

# TRAINING NOTES



## Company Defensive Position

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Establishing a company defensive position is one of the most difficult of all light infantry missions. It requires detailed planning, a solid grasp of fundamental concepts at each level of command, and decentralized execution. The ability to put in a truly effective defensive line in a timely manner clearly separates the good units from the average ones.

The defense starts with the operations order. From it the company commander gets a clear understanding of his battalion commander's intent and any necessary control measures. The actual work starts with a map study before the company commander conducts his reconnaissance, which is the single most critical task, and he must have a basic plan before he arrives at the designated location. He should start on a flank and work on tying that flank in with that of the flanking commander, or if it is an exposed flank he must decide on how he intends to protect it. He then works from that flank through his entire sector.

As his first priority, he concentrates on the best spacing for the platoon positions, the concentration of weapon systems on dismounted and mounted avenues of approach, and the places

where he is willing to accept risk.

During his reconnaissance, he must decide on the placement of his crew-served weapon systems. Company commanders themselves must emplace their M60 machineguns and Dragon systems and should also designate final protective fires to insure the greatest possible coverage of the company's front. In the light infantry particularly, these weapons are too few and too important to be allowed to support only one platoon.

### FLANKS

The reconnaissance continues through the sector and goes to the other flank where, again, the commander ties that flank in with an adjoining unit, or develops plans to protect that flank if it is an exposed one: It ends with identifying the general location of alternate and supplemental positions, command post locations, vehicle and tent positions, trail and resupply networks, and withdrawal or counterattack routes.

The reconnaissance is best conducted by the company commander and his fire support officer, with the platoon leaders being brought up only

after the commander has a final plan. The commander then takes his platoon leaders, mortar section sergeant, and wire chief and physically lays out the plan he has envisioned. He should take his time and make sure his subordinates understand what he wants. He must be specific and make any necessary adjustments before moving on. This includes specifying the vegetation to be cut, whether positions will be staggered or linear, the average distance between them, the immediate security requirements, and any specific innovations he desires (abatis and the like).

The commander must make sure his platoons fully understand how he wants them to time their efforts—that is, where he wants them to be in four hours, eight hours, twelve hours, and so on. He must also consider how much security is needed and what critical tasks must be completed before allowing the soldiers to be put on a rest cycle. After the reconnaissance, the platoon leaders return to their assembly areas, brief their platoons, and move to their sectors.

By the time the company commander returns to his command post (CP) area, his first sergeant should have the CP fully established, the mor-

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tars should be digging in, and the units' vehicles should be camouflaged.

Completing a good plan and passing it on to his subordinates is a great start for any company commander. Unfortunately, it is only the beginning. Having a priority of work is common to most infantry units but it is just as commonly ignored or misunderstood. For example, there is no excuse for shifting positions after the soldiers have them half completed. That type of leadership will only result in the soldier's being reluctant to dig and convinced that their commander does not care about their welfare. (The example in the accompanying table breaks the tasks down by individual and time. The time lines and other deci-

sion points will shift on the basis of METT-T and the available resources, but if a commander does not have a system that allows his key individuals to make decisions at the proper time, the result will be wasted labor and a weak defense.)

The single most important element of a successful defensive line is the effectiveness of the weapons. Camouflage and concealment are a secondary concern unless they are specified in the operations order.

Positions must be prepared in stages to prevent unnecessary work by the soldiers. Sector stakes go in as a position is roughed out, but digging does not begin until approved by the platoon leader (unless the platoon is tak-

ing fire, in which case all of this talk is unnecessary). The platoon leader does not give the order to dig until the company commander or the first sergeant has approved his position siting, fields of fire, and most important, his tie-in on the flanks.

Once the order to dig is given, the squad leaders must exercise extreme care to make sure each position is big enough to fight in and live in for an extended period. Thus, if a soldier prepares a hole for three days and then has to stay in it for 30 days, he shouldn't have to reconstruct it. In other words, from the beginning the hole should be as big as needed and as strong as possible.

Roofing timbers, if available, must

## TIME LINE FOR DEFENSIVE TASKS

	← 2 HRS →	← 6 HRS →	← 12 HRS →	← 18 HRS →	← 24 HRS →
CO CDR	o Recon (as early as possible) * Sets in plts	* Walks 1/2 line (Rests) o Spot checks Plt Ldrs setting in sqds	* Approves Co fire plan (FSO) Checks each MG and AT wpn	o Walks line o Checks obstacles (Rests)	
CO XO	o Brings up Company o Requests fuel, ammo, Class IV o Distributes pioneer tools	o A22 positions Class IV, ammo, etc. (Rests)	o Walks line	o Chow run (Rests)	
ISG	o Sets in Co HQ, mortars, vehicles (Rests) o Sets plts with A/A o Checks AT section	* Walks 1/2 line Checks each MG and AT wpn	o Checks AT section (Rests)	o Walks line o Checks obstacles	
PLT LDR	o Checks readiness of sqds (Rests) o Reviews and checks OPORD info	* Sets in sqds o LP/OP out o Checks MGs and AT wpons	* Gives OK to dig after checking hasty positions * OKs rest plan	* Checks each wpn position when hole is "in" * OKs overhead cover (Rests)	o Walks line
PLT SGT	o Checks ammo, food, water o Checks maint of wpons, vehicles, and ammo (Rests) o Special care of MG teams	o Sets in CP tents, ammo, trail network o Checks MGs, AT wpons	o Plt sector sketch	o Institutes rest plan based on METT-T o Starts detail for tree cutting, sandbags	* Walks line * OKs overhead cover before dirt goes on (Rests)
SQD LDR & SQD	o Same as Plt Sgt o Special Care of feet, wpons, equipment (Rests)	o Sector stakes in o Digs in o Roughs out hasty position o Claymores in o Range cards		o Obstacles o Overhead cover	← Detail/Security/Rest based on METT-T directed at Co level →



be heavy enough to support a full 36-inch dirt cover. Frontal berms must be able to stop both small antiarmor rounds and bullets. Soldiers must know the dimensional requirements for berms and overhead cover using soil, snow, icecrete, or some combination of these materials. If the doctrinally prescribed strength and protection cannot be provided, the battalion operations section must be advised of the specific deficiencies.

The overhead cover must leave room for the soldier to sight and fire his weapon comfortably with his helmet on. Platoon leaders must get behind each weapon and verify that the position is adequate and that the sectors of fire interlock. Company commanders must do the same for all machineguns and antiarmor weapons.

In cold weather areas in the winter months, squad leaders must decide which positions must be dug in and which can be built up with snow bags and icecrete. Most positions will require some digging to allow for the comfortable use of weapons.

The positioning of claymores, machineguns, and 90mm recoilless rifles (if issued) is of special concern, because these weapons must be used to provide shock and violent destruction at critical locations. They are always shown on platoon and company fire plans and are always tied into obstacles. These weapons are normally the

last to fire during periods of limited visibility, although during daylight machineguns should engage long range targets as they come into range. Machineguns with night sights also may be used on long range targets at night.

These systems will often have separate day and night positions. Machinegun final protective fires (FPF's) should be sited to cover as much of the company front as possible, and every effort should be made to get as much grazing fire as possible. Wire should also be placed along the FPF line to force the enemy to stop in the cone of fire.

Claymores are the best weapons for covering gaps in the grazing fire, but they must be kept under observation to prevent the enemy from disarming them. Machineguns and antiarmor weapons are never emplaced at the flank position in a company or isolated as the last position in a mounted avenue of approach. They should always be protected by at least one rifle position.

The following are a few more ideas for a defensive position:

- Companies should prepare defensive packages of pioneer tools, wire, timbers, and pickets. Each squad and section should have two shovels, two picks, two saws, and two axes. The wire, timbers, and other bulky materials should be prepared in pla-

toon packages (A-22 bags or on alkios) and kept in the battalion field trains until needed. They should be moved forward to the combat trains if a defense is anticipated.

- Observation posts and listening posts (OP/LPs) are mandatory— one per platoon sector, usually in the center and manned by a fire team. Often this is the only security required, and it allows the rest of the platoon to work. The OP should be close enough to be supported during its withdrawal and far enough out to give enough early warning, but it normally moves closer to the defensive line during periods of limited visibility. The soldiers manning the OP will normally engage the enemy to cause him to deploy and to confuse him about the location of the defensive line, using indirect fire weapons when possible. A simple signal for its return, such as a running password and the sound of the OP's claymore going off, must be known to all.

- Trail discipline is universally misunderstood. It does help keep the position hidden, but more important it reduces confusion when changing security, reinforcing, or resupplying. The number of trails should be kept to a minimum, and they should follow covered and concealed routes whenever possible. Sections of the trails that are under enemy observation must be well marked with warning signs,

while trails forward of the position must be covered by observation and fire.

- In the defense, patrols should be scheduled to deflect or eliminate all enemy probing and reconnaissance efforts. They should have set routes, should include one or more ambush positions, should be as aggressive as possible, and should always try to capture a prisoner. (A squad-size patrol is better than a platoon-size patrol unless the unit is assured of killing a lot of enemy.) A patrol should never be sent outside of communication or indirect fire range, and flank units must know its routes and schedule. Too, a patrol should return to the company lines at first light instead of in the middle of the night. A running password is again required and should be coordinated with the flank positions in case the patrol gets confused. Ground surveillance radar can be used to monitor a patrol's activities and to

help guide it back to the company's lines.

- Leaders should always keep radios with them while setting the defense. For instance, it can take up to six hours to walk a company line, and the radio enables the leaders to stay abreast of key events and shift to handle problems.

- Fields of fire should be cut thinly and the gun positions should be disguised; if the soldiers cannot see to shoot their weapons, the fields of fire should be cut still more until they can see their sectors.

- Every soldier should be taught to recite the following items of information as a litany to the company commander, first sergeant, or other "inspectors": Who he is; his unit down to squad level; his job (SAW gunner); who is on his left, right, and front; the signals for the FPF and withdrawal; the enemy, including weapon capabilities; his position, including sec-

tors of fire, range card, and what weapons his frontal and overhead protection will stop. This is a tried and true system that forces soldiers to remember the critical information they need to perform their mission and to survive.

In summary, defensive positions and fire planning must give a soldier a sense of protection and security, or he will not fire his weapon. Establishing light infantry company defensive positions is therefore a task that deserves careful planning and attention.

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# Training for the Urban Battle

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In virtually any future war that can be imagined, every unit—combat, combat support, and combat service support—will conduct military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT). This means that our training programs must keep pace with the ever-increasing urbanization of lands throughout the world.

The U.S. Army Infantry School is pursuing several Army-wide MOUT training initiatives that are relevant to all branches. Chief among these are a MOUT White Paper, a MOUT training strategy, a MOUT training complex, and Training Circular 90-1.

The recently drafted White Paper

highlights fundamental definitions in the current doctrine and the problems that previously resulted from the misuse of terminology. FM 90-10, for instance, defines MOUT as "all military actions that are planned and conducted on a terrain complex where man-made construction impacts on the tactical options available to the commander." This is a broad category that includes not only operations within an urban complex but also operations that are affected in any way by urbanization.

*Urban terrain* is also a broad term. Although we tend to equate it with buildings, it encompasses any area

where man's hand has altered the face of the terrain. Within the full scope of the definition in FM 90-10, then, MOUT is part of almost every combat operation.

The White Paper, on the other hand, uses the term *combat in built-up areas* as one portion of MOUT that pertains to fighting among streets and buildings. This category can be further divided into *combat in cities*, *combat in small cities and towns*, *combat in villages*, and *combat in strip areas*.

(Many trainers incorrectly equate MOUT training only with training for combat in built-up areas. We do indeed need more training for fighting