

# TRAINING NOTES



## Range Cards In the Deliberate Attack

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In a deliberate attack, the objective is often obscured. The attacker has the option of using planned smoke from mortars and artillery, as well as from smoke pots and generators, to conceal his approach to the objective. He might place smoke directly on the enemy's positions to obscure the enemy's field of vision. And even if screening smoke is designed to go in between the assault element and the objective, observer-gunner data and an unpredictable wind may "blind" the gunners in the support element. During the attack, flames and smoke from burning materials may also reduce the visibility of the objective; and, of course, the defender may elect to smoke his own positions to conceal himself.

Whatever the source, obscuration between the support element and the objective reduces the effectiveness of the supporting fires. The leader of the support element cannot see the targets he identified earlier, and the gunners cannot see the impact of their rounds in relation to the maneuvering troops.

During a live-fire training exercise, the observer-controller with the support element normally orders a cease fire when the objective is obscured. During a MILES force-on-force exercise, how-

ever, the gunners tend to continue firing, even when they cannot see the objective. They know they can't possibly injure fellow soldiers with simulated "bullets." But this is not the type of lesson we want our gunners to learn,

and their fires are equally ineffective.

We believe, on the basis of a three-week platoon attack live-fire exercise in which we served as observer-controllers, that this reduction in effectiveness can be countered by the use of

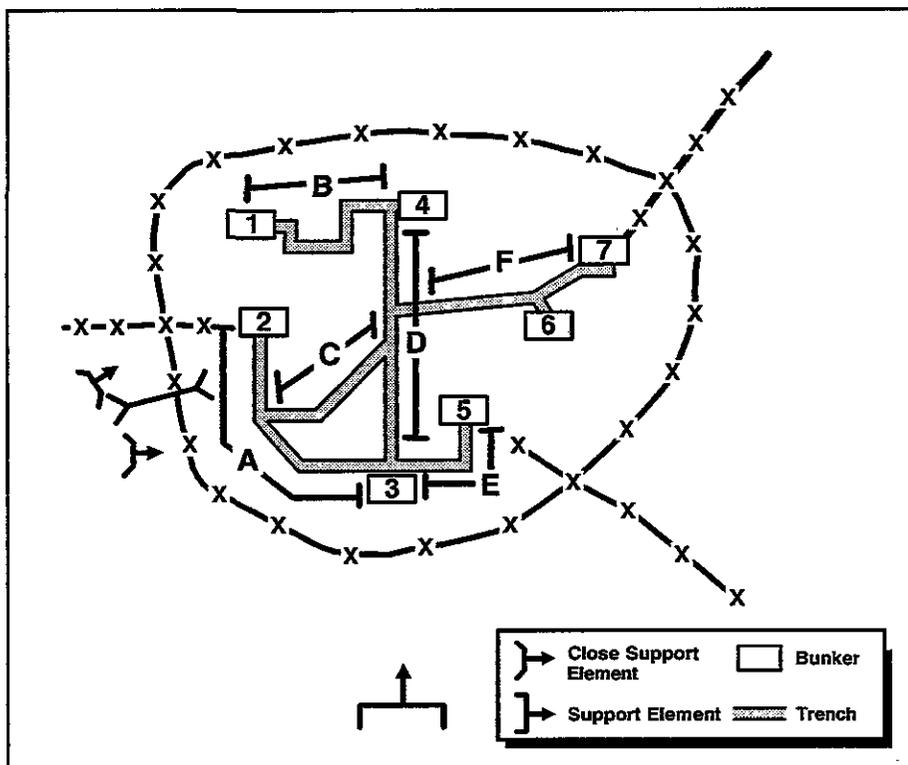


Figure 1

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range cards in the support-by-fire position.

The employment of range cards by support element machinegunners allows for the sustained suppression of targets, increases the assault element leader's ability to influence the control of supporting fires, and decreases the chances of fratricide. This is not a new idea; rather, it is an old one that has fallen into disuse.

A range card offers positive control that can counter the effects of unpredictable conditions. It gives the gunner a reference to his targets. He can continue to place effective fires on known or suspected enemy locations, shift them to other known or suspected enemy locations, and use searching and traversing fires to place rounds along likely routes, such as trenchlines, on the objective. Even when the gunner cannot see the objective, the range card allows him to be selective in placing his rounds and thereby to increase the effectiveness of his suppressive fires.

A range card also allows for tighter synchronization between maneuvering assault elements and supporting fires. If the commander obtains detailed information, such as an aerial photo or a sketch of the objective area, he should be able to determine known or likely enemy positions and apply numeric identification or codes to each target (Figure 1). With such a system in place, the commander can then more precisely define the effects he wants from suppressive fires on the objective.

In the following example, the commander elects to use the fires provided by the close support element to suppress bunkers adjacent to the breach site (bunkers 1 and 2) and trenchlines A and B, while the machineguns of the support element isolate the objective by engaging bunkers 3 and 4 as well as trenchlines C and D (Figure 2). The assault element leader, once his lead clearing team has entered the trench, shifts fires from trenchline C and bunker 3 to trenchline E and bunker 5 while maintaining all other suppressive fires that give the clearing team freedom of action within trenchlines A and C (Figure 3).

Once the clearing teams have cleared bunker 2, trenchlines A and C, and bunker 3, he shifts supporting machine-

gun fires from trenchlines D and E and bunker 5 to bunkers 6 and 7 and trenchline F (Figure 4). When the clearing

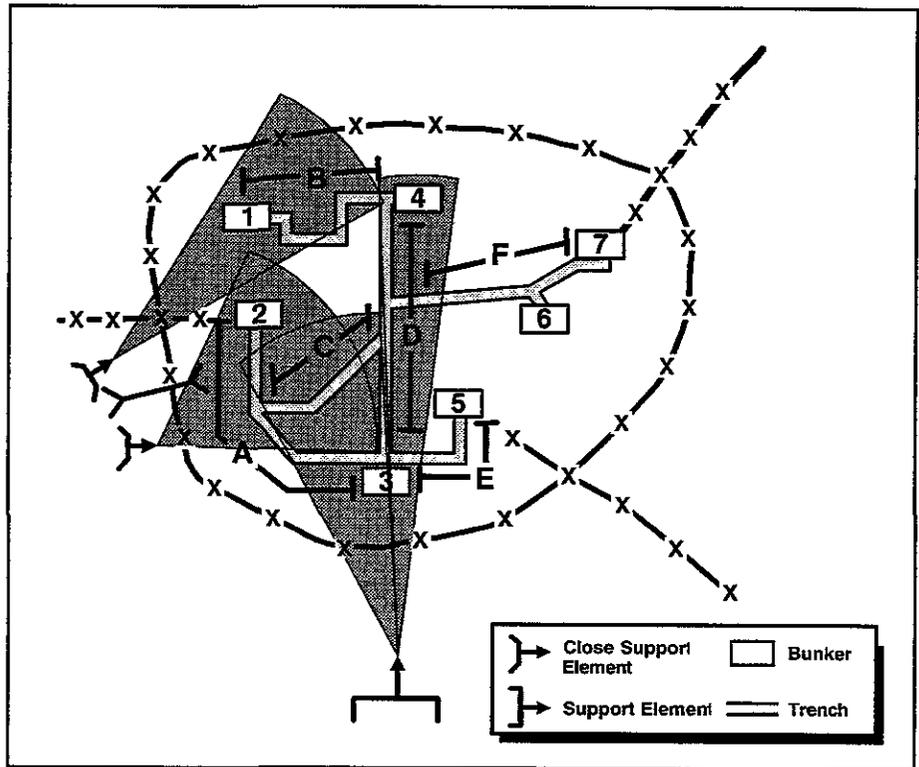


Figure 2

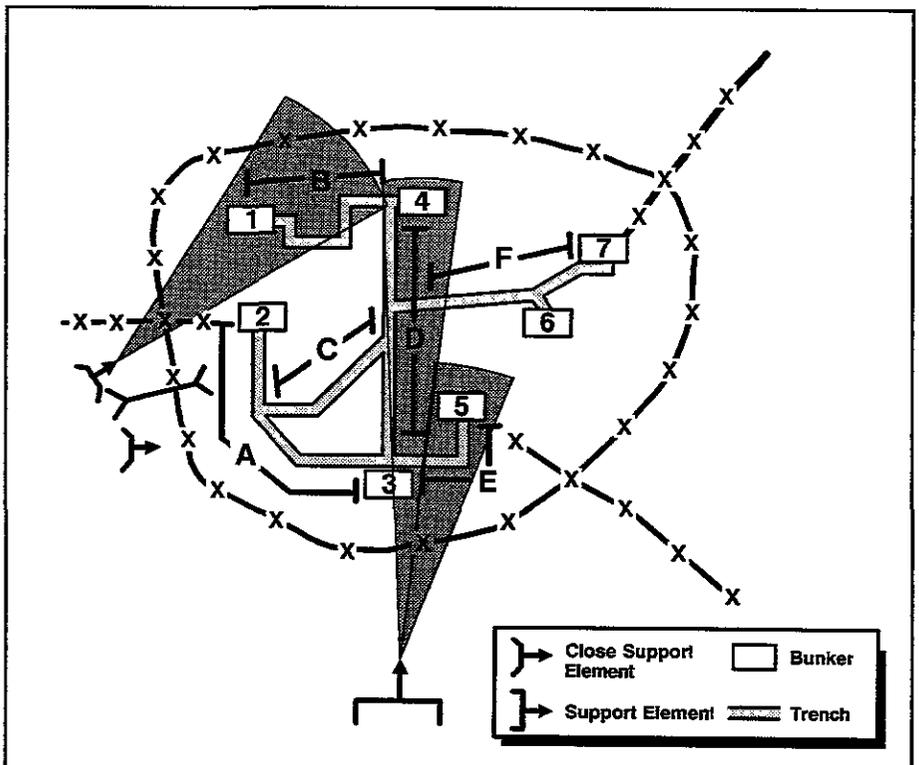


Figure 3

teams have cleared bunkers 5 and 4, the close support element can cease suppressive fires on trenchline B, allowing

the clearing teams to continue the attack toward bunker 1 (Figure 5). Once the left half of the objective is clear, the

supporting fires can be shifted off the objective, and the clearing teams can move under their own close suppression against bunkers 6 and 7.

Even while the support element's vision is obscured, the range card also provides the assault element with additional firepower by allowing its leader to call for precision suppression while on the objective. As in the example used to describe the increased ability to synchronize fire and maneuver, if the targets are coded or numbered and the support element machinegunners can apply range card data to each target, the assault element leader can call for the suppression of specific targets as his soldiers negotiate their tasks.

The added control of range card data applied to supporting fires also directly reduces the probability of fratricide. The assault element leader can report his element's position in relation to target numbers and can shift supporting fires with relative assurance that he is not placing his soldiers in harm's way.

Range cards definitely should not be restricted to defensive applications. They allow for precision suppression and closer synchronization of assault and support elements, even when the objective area is obscured. By constructing and using range cards in the support element of a deliberate attack, a unit can improve the effectiveness of supporting fires, provide additional flexibility, and reduce the possibility of fratricide, even when his gunners cannot see the objective. And all of these, in turn, can increase the unit's likelihood of success on the battlefield.

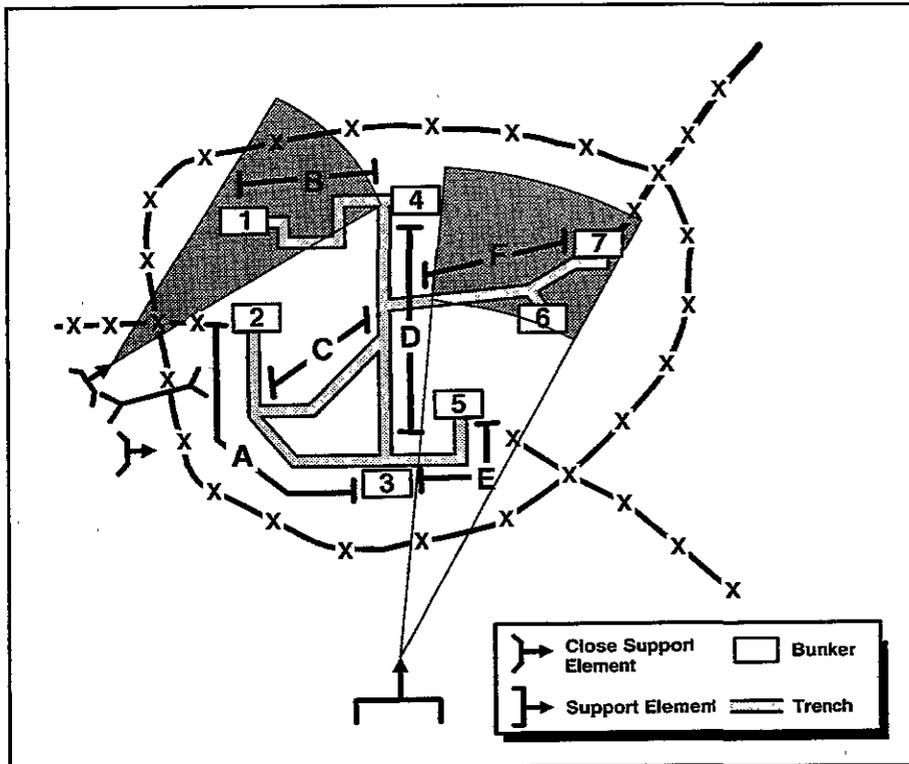


Figure 4

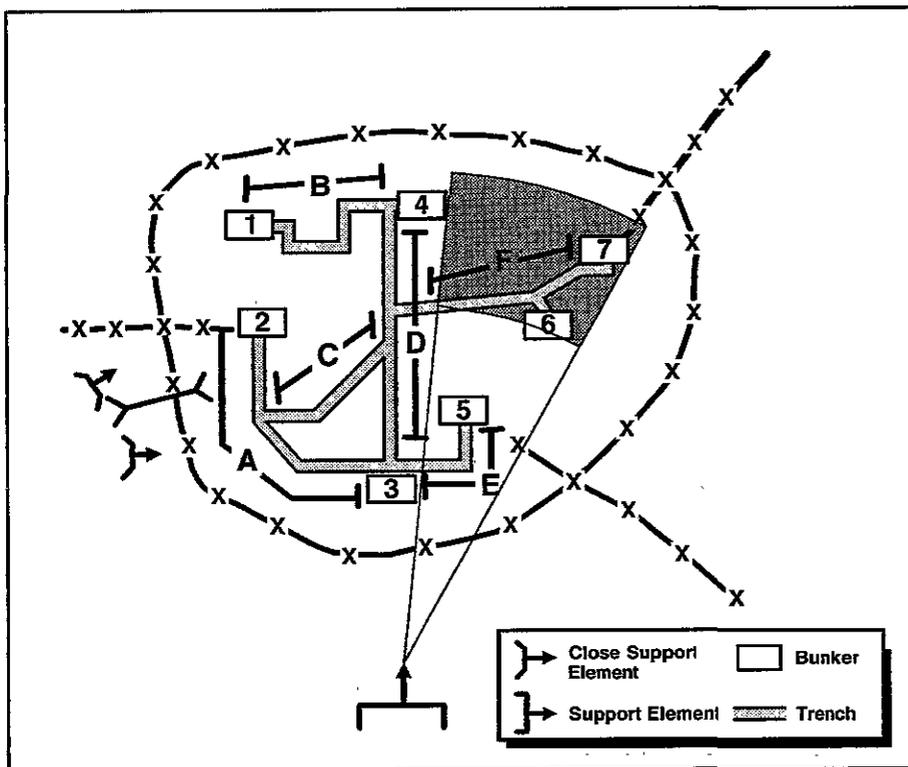


Figure 5

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