

spected daily because they had a tendency to loosen during use. All wheel lug nuts also had to be checked and tightened.

Operators need to be able, at least, to repair their own tires and check vital fittings for looseness, for, after all, mechanics in the field are not always readily available. But the M966 BII (basic issue items) does not include a jack, and the tools are also limited, consisting of two screwdrivers, an open-end adjustable wrench, and pliers. This is woefully inadequate. (For tires, at the very least, each platoon should own a tire repair kit—NSN 2640-00-922-6921—and each operator should be trained in its use.)

Otherwise, the HMMWV has proved to be an extremely hardy vehicle. The gunner's hatch is constructed so that the supports form a roll cage. (I have seen a HMMWV sit completely upside down in a tank fighting position, not recovered for about eight hours. After recovery and inspection, the vehicle was driven away.

The only damage to it was its broken radio antennas. The occupants were not injured, as they were wearing their seat belts.) The mobility and power of the vehicle is exceptional.

Overall, the NTC rotation taught the company some valuable lessons about logistical support. A light battalion is not currently capable of adequately supporting an attached motorized/mechanized force unless that force is augmented by a support slice. The light battalion's combat trains are not capable of handling the basic load of 120 TOW rounds on a recurring basis, and this number can double or triple when rounds are prestocked in the defense. A light battalion support platoon is not capable of drawing the amount of ammunition required for a TOW company from an ammunition transfer point or of moving that ammunition forward to the LRP. Too often, the light battalion combat trains, which focus upon stealth and the ability to hide,

are given away by the convoy of trucks coming to pick up supplies.

The solution appears to be to have the support package for a HMMWV-TOW company prepared farther back, possibly at the FAST. The company XO can meet the package at a predetermined location (ammunition still loaded on FAST trucks) and escort it as part of the LOGPAC. The current BII and the organization of operator/organizational maintenance items need revision. These lessons, when applied aggressively, can turn the HMMWV-TOW company into a viable, sustainable augmentation force capable of providing a decisive antiarmor force on the modern battlefield.

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# Modified Platoon Wedge

LIEUTENANT SEAN D. McDEVITT

With the advent of the nuclear age and the increased lethality of small arms, the success or failure of military forces in an armed conflict is largely dependent upon their small unit leaders. The Vietnam conflict emphasized the importance of having small unit leaders who were able to react quickly to a highly mobile and often dispersed enemy, and to engage him decisively. The failure of a small unit leader to engage an enemy force effectively and immediately resulted in loss of contact or, worse, the decimation of his unit.

Today's infantry platoon leader faces the same problems when attacking a highly mobile, dispersed force such as a guerrilla unit. The platoon line formation, the most common movement forma-

tion, simply does not provide the modern-day platoon leader with the highly flexible, instantaneous response he needs to deal effectively with a guerrilla force.

The time needed to react to a small attack, such as a sniper, also poses a problem for the platoon line formation. By the time a platoon leader has had his lead squad deliver a heavy volume of suppressive fire and deployed his second squad to maneuver and destroy the sniper, that sniper usually has had plenty of time to withdraw to another position and resume his harassment.

If an enemy unit is deployed in depth, as in an elastic defense configuration, a few harassing attacks by one or two soldiers can quickly throw an approaching

unit into a state of disarray and low morale, rendering it unable to mount an effective counterattack and maintain contact with the enemy.

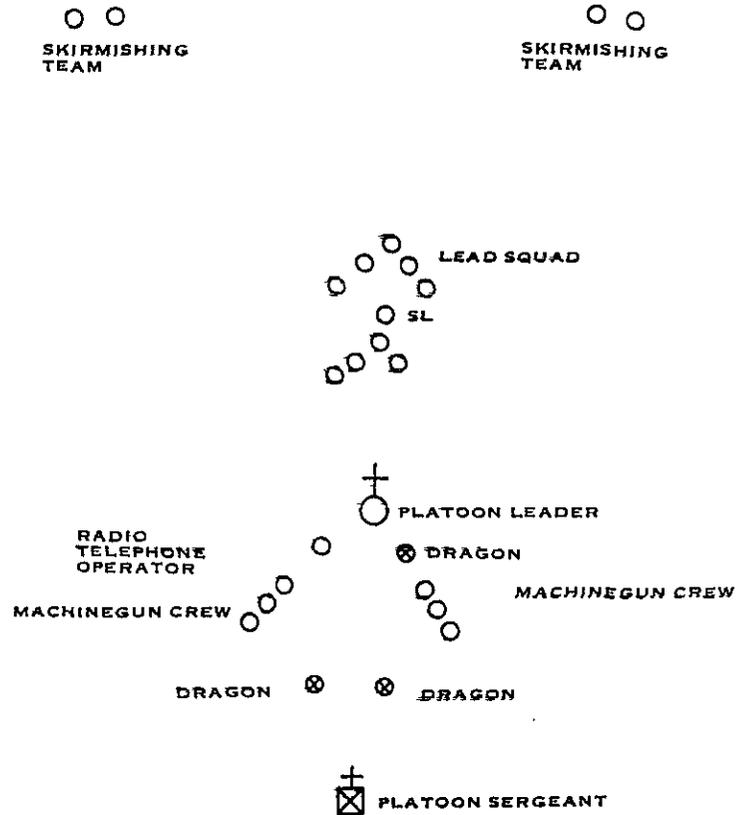
Another difficulty with the platoon line formation is that, while it engages the enemy with the smallest unit possible, the formation, being relatively long and narrow, is vulnerable to ambush.

While the platoon line formation offers dispersion and maneuver, a platoon leader is at a severe disadvantage when using it against a guerrilla force. What we need is a formation that allows a platoon leader to react instantly to one or more small attacks and to suppress them while retaining protection from indirect fire and also his ability to contact the enemy with the smallest unit possible.

## TRAINING NOTES

The solution is to deploy a platoon in a wedge formation with two, two-man skirmishing teams providing forward security. This formation, developed by members of an Infantry Officer Basic Course class, enables a platoon leader to successfully engage and defeat the mobile, dispersed elements of a guerrilla force.

By employing the proven tactical advantage of the wedge, this formation allows for maximum flexibility both within the squads and for the platoon as a whole. The platoon is formed with one squad forward to serve as a point element and two squads back to provide support and maneuver. Each squad is formed in a fire team wedge. The platoon leader, the radio-telephone operator, and the heavy weapons section are situated in the center of the wedge, allowing for the greatest possible control and flexibility in the event of contact (see sketch). If the formation needs to maneuver in thick vegetation, soldiers can be placed between the command element and the two rear squads to relay commands.



## SECURITY

Each team of skirmishers serves as point security. The skirmishers deploy 100 to 250 meters to the front of the formation to provide early warning of both enemy forces and danger areas and hopefully discover small ambushes and snipers before the main body of the platoon is exposed. During a test of this modified platoon wedge in field conditions, the skirmishers did detect small ambushes and often surprised the enemy elements completely, forcing them to retreat.

If the skirmishers meet considerable resistance, the lead squad deploys and lays down heavy suppressive fire. Depending on the enemy situation, the platoon leader can deploy one or more of his heavy weapons with the squad providing support. The platoon leader then has the option of deploying either one or two of the rear squads to maneuver against the enemy instantly instead of having to wait for the trail squad to arrive from the rear of the formation. This gives the platoon leader flexibility in reacting to an opposing force while still



preserving a great deal of control over his unit.

In the event of multiple enemy attacks, the platoon leader can assign each squad leader an opposing force to maneuver against. Primary control is thus delegated to the squad leaders, and the platoon maintains its momentum instead of becoming bogged down in a few, isolated attacks.

In addition to being flexible and more easily controlled, the modified platoon wedge is difficult to ambush, because it employs a point element followed by two rear elements that provide both flank and rear security. If an enemy force does try to ambush the platoon, the squads that are not in immediate contact are free to maneuver instantly against the ambushing unit.

A final advantage of the modified platoon wedge is that it makes a perimeter easier to establish when the platoon halts. Since the platoon is already in a triangle formation, all that is required to establish a perimeter is for each squad leader to bring his fire teams on line and occupy a designated sector—that is, one side of the triangular perimeter.

When we tested the technique, we found that we could maintain our forward speed better and, at the same time, eliminate a great deal of the confusion that we had had with the platoon line formation. The platoon leader was always in the center of the formation with his radio-telephone operator and platoon sergeant. If necessary, the platoon could move out instantly with little re-forming and confusion. There was no need to reposition

the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant, or the radio-telephone operator, since in movement they also occupied the center of the formation. Noise discipline was also better.

In today's low-intensity conflicts

against small, highly mobile enemy units, the modified platoon wedge provides a practical and efficient means of combat. With practice and leadership, a platoon leader can use this formation to fix and destroy any small guerrilla force.

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# Scouting Fire Teams

CAPTAIN PAUL A. HAND, U.S. Marine Corps

Over the past few years, the subject of maneuver warfare has been discussed at length in articles, books, and editorials. In all these discussions, however, we sometimes forget that warfare consists of small units making progress on the battlefield. To paraphrase S.L.A. Marshall, battalions, regiments, and divisions cannot advance if platoons and companies do not advance. All discussions of maneuver warfare must therefore include a discussion of how the platoon and company take advantage of these concepts.

Tactics at company level should be more than simple frontal or flanking attacks. Our manuals tell us that a platoon uses fire and maneuver to close with and destroy the enemy. To many of our leaders, though, fire and maneuver means moving in the direction of the enemy until their lead elements run into his defensive positions. Unfortunately, a key item missing from this definition is locating the enemy: to maneuver effectively against him we must be able to find his positions or formations, determine the extent of his positions, and, more important, determine what he intends to do.

As a result, as studies of Vietnam and observations of our present training show, our companies all too often blunder onto an enemy (or aggressor) position and then react. They often cross open areas without scouting the far side, blindly travel through forested areas without

scouts to their front, or travel with open flanks.

These problems directly affect a unit's ability to accomplish its mission. If a platoon or company is forced to deploy into unfavorable enemy situations, that unit at best may lose a lot of time and at worst may suffer many casualties and be unable to continue with its mission. A positive solution to this problem is for infantry units to train and employ scouting elements. If they do not, they will probably not use them in combat either and will therefore invite disaster by attacking blind into possible enemy positions.

The use of scouting elements is not a new idea, in either the Marine Corps or the Army. Various manuals for small

units in both services discuss either the employment of scouts or some analogous movement techniques. It may be helpful, however, to pull together information from those sources and discuss how a platoon leader can employ his scouting elements effectively. (While my own experience has been primarily with the United States Marine Corps, Capt. A.D. Davis IV of the U.S. Army has offered some suggestions dealing with Army doctrine.)

Army Field Manual 7-8, The Infantry Platoon and Squad, states that the lead platoon uses the movement technique that suits the likelihood of contact. (To a large extent, the platoon leader must take into account the terrain as well.) The three basic techniques that an Army unit uses

