



Figure 5. Positions for all the squad members.

crew erects the system to shoot. Even then its signature is only about 18 inches or so above the ground, and this can be easily

camouflaged with bushes or blinds.

This position obviously requires more labor than the current TOW position but

not prohibitively more. It can still be constructed by the squad members using the basic pioneer tools available with the squad carrier. Since construction may have to be halted at any moment in response to a threat, I suggest the following steps in construction: First the basic hole, then the second level, and finally the side overhead cover.

At times, it may be both possible and desirable to build actual overwatch cover for the system as shown in the manual. But the proposed position offers many more advantages than our current one, and should be considered on its obvious merits.

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Squad Combat Training

CAPTAIN GUY SANDS-PINGOT

During their frequent chance encounters with the enemy in the Vietnam War, many of our small units failed to react properly and suffered excessive casualties, even though the enemy forces were inferior in number and firepower. These units and their leaders seemed to lack a clear and concise idea of what actions they were supposed to take on chance contact. Too often, this also led a U.S. unit to do exactly what the enemy wanted it to do—divert manpower and firepower from its main objective for extended periods of time.

After 1973, we tended to forget many of the lessons we had learned the hard way in Vietnam. Proper small unit reaction to chance contacts was one such lesson.

In the 1980s, however, with the advent

of the light infantry concept, the Infantry School formulated a new model for small unit actions—a combat drill that pulled together the steps a small unit should take when it suddenly found itself confronted with an enemy force.

Fundamental within the drill, which was first announced in Field Circular 7-22, Infantry Squad and Platoon Drills, is the insistence on locating and fixing the enemy force and conducting a flank attack after fire superiority has been gained.

Accordingly, the combat drill provides a framework that, in sequential order, reduces decisions to their most critical points. It also serves as a multi-level model for small unit leaders to follow during their combat training programs. Implicit in the drill is the assumption that

small units will be engaged in combat as part of a larger force and as such will take part in a mission—a movement to contact, for example—to find the enemy in order to defeat him.

At one level, that of training, the drill clearly defines what needs to be trained and to what standards. Used as a medium of training, the combat drill improves individual and unit readiness in three ways: It reduces reaction time; it standardizes critical actions; and it ensures that both leaders and subordinates master the skills and tasks required to successfully meet the immediate requirements of a combat engagement.

On another level, that of operational technique, the combat drill clearly lays out the steps that, when practiced by small

units in peacetime, will lead to success in war.

Through constant repetition, the drill also gives individual soldiers a frame of reference within which they can critique and understand their role while seeing how their actions (or inactions) contribute to the success or failure of the unit's mission. Unit discipline and teamwork are taught simultaneously, and set standards are reinforced as an important by-product.

SQUAD DRILL

Although the drill has two variants, one for the squad and the other for a platoon, only the squad drill will be reviewed in this article. It is at the squad level that the first organized reaction to counter a chance enemy contact can take place. (Even when a platoon conducts a mission such as a movement to contact, only a part of its elements—usually a squad—will initially make contact or come under enemy fire.) The squad combat drill lists six major steps every squad leader must consider when he faces the possibility of meeting an enemy force. Here are those steps, with a few of my thoughts about each:

- **Prepare for combat.** This preparation usually takes place in an assembly area, although not always behind friendly lines (patrol base activities, for instance, should be practiced as well). Here the squad leader issues orders; checks equipment and the supply of ammunition, rations, and water; conducts communication checks; camouflages as needed; and rehearses and inspects his men before moving out through the line of departure (LD). While FC 7-22 does not explicitly say so, the preparation for combat does not end when the unit crosses the LD during movement and before contact; the squad leader must continue those actions and preparations that may be critical to the outcome of any future contact.

- **React to enemy contact.** When a chance contact is made with an enemy force, the element of the squad that makes contact instinctively and immediately seeks cover and concealment and returns fire with all available weapons, especially with the SAW or M60 machinegun. Additionally, it tells the squad leader what

is happening. This step immediately runs into the next one

- **Locate the enemy.** This is perhaps the most difficult step to execute. Although the squad can usually discern a general direction from which enemy fire is coming, it is difficult, and at times impossible, for all personnel who come under fire to observe and acquire targets in order to put well-aimed and well-placed sustained fire on enemy positions. Yet this is precisely what these soldiers must do, if they can, even if they are in the midst of hostile fire. The soldiers need to move according to the terrain, and team leaders must make certain that whenever their men move, they are covered by the fire of a base element. The squad leader must personally assess the situation as quickly as he can and reposition his troops accordingly. Once he has made his assessment, he notifies his platoon leader and decides on his next course of action.

- **Gain fire superiority.** In this step, the fire team leaders tell their men what to do as the squad attempts to destroy or suppress the enemy force. To do this, they must control and distribute their men's fire to make sure it is effectively concentrated on critical targets with a heavy volume at first, then tapering it to a sustained rate. There must be no pauses in the fire. (If, at this point, the squad leader decides his element cannot gain fire superiority, he also knows that his force will not be able to maneuver against the enemy position. Here is where the squad drill might merge into the platoon drill with the squad in contact becoming the fixing element.) When the squad leader feels he has gained fire superiority, he maneuvers his soldiers into position for the next step. At the same time he places himself where he can best control the actions of his men.

- **Conduct a flank attack.** In this fifth step, the squad leader chooses the flank to assault based on the principles of cover and concealment, speed in regard to the distance to the enemy, and the location of both his maneuver and fixing elements. Once these points have been swiftly developed into a workable plan, the maneuver element assaults through the enemy position using fire and movement. The standardization of radio brevity codes and pyrotechnic signals is of utmost importance. Surprise and violence of execution

are critical to the success of the attack. The enemy must be kept unaware of the flank from which the maneuver element will attack until the attack is actually begun.

- **Consolidate and reorganize.** When the enemy resistance has been overcome, the squad leader reorganizes his squad and consolidates the position. He makes sure that all enemy resistance has been eliminated. Then he ensures that local security is established and that hasty defensive positions are constructed so the maneuver element and the fixing element (which has deployed to the objective on signal from the squad leader) are both prepared for any possible enemy counterattack.

Additionally, casualties are given first aid, the chain of command is reestablished, ammunition and weapons are redistributed, if necessary, and any prisoners are secured and guarded. After all of this has been done, the squad leader reports to his platoon headquarters and awaits further instructions. A further step not mentioned in FC 7-22 would be to pursue the enemy when the tactical situation warrants it. There are several advantages to this step, the chief one being that it maintains and expands the momentum of the attack against the enemy unit. It must clearly be understood, though, that such actions must be properly coordinated at company and battalion level.

If a squad executes it properly, the combat drill restores to the basic infantry element the principle of maneuver by its clear enumeration of six steps—prepare for combat, react to enemy contact, locate the enemy, gain fire superiority, conduct a flank attack, and consolidate and reorganize. These steps serve as flexible guideposts and as reminders of the actions a squad leader needs to take when he and his men are confronted by an enemy force.

Unlike the older and more complicated immediate action drills of 20 or more years ago, the new combat drill is flexible and can be adjusted to the changing tactical situation. It gives a squad leader and his men a chance to learn the most critical combat steps today in preparation for tomorrow's battle.

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