
- 3-32. The term fire team formation refers to the Soldiers' relative positions within the fire team. Fire team formations include the fire team wedge and the fire team file (Table 3-2). Both formations have advantages and disadvantages. Regardless of which formation the team employs, each Soldier must know his location in the formation relative to the other members of the fire team and the team leader. Each Soldier covers a set sector of responsibility for observation and direct fire as the team is moving. To provide the unit with all-round protection, these sectors must interlock. Team leaders must be constantly aware of their team's sectors and correct them as required.
- The team leader adjusts the team's formation as necessary while the team is moving. The distance between men will be determined by the mission, the nature of the threat, the closeness of the terrain, and by the visibility. As a general rule, the unit should be dispersed up to the limit of control. This allows for a wide area to be covered, makes the team's movement difficult to detect, and makes them less vulnerable to enemy ground and air attack. Fire teams rarely act independently. However, in the event that they do, when halted, they use a perimeter defense to ensure all-around security.

Squad Formations

- 3-37. The term squad formation refers to the relative locations of the fire teams. Squad formations include the squad column, the squad line, and the squad file.
- 3-38. The squad leader adjusts the squad's formation as necessary while moving, primarily through the three movement techniques (see Section III). The squad leader exercises command and control primarily through the two team leaders and moves in the formation where he can best achieve this. The squad leader is responsible for 360-degree security, for ensuring the team's sectors of fire are mutually supporting, and for being able to rapidly transition the squad upon contact.
- 3-39. The squad leader designates one of the fire teams as the base fire team. The squad leader controls the squad's speed and direction of movement through the base fire team while the other team and any attachments cue their movement off of the base fire team. This concept applies when not in contact and when in contact with the enemy.
- 3-40. Weapons from the weapons squad (a machine gun or a Javelin) may be attached to the squad for the movement or throughout the operation. These high value assets need to be positioned so they are protected and can be quickly brought into the engagement when required. Ideally, these weapons should be positioned so they are between the two fire teams.

Fire Team Wedge

- The wedge (Figure 3-3) is the basic formation for the fire team. The interval between Soldiers in the wedge formation is normally 10 meters. The wedge expands and contracts depending on the terrain. Fire teams modify the wedge when rough terrain, poor visibility, or other factors make control of the wedge difficult. The normal interval is reduced so all team members can still see their team leader and all team leaders can still see their squad leader. The sides of the wedge can contract to the point where the wedge resembles a single file. Soldiers expand or resume their original positions when moving in less rugged terrain where control is easier.
- In this formation the fire team leader is in the lead position with his men echeloned to the right and left behind him. The positions for all but the leader may vary. This simple formation permits the fire team leader to lead by example. The leader's standing order to his Soldiers is: "Follow me and do as I do." When he moves to the right, his Soldiers should also move to the right. When he fires, his Soldiers also fire. When using the lead-by-example technique, it is essential for all Soldiers to maintain visual contact with the leader.



Squad Line

- The squad line provides maximum firepower to the front and is used to assault or as a pre-assault formation (Figure 3-6). To execute the squad line, the squad leader designates one of the teams as the base team. The other team cues its movement off of the base team. This applies when the squad is in close combat as well. From this formation, the squad leader can employ any of the three movement techniques or conduct fire and movement (see Section III).



Platoon Formations

- 3-47. The actual number of useful combinations of squad and fire team combat formations within the platoon combat formations is numerous, creating a significant training requirement for the unit. Add to that the requirement to modify formations with movement techniques, immediate action drills, and other techniques, and it is readily apparent that what the platoon leader needs is a couple of simple, effective strategies. These strategies should be detailed in the unit's SOPs. For a full description of each combat formation and advantages and disadvantages refer again to Table 3-1

Squad File

- The squad file has the same characteristics as the fire team file (Figure 3-7). In the event that the terrain is severely restrictive or extremely close, teams within the squad file may also be in file. This disposition is not optimal for enemy contact, but does provide the squad leader with maximum control. If the squad leader wishes to increase his control over the formation he moves forward to the first or second position. Moving forward also enables him to exert greater morale presence by leading from the front, and to be immediately available to make key decisions. Moving a team leader to the last position can



Platoon Headquarters

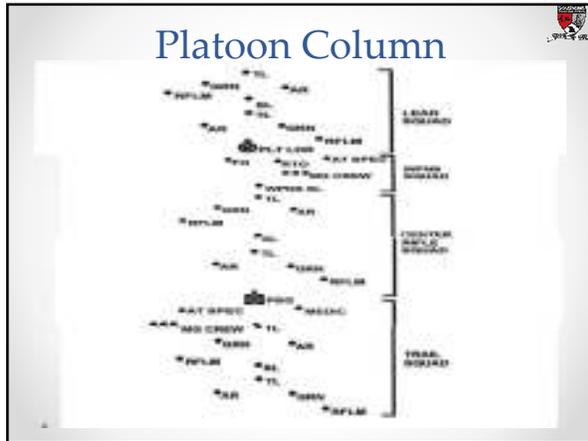
- 3-51. The platoon leader also has to decide how to disperse the platoon headquarters elements (himself, his RTO, his interpreter, the forward observer, the platoon sergeant, and the medic). These elements do not have a fixed position in the formations. Rather, they should be positioned where they can best accomplish their tasks. The platoon leader's element should be where he conducts actions on contact, where he can supervise navigation, and where he can communicate with higher. The FO's element should be where he can best see the battlefield and where he can communicate with the platoon leader and the battalion fire support officer (FSO). This is normally in close proximity to the platoon leader. The platoon sergeant's element should be wherever the platoon leader is not. Because of the platoon sergeant's experience, he should be given the freedom to assess the situation and advise the platoon leader accordingly. Typically, this means the platoon leader is more toward the front of the formation, while the platoon sergeant is more to the rear of the formation.

Demonstrations

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VTeLlvZnyg&list=PL93A1FE4B7126209C>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKRues4Fwrk&list=PL93A1FE4B7126209C>

Platoon Leader Responsibilities

- 3-48. Like the squad leader, the platoon leader exercises command and control primarily through his subordinates and moves in the formation where he can best achieve this. The squad and team leader execute the combat formations and movement techniques within their capabilities based on the platoon leader's guidance.
- 3-49. The platoon leader is responsible for 360-degree security, for ensuring that each subordinate unit's sectors of fire are mutually supporting, and for being able to rapidly transition the platoon upon contact. He adjusts the platoon's formation as necessary while moving, primarily through the three movement techniques (see Section III). Like the squad and team, this determination is a result of the task, the nature of the threat, the closeness of terrain, and the visibility.
- 3-50. The platoon leader is also responsible for ensuring his squads can perform their required actions. He does this through training before combat and rehearsals during combat. Well-trained squads are able to employ combat formations, movement techniques, actions on contact, and stationary formations.

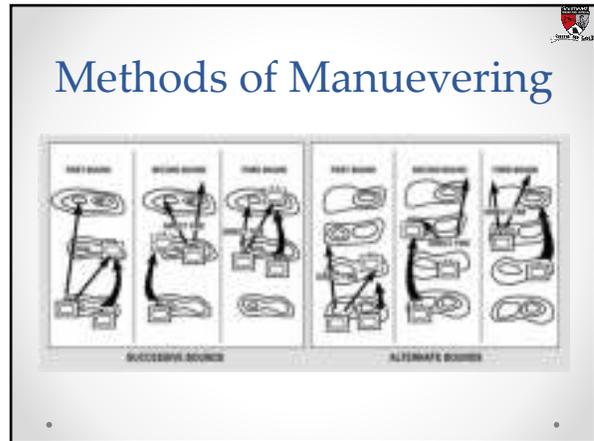


Methods of Manuevering

- **Successive Bounds**
- 3-68. If the platoon uses successive bounds, the lead squad, covered by the trail squad, advances and occupies a support-by-fire position. The trail squad advances to a support-by-fire position abreast of the lead squad and halts. The lead squad moves to the next position and the move continues. Only one squad moves at a time, and the trail squad avoids advancing beyond the lead squad.
- **Alternate Bounds**
- 3-69. Covered by the rear squad, the lead squad moves forward, halts, and assumes overwatch positions. The rear squad advances past the lead squad and takes up overwatch positions. The initial lead squad then advances past the initial rear squad and takes up overwatch positions. Only one squad moves at a time. This method is usually more rapid than successive bounds.

Movement Techniques

- Movement techniques are not fixed formations. They refer to the distances between Soldiers, teams, and squads that vary based on mission, enemy, terrain, visibility, and any other factor that affects control. There are three movement techniques: traveling; traveling overwatch; and bounding overwatch. The selection of a movement technique is based on the likelihood of enemy contact and the need for speed. Factors to consider for each technique are control, dispersion, speed, and security (Table 3-5). Individual movement techniques include high and low crawl, and three to five second rushes from one covered position to another (see FM 21-75, *Combat Skills of the Soldier*).



Movement Techniques Cont.

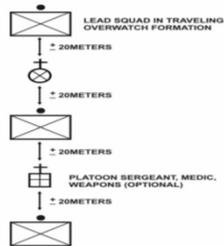
- Basic Movement Techniques
- Traveling- Contact Not Likely
- Traveling Overwatch-Contact Possible
- Bounding Overwatch- Contact Expected
- Refer to Video.

Platoon Movement Techniques

- 3-76. The platoon leader determines and directs which movement technique the platoon will use. While moving, leaders typically separate their unit into two groups: a security element and the main body. In most scenarios, the infantry platoon is not large enough to separate its forces into separate security forces and main body forces. However, it is able to accomplish these security functions by employing movement techniques. A movement technique is the manner a platoon uses to traverse terrain.
- 3-77. As the probability of enemy contact increases, the platoon leader adjusts the movement technique to provide greater security. The key factor to consider is the trail unit's ability to provide mutual support to the lead element. Soldiers must be able to see their fire team leader. The squad leader must be able to see his fire team leaders. The platoon leader should be able to see his lead squad leader

Traveling

- The platoon often uses the traveling technique when contact is unlikely and speed is needed

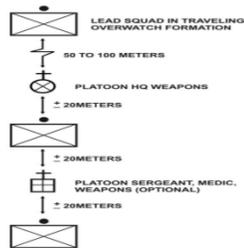


Squad Tactics: Recon

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VTeL1vZnyg&list=PL93A1FE4B7126209C>

Traveling Overwatch

- Traveling overwatch is an extended form of traveling in which the lead element moves continuously but trailing elements move at varying speeds, sometimes pausing to overwatch movement of the lead element



Squad Tactics: Squad Attack

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcapgRx1sxl

Bounding Overwatch

- Bounding overwatch is similar to fire and movement in which one unit overwatches the movement of another (Figure 3-21). The difference is there is no actual enemy contact. Bounding overwatch is used when the leader expects contact.

Platoon Attack/Battle Drill 1

- 7-10. An attack is an offensive operation that destroys enemy forces, seizes, or secures terrain. An attack differs from a movement to contact because the enemy disposition is at least partially known. Movement supported by fires characterizes an attack. The platoon will likely participate in a synchronized company attack. However, the platoon may conduct a special purpose attack as part of or separate from a company offensive or defensive operation. Special purpose attacks consist of ambush, spoiling attack, counterattack, raid, feint, and demonstration. For a detailed discussion of attack and special purpose attacks, refer to Section VI.

Platoon Attack/Battle Drill

1

- http://www.armystudyguide.com/content/EIB/EIB_Related_Battle_Drills/battle-drill-1-conduct-pl.shtml

Ambush

- <http://arotc.uncc.edu/sites/arotc.uncc.edu/files/MSL%20302%20Tactics%20and%20Techniques%20Section%2006%20-%20Platoon%20Ambush.pdf>

Reconnaissance

- Patrols that depart the main body with the intention of avoiding direct combat with the enemy while seeing out information or confirming the accuracy of previously-gathered information are called *reconnaissance patrols*. The most common types reconnaissance patrols are area, route, zone, and point. Leaders also dispatch reconnaissance patrols to track the enemy, and to establish contact with other friendly forces. Contact patrols make physical contact with adjacent units and report their location, status, and intentions. Tracking patrols follow the trail and movements of a specific enemy unit. Presence patrols conduct a special form of reconnaissance, normally during stability or civil support operations.

Reconnaissance

- http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDsQfjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mc.edu%2Ffaculty%2Findex.php%2Fdownload_file%2F13791%2F7%2F&ei=M72TUs_4GdUyQGHR4CIDA&usq=AFQjCNE1g_ehudR_OEQxTasDPXjxJEIYIA