Defensive Sector Sketches

CAPTAIN HAROLD E. RAUGH, JR.

The best defensive positions are those that are planned with two considerations in mind — which positions will make the most of the defender's advantage, and which weapons will be the most effective against the attacker. One way a defender can plan his positions and control his fires effectively is through the use of sector sketches. And these sketches can also help him determine how well those fires will cover his sector.

More training needs to be conducted on the use of sector sketches. Then all rifle squad leaders, platoon leaders, and company commanders should be required to develop sketches and submit them to the next higher echelon of command.

When given a battalion operations order that prescribes a defensive mission, each of these leaders first begins his troop leading procedure and makes a tentative plan on the basis of his METT-T analysis.

Mission. He considers the unit's mission, including the specified and implied tasks involved in it.

Enemy. He considers the enemy situation, the size and type of units, where they are, their ability to reinforce, the weapons and units in support, and their capabilities and tactics.

Terrain and weather. He considers observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, avenues of approach, and the effects of weather on personnel, equipment, visibility, and trafficability.

Troops (and other assets) available. He considers all the resources available to him. (A squad leader, for example, after his analysis, develops his plan in the following sequence: He positions his machineguns and Dragons, positions his troops, emplaces obstacles and mines, and then develops targets.)

Time. He considers the time available.

(The Armor School adds to these items Space available to get METT-TS.)

Each leader then prepares a defensive sector sketch to help him plan his defense and control his fires. The sketch should show at least the following:

- The main terrain features in the sector of fire and the estimated ranges to them.
- Each primary position.
- The primary and secondary sectors of fire of each position.
- The type of weapon in each position.
- Observation post (OP) and leader positions.
- Target reference points (TRPs) in the sector.
- Deadspace.
- Obstacles.
- Final protective line (FPL) for dismounted machineguns.

(Excellent examples of squad and platoon sector sketches are found on pages 4-14 and 4-15, Field Manual 7-8.)

The heading of a squad sector sketch should include the unit (no higher than platoon) and the date-time group. Each squad leader should submit his sector sketch to his platoon leader within 30 minutes after he completes his METT-T analysis.

The platoon sector sketch is basically a consolidation of the major items from the squad sector sketches. A platoon leader develops his plan in the following sequence (after conducting his METT-T analysis). First, he positions his machineguns and Dragons; then he positions his squads, emplaces obstacles and mines, and develops targets.

After checking the range cards and the squad sector sketches, the platoon leader adjusts the sectors or weapons as necessary to cover any gaps or other flaws in his fire plan. When convinced that his plan is as complete and effective as possible, the platoon leader makes his platoon sector sketch showing:

- Squad sectors of fire.
- Machinegun and Dragon positions and sectors of fire, including FPLs and PDFs of the machineguns and TRPs for the Dragons.
- Mines and obstacles.
- Indirect fire planned in the platoon's sector of fire (targets and FPFs).
- OPs and patrol routes (if any).
- The platoon command post (CP) location.

The heading of the platoon sector sketch gives only the platoon designation and the date-time group. The platoon leader makes two copies of his sector sketch, keeping one and giving the other to his company commander within one hour after completing his METT-T analysis.

At the company level, the commander has more direct and indirect fire weapons available to him, and he needs to include all of them when he develops his defense plan in his sequence: He locates any armor kill zones; positions TOWs and tanks, if available; confirms positions of all crew-served weapons; identifies locations requiring additional obstacles and mines; and develops targets.

The company commander analyzes all the platoon sector sketches when they are submitted and makes any

weapon and position adjustments that may be necessary. He then completes his company sector sketches. Unlike the squad and platoon sector sketches, the company sketch needs to be drawn to scale on an overlay. It should include:

- Primary and alternate traces for each platoon.
- All M60 and .50 caliber machineguns and Dragons.
- All mortars, including primary and alternate positions for the company's organic mortars.
- Indirect fire targets, selected by the company commander as well as those provided by battalion.
- Mines and obstacles.
- All TOWs and other weapons attached to the company.
- Primary and alternate CP locations.
- Armor kill zones in the company sector.
- All CP/LPs.

The heading on the company sector sketch states only the company designation and the date-time group. Realistically, the company commander should try to get a copy of his sector sketch to his battalion commander within 90 minutes after he completes his METT-T analysis.

Squad and platoon leaders and company commanders need to plan their defense effectively, and the sector sketch is an excellent way of doing this. It helps determine the adequacy of sector coverage and also helps in controlling fires. By using the METT-T analysis listed here and the described sequences of defense and sector sketch planning, commanders can effectively organize their unit defenses to halt and destroy any attacking enemy.

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72 Ways to Win Bigger

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Army 86 was developed to increase the Army's ability to cope with changes in the technology, organization, and nature of the Soviet threat. Basically, the Army feels it must be prepared to fight outnumbered and win. Specifically, this means the Army, from battalion through theater, must be able to see deep, attack deep, apply combat power, and protect and sustain the force.

Critical to these requirements is the role of superior technology, and every element of the Division 86 force structure will in some fashion benefit from its effects. Even the infantry battalion will benefit. Or will it?

Among the improvements envisioned for the Division 86 infantryman, for instance, is a series of small arms designed to increase his firepower. An increase in firepower serves two purposes: It increases potential lethality, and it lessens the need for developing and maintaining individual marksmanship skills.

The effect of superior weapons technology elsewhere in Army 86 is obvious, and high technology examples abound: the TOW antitank missile, the "smart" bomb, and the cruise missile. Even the tank is a technological benefactor. Thanks to such improvements as the laser rangefinder, a single main battle tank (MBT) round has a 50:50 hit probability at 2,000 meters. In short, what the tanker can see, he can hit.

But the infantry's planned technological future seems to represent a marked departure from the combination elsewhere of reduced ammunition expenditure, high accuracy, and high lethality. Is this the way to go? How about another look.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

At the infantry battalion level, significant benefits could accrue if we turned at least 72 riflemen per battalion into snipers.

Opponents of sound marksmanship in general and superior marksmanship in particular have long done the infantry a disservice and the enemy a left-handed favor; By neglecting the human factor in the man-plus-machine equation, they have substituted firepower for marksmanship. Thus, volume of fire takes the place of accuracy and apparently is to continue doing so. And all this ignores the fact that there are many electronic and optical improvements that can dramatically increase the individual rifleman's lethal potential.

The emphasis on increased small arms firepower has resulted, however, in a corresponding deterioration of the existing regard for even the most basic marksmanship techniques, skills, and standards. Thus the "cone of fire" has replaced an individual soldier's aimed fire. As a result, the infantryman now shoots more but hits less. This ability to shoot more, aided by weapons that fire ever faster and