

3-45. When the weapons squad travels dispersed, they can either be attached to squads or attached to the key leaders like the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and weapons squad leader. There is no standard method for their employment. Rather, the platoon leader places the weapons using two criteria: ability to quickly generate fire superiority, and protection for these high value assets.

3-46. Like the rifle squad, the weapons squad, when traveling as a squad, uses either a column or line formation. Within these formations, the two sections can also be in column or line formation.

PLATOON FORMATIONS

3-47. The actual number of useful combinations of squad and fire team combat formations within the platoon combat formations is numerous, creating a significant training requirement for the unit. Add to that the requirement to modify formations with movement techniques, immediate action drills, and other techniques, and it is readily apparent that what the platoon leader needs is a couple of simple, effective strategies. These strategies should be detailed in the unit's SOPs. For a full description of each combat formation and advantages and disadvantages refer again to Table 3-1.

PLATOON LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

3-48. Like the squad leader, the platoon leader exercises command and control primarily through his subordinates and moves in the formation where he can best achieve this. The squad and team leader execute the combat formations and movement techniques within their capabilities based on the platoon leader's guidance.

3-49. The platoon leader is responsible for 360-degree security, for ensuring that each subordinate unit's sectors of fire are mutually supporting, and for being able to rapidly transition the platoon upon contact. He adjusts the platoon's formation as necessary while moving, primarily through the three movement techniques (see Section III). Like the squad and team, this determination is a result of the task, the nature of the threat, the closeness of terrain, and the visibility.

3-50. The platoon leader is also responsible for ensuring his squads can perform their required actions. He does this through training before combat and rehearsals during combat. Well-trained squads are able to employ combat formations, movement techniques, actions on contact, and stationary formations.

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

3-51. The platoon leader also has to decide how to disperse the platoon headquarters elements (himself, his RTO, his interpreter, the forward observer, the platoon sergeant, and the medic). These elements do not have a fixed position in the formations. Rather, they should be positioned where they can best accomplish their tasks. The platoon leader's element should be where he conducts actions on contact, where he can supervise navigation, and where he can communicate with higher. The FO's element should be where he can best see the battlefield and where he can communicate with the platoon leader and the battalion fire support officer (FSO). This is normally in close proximity to the platoon leader. The platoon sergeant's element should be wherever the platoon leader is not. Because of the platoon sergeant's experience, he should be given the freedom to assess the situation and advise the platoon leader accordingly. Typically, this means the platoon leader is more toward the front of the formation, while the platoon sergeant is more to the rear of the formation.

BASE SQUAD

3-52. The platoon leader designates one of the squads as the base squad. He controls the platoon's speed and direction of movement through the base squad, while the other squads and any attachments cue their movement off of the base squad.

MOVING AS PART OF A LARGER UNIT

3-53. Infantry platoons often move as part of a larger unit's movement. The next higher commander assigns the platoon a position within the formation. The platoon leader assigns his subordinates an

appropriate formation based on the situation and uses the appropriate movement technique. Regardless of the platoon's position within the formation, it must be ready to make contact or to support the other elements by movement, by fire, or by both.

3-54. When moving in a company formation, the company commander normally designates a base platoon to facilitate control. The other platoons cue their speed and direction on the base platoon. This permits quick changes and lets the commander control the movement of the entire company by controlling only the base platoon. The company commander normally locates himself within the formation where he can best see and direct the movement of the base platoon. The base platoon's center squad is usually its base squad. When the platoon is not acting as the base platoon, its base squad is its flank squad nearest the base platoon.

PRIMARY FORMATIONS

3-55. Platoon formations include the column, the line (squads on line or in column), the vee, the wedge, and the file. The leader should weigh these carefully to select the best formation based on his mission and on METT-TC analysis. A comparison of the formations is in Table 3-4.

3-56. Within these platoon formations, the rifle squads are either in a column or a line. Within the rifle squad formations, the teams are in one of the six formations. Normally the platoon leader does not personally direct fire team formations, but he can do so if the situation dictates. He should at a minimum know the formation of the base fire team of the base squad. The weapons squad travels separately or attached to the rifle squads.

Table 3-4. Comparison of platoon formations.

Movement Formation	When Most Often Used	CHARACTERISTICS				
		Control	Flexibility	Fire Capability/ Restrictions	Security	Movement
Platoon column	Platoon primary movement formation	Good for maneuver (fire and movement)	Provides good dispersion laterally and in depth	Allows limited firepower to the front and rear, but high volume to the flanks	Extremely limited overall security	Good
Platoon line, squads on line	When the leader wants all Soldiers forward for maximum firepower to the front and the enemy situation is known	Difficult	Minimal	Allows maximum firepower to the front, little to flanks and rear	Less secure than other formations because of the lack of depth, but provides excellent security for the higher formation in the direction of the echelon	Slow
Platoon line, squads in column	May be used when the leader does not want everyone on line; but wants to be prepared for contact; when crossing the LD when LD is near the objective	Easier than platoon line, squads on line, but more difficult than platoon column	Greater than platoon column, squads on line, but less than platoon line, squads on line	Good firepower to the front and rear, minimum fires to the flanks; not as good as platoon column, better than platoon line	Good security all around	Slower than platoon column, faster than platoon line, squads on line
Platoon vee	When the enemy situation is vague, but contact is expected from the front	Difficult	Provides two squads up front for immediate firepower and one squad to the rear for movement (fire and movement) upon contact from the flank	Immediate heavy volume of firepower to the front or flanks, but minimum fires to the rear	Good security to the front	Slow
Platoon wedge	When the enemy situation is vague, but contact is not expected	Difficult but better than platoon vee and platoon line, squads on line	Enables leader to make contact with a small element and still have two squads to maneuver	Provides heavy volume of firepower to the front or flanks	Good security to the flanks	Slow, but faster than platoon vee
Platoon file	When visibility is poor due to terrain, vegetation, or light	Easiest	Most difficult formation from which to maneuver	Allows immediate fires to the flanks, masks most fires to front and rear	Extremely limited overall security	Fastest for dismounted movement

Platoon Column

3-57. In the platoon column formation, the lead squad is the base squad (Figure 3-8). It is normally used for traveling only.

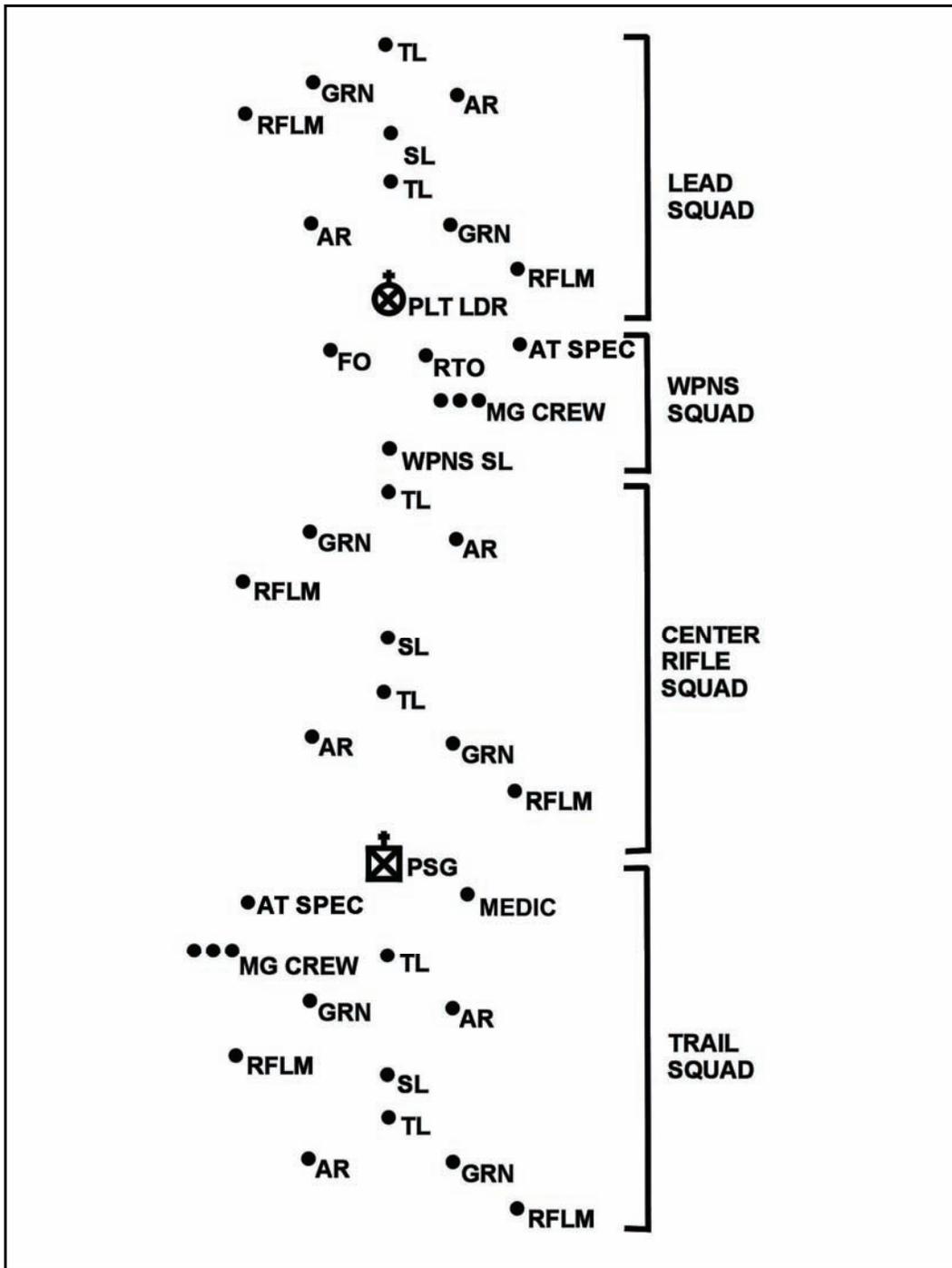


Figure 3-8. Platoon column.

NOTE: METT-TC considerations determine where the weapons squad or machine gun teams locate in the formation. They normally move with the platoon leader and /or PSG so he can establish a base of fire quickly.

Platoon Line, Squads on Line

3-58. In the platoon line, squads on line formation, when two or more platoons are attacking, the company commander chooses one of them as the base platoon. The base platoon's center squad is its base squad. When the platoon is not acting as the base platoon, its base squad is its flank squad nearest the base platoon. The weapons squad may move with the platoon, or it can provide the support-by-fire position. This is the basic platoon assault formation (Figure 3-9).

3-59. The platoon line with squads on line is the most difficult formation from which to make the transition to other formations.

3-60. It may be used in the assault to maximize the firepower and shock effect of the platoon. This normally is done when there is no more intervening terrain between the unit and the enemy, when antitank systems are suppressed, or when the unit is exposed to artillery fire and must move rapidly.

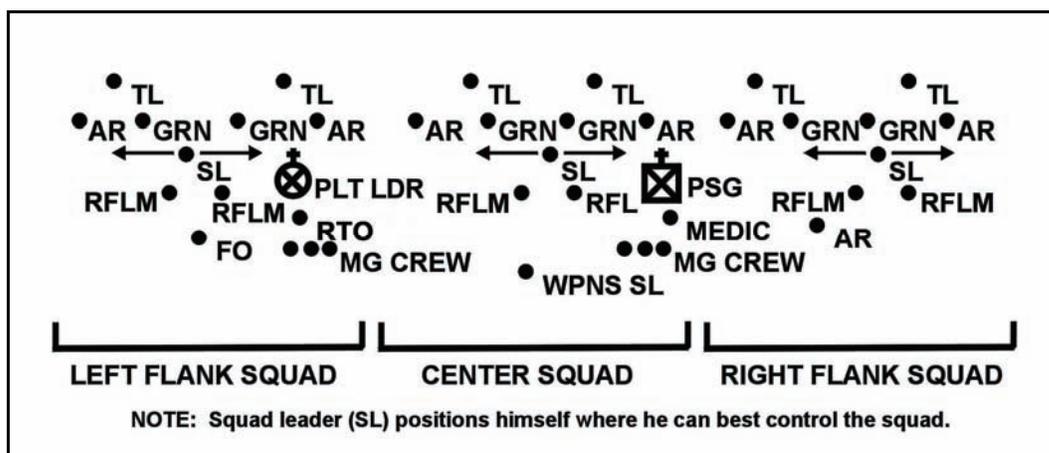


Figure 3-9. Platoon line, squads on line.

Platoon Line, Squads in Column

3-61. When two or more platoons are moving, the company commander chooses one of them as the base platoon. The base platoon's center squad is its base squad. When the platoon is not the base platoon, its base squad is its flank squad nearest the base platoon (Figure 3-10). The platoon line with squads in column formation is difficult to transition to other formations.

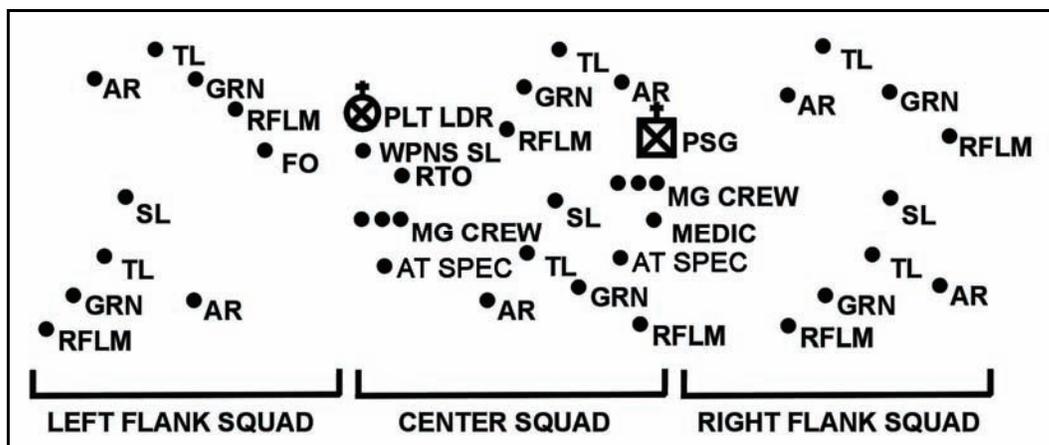


Figure 3-10. Platoon line, squads in column.

Platoon Vee

3-62. This formation has two squads up front to provide a heavy volume of fire on contact (Figure 3-11). It also has one squad in the rear that can either overwatch or trail the other squads. The platoon leader designates one of the front squads to be the platoon's base squad.

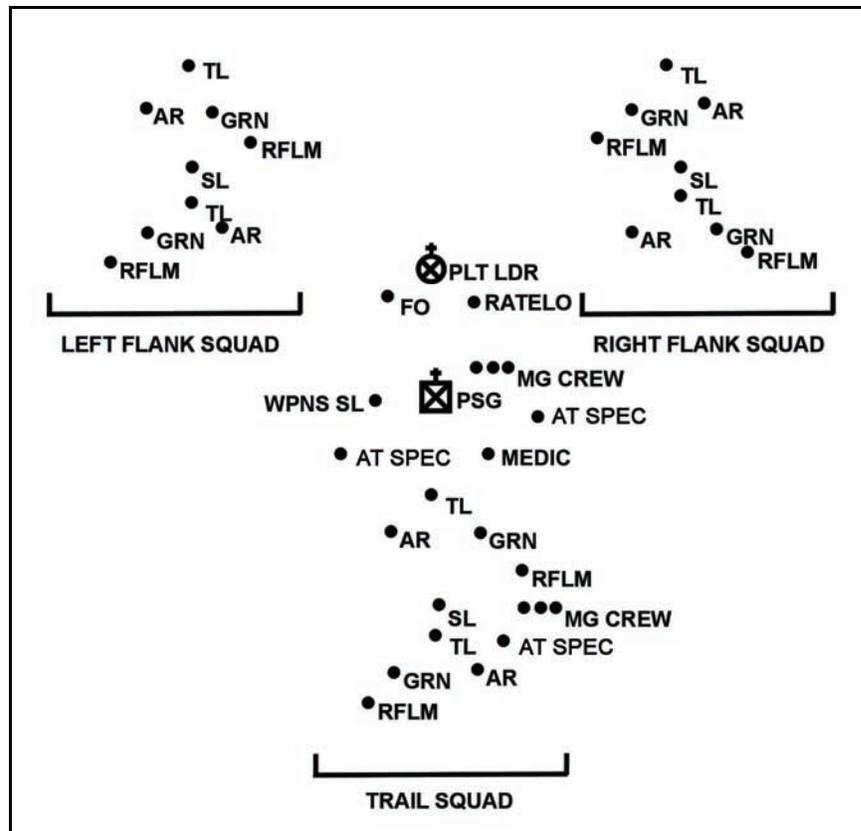


Figure 3-11. Platoon vee.

Platoon Wedge

3-63. This formation has two squads in the rear that can overwatch or trail the lead squad (Figure 3-12). The lead squad is the base squad. The wedge formation—

- Can be used with the traveling and traveling overwatch techniques.
- Allows rapid transition to bounding overwatch.

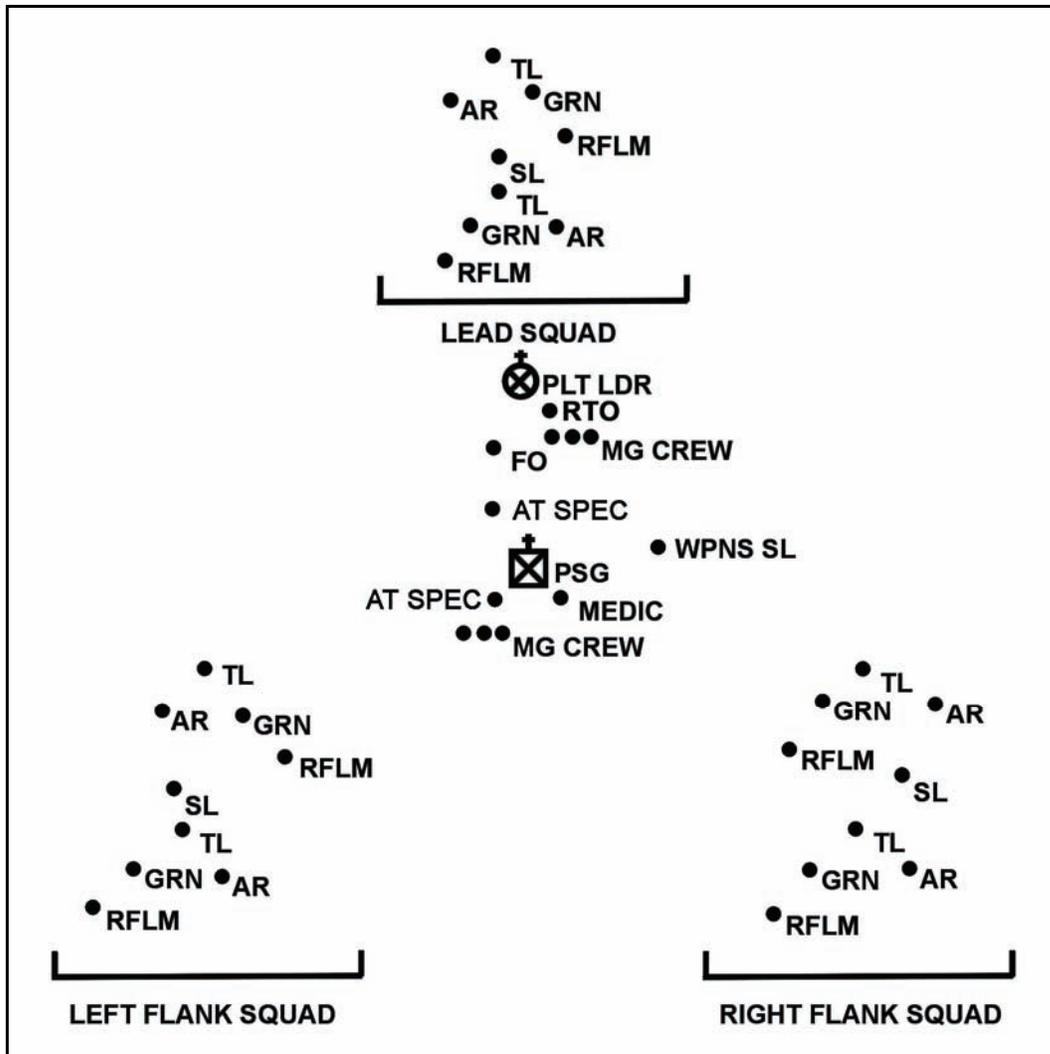


Figure 3-12. Platoon wedge.

Platoon File

3-64. This formation may be set up in several methods (Figure 3-13). One method is to have three-squad files follow one another using one of the movement techniques. Another method is to have a single platoon file with a front security element (point) and flank security elements. The distance between Soldiers is less than normal to allow communication by passing messages up and down the file. The platoon file has the same characteristics as the fire team and squad files. It is normally used for traveling only.

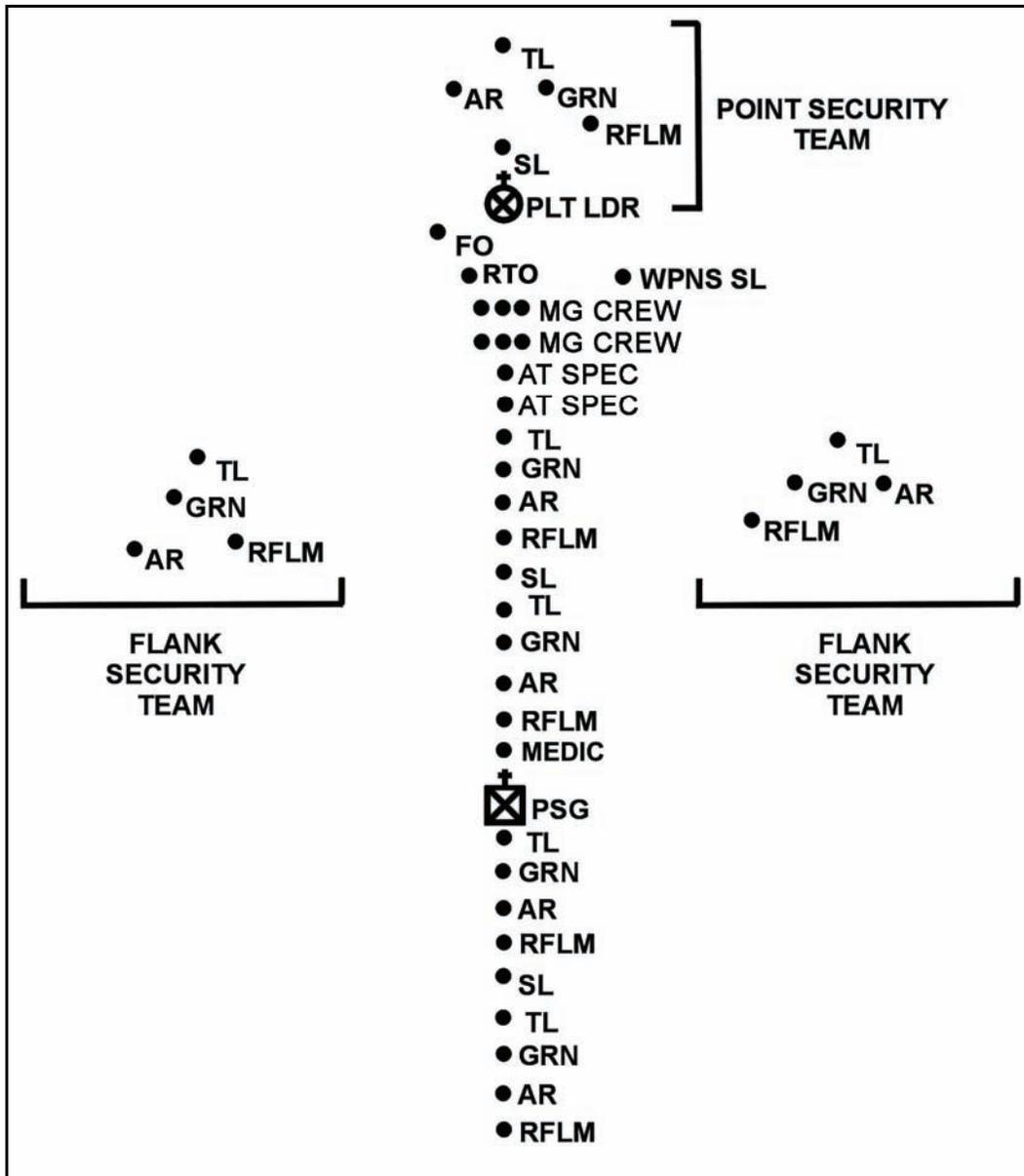


Figure 3-13. Platoon file.

SECTION III — MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES

3-65. Movement techniques are not fixed formations. They refer to the distances between Soldiers, teams, and squads that vary based on mission, enemy, terrain, visibility, and any other factor that affects control. There are three movement techniques: traveling; traveling overwatch; and bounding overwatch. The selection of a movement technique is based on the likelihood of enemy contact and the need for speed. Factors to consider for each technique are control, dispersion, speed, and security (Table 3-5). Individual movement techniques include high and low crawl, and three to five second rushes from one covered position to another (see FM 21-75, *Combat Skills of the Soldier*).

Table 3-5. Movement techniques and characteristics.

Movement Techniques	When Normally Used	CHARACTERISTICS			
		Control	Dispersion	Speed	Security
Traveling	Contact not likely	More	Less	Fastest	Least
Traveling overwatch	Contact possible	Less	More	Slower	More
Bounding overwatch	Contact expected	Most	Most	Slowest	Most

3-66. From these movement techniques, leaders are able to conduct actions on contact, making natural transitions to fire and movement as well as to conducting tactical mission tasks. When analyzing the situation, some enemy positions are known. However, most of the time enemy positions will only be likely (called templated positions). Templated positions are the leader's "best guess" based on analyzing the terrain and his knowledge of the enemy. Throughout the operation, leaders are continuously trying to confirm or deny both the known positions as well as the likely positions.

Methods of Maneuvering Subordinates

3-67. There are two methods of bounding the squads: successive; and alternate bounds. In successive bounds the lead element is always the same; in alternate bounds (called leapfrogging), the lead element changes each time (Figure 3-14).

Successive Bounds

3-68. If the platoon uses successive bounds, the lead squad, covered by the trail squad, advances and occupies a support-by-fire position. The trail squad advances to a support-by-fire position abreast of the lead squad and halts. The lead squad moves to the next position and the move continues. Only one squad moves at a time, and the trail squad avoids advancing beyond the lead squad.

Alternate Bounds

3-69. Covered by the rear squad, the lead squad moves forward, halts, and assumes overwatch positions. The rear squad advances past the lead squad and takes up overwatch positions. The initial lead squad then advances past the initial rear squad and takes up overwatch positions. Only one squad moves at a time. This method is usually more rapid than successive bounds.

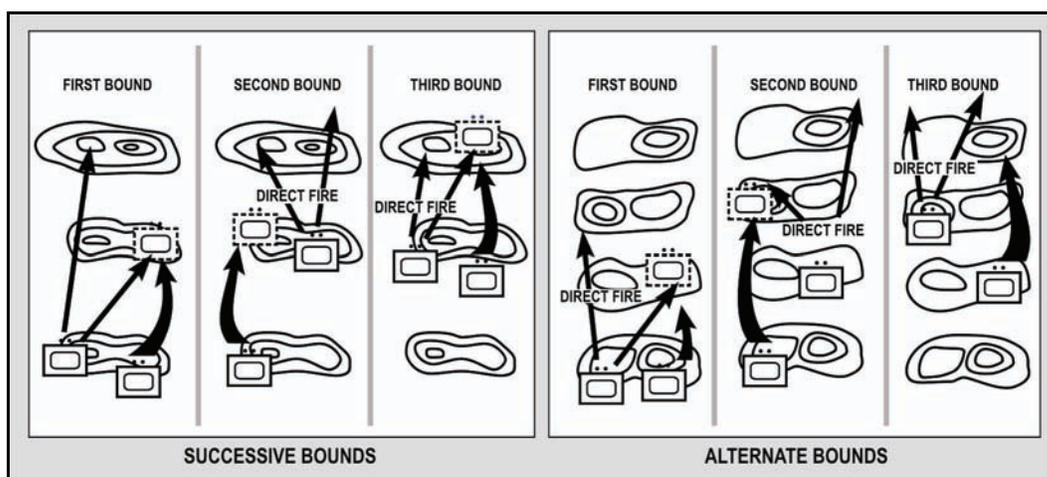


Figure 3-14. Successive and alternate bounds.

SQUAD MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES

3-70. The platoon leader determines and directs which movement technique the squad will use.

SQUAD TRAVELING

3-71. Traveling is used when contact with the enemy is not likely and speed is needed (Figure 3-15).

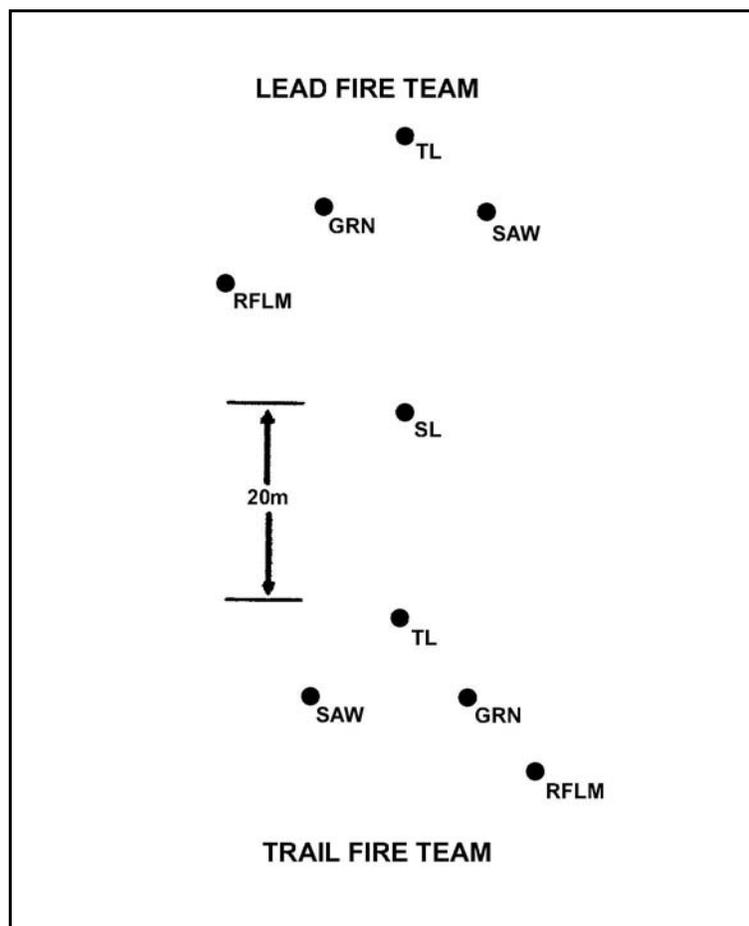


Figure 3-15. Squad traveling.

SQUAD TRAVELING OVERWATCH

3-72. Traveling overwatch is used when contact is possible. Attached weapons move near the squad leader and under his control so he can employ them quickly. Rifle squads normally move in column or wedge formation (Figure 3-16). Ideally, the lead team moves at least 50 meters in front of the rest of the element.

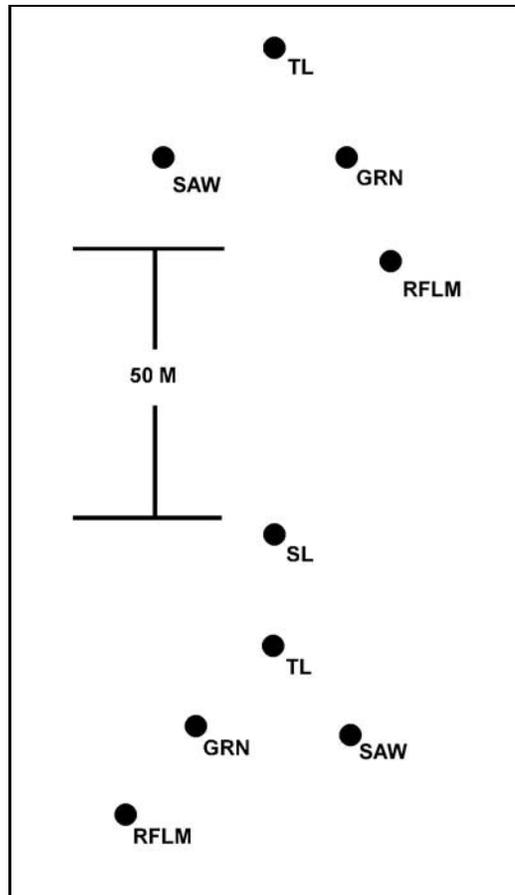


Figure 3-16. Squad traveling overwatch.

SQUAD BOUNDING OVERWATCH

3-73. Bounding overwatch is used when contact is expected, when the squad leader feels the enemy is near (based on movement, noise, reflection, trash, fresh tracks, or even a hunch), or when a large open danger area must be crossed. The lead fire team overwatches first. Soldiers in the overwatch team scan for enemy positions. The squad leader usually stays with the overwatch team. The trail fire team bounds and signals the squad leader when his team completes its bound and is prepared to overwatch the movement of the other team.

3-74. Both team leaders must know which team the squad leader will be with. The overwatching team leader must know the route and destination of the bounding team. The bounding team leader must know his team's destination and route, possible enemy locations, and actions to take when he arrives there. He must also know where the overwatching team will be and how he will receive his instructions (Figure 3-17). The cover and concealment on the bounding team's route dictates how its Soldiers move.

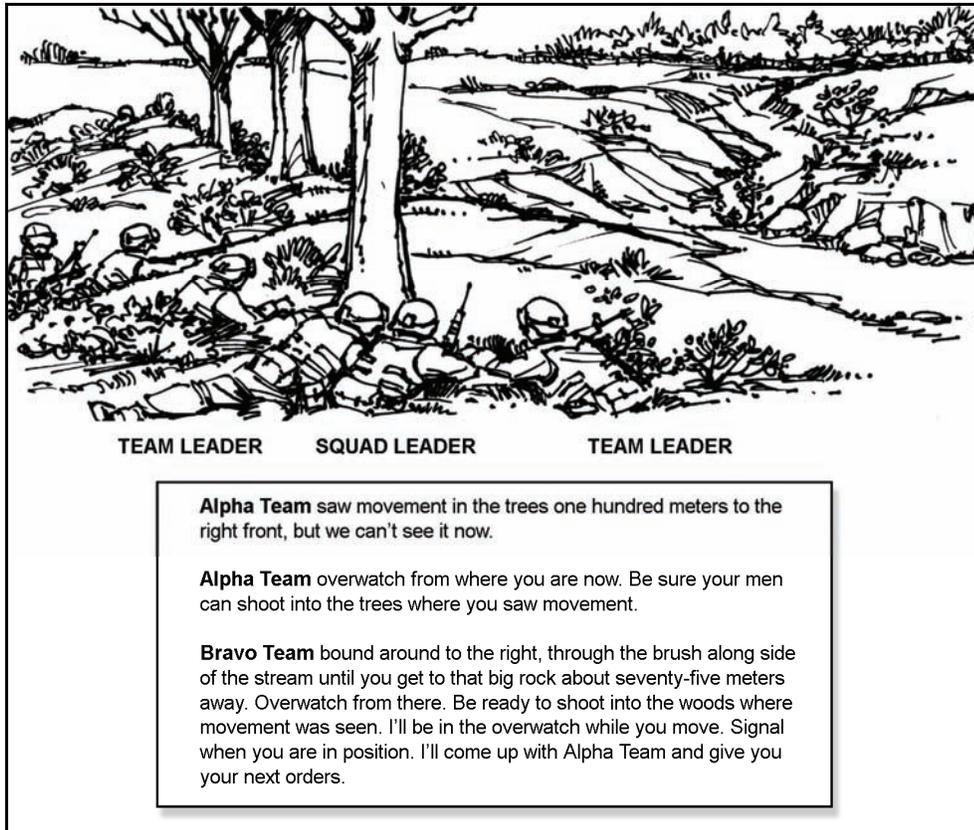


Figure 3-17. Squad bounding overwatch.

3-75. Teams can bound successively or alternately. Successive bounds are easier to control; alternate bounds can be faster (Figure 3-18).

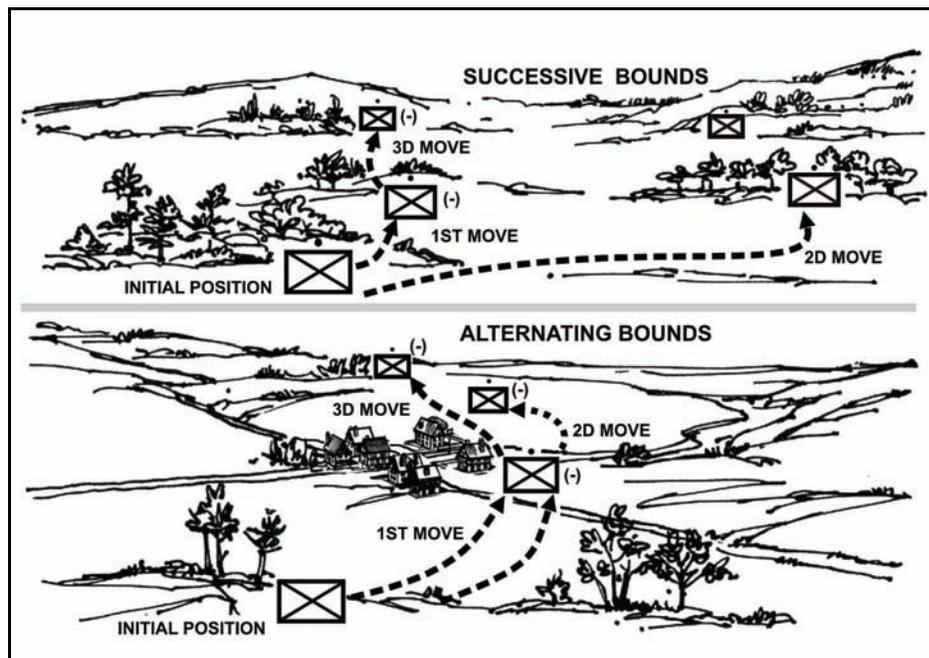


Figure 3-18. Squad successive and alternate bounds.

PLATOON MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES

3-76. The platoon leader determines and directs which movement technique the platoon will use. While moving, leaders typically separate their unit into two groups: a security element and the main body. In most scenarios, the Infantry platoon is not large enough to separate its forces into separate security forces and main body forces. However, it is able to accomplish these security functions by employing movement techniques. A movement technique is the manner a platoon uses to traverse terrain.

3-77. As the probability of enemy contact increases, the platoon leader adjusts the movement technique to provide greater security. The key factor to consider is the trail unit's ability to provide mutual support to the lead element. Soldiers must be able to see their fire team leader. The squad leader must be able to see his fire team leaders. The platoon leader should be able to see his lead squad leader.

TRAVELING

3-78. The platoon often uses the traveling technique when contact is unlikely and speed is needed (Figure 3-19). When using the traveling technique, all unit elements move continuously. In continuous movement, all Soldiers travel at a moderate rate of speed, with all personnel alert. During traveling, formations are essentially not altered except for the effects of terrain.

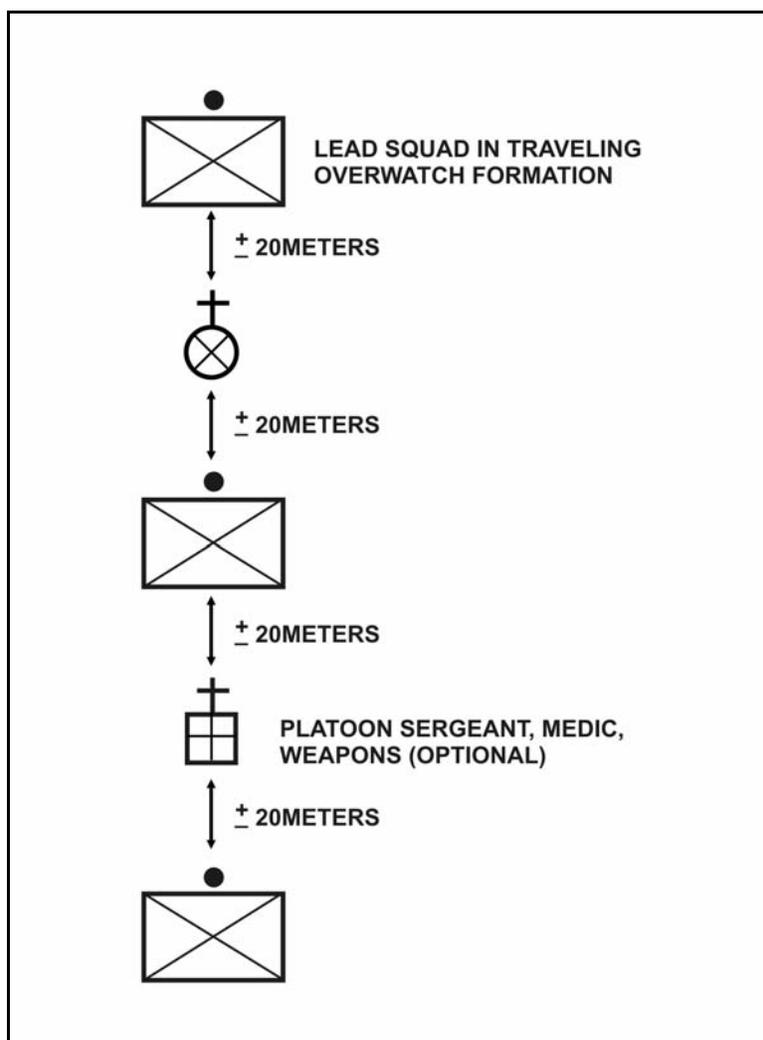


Figure 3-19. Platoon traveling.

TRAVELING OVERWATCH

3-79. Traveling overwatch is an extended form of traveling in which the lead element moves continuously but trailing elements move at varying speeds, sometimes pausing to overwatch movement of the lead element (Figure 3-20). Traveling overwatch is used when enemy contact is possible but not expected. Caution is justified but speed is desirable.

3-80. The trail element maintains dispersion based on its ability to provide immediate suppressive fires in support of the lead element. The intent is to maintain depth, provide flexibility, and sustain movement in case the lead element is engaged. The trailing elements cue their movement to the terrain, overwatching from a position where they can support the lead element if needed. Trailing elements overwatch from positions and at distances that will not prevent them from firing or moving to support the lead element. The idea is to put enough distance between the lead unit and the trail unit(s) so if the lead unit comes into contact, the trail unit(s) will be out of contact but have the ability to maneuver on the enemy.

3-81. Traveling overwatch requires the leader to control his subordinate's spacing to ensure mutual support. This involves a constant process of concentrating (close it up) and dispersion (spread it out). The primary factor is mutual support, with its two critical variables being weapon ranges and terrain. Infantry platoon's weapon range limitations dictate that units should not generally get separated by more than 300 meters. In compartmentalized terrain this distance is obviously closer while in open terrain this distance is greater.

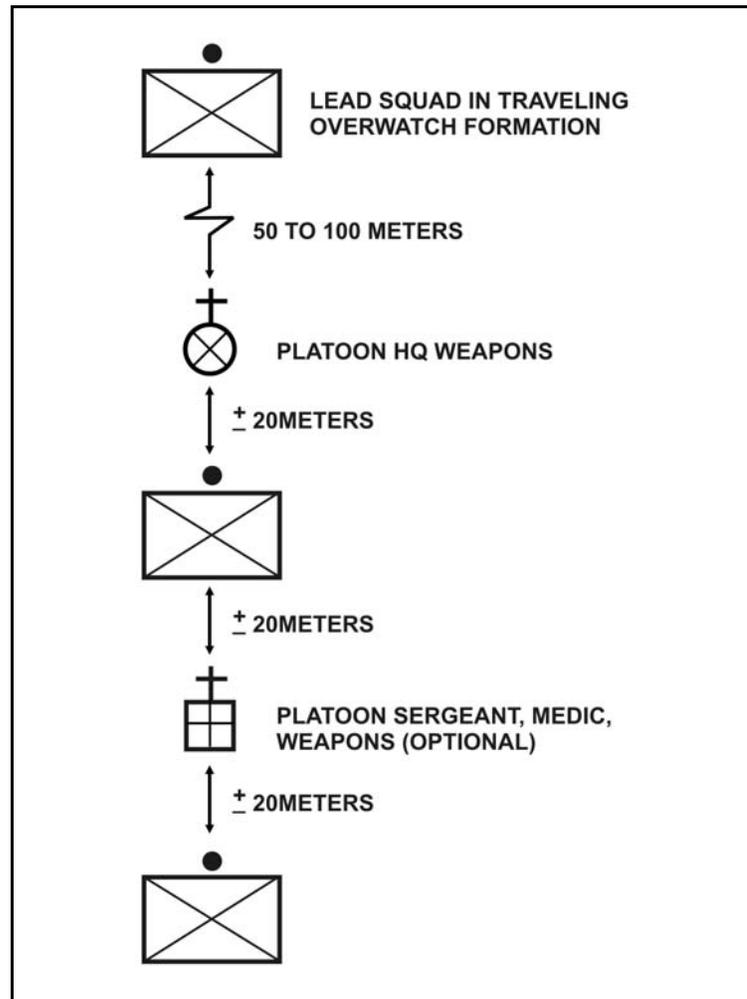


Figure 3-20. Platoon traveling overwatch.

BOUNDING OVERWATCH

3-82. Bounding overwatch is similar to fire and movement in which one unit overwatches the movement of another (Figure 3-21). The difference is there is no actual enemy contact. Bounding overwatch is used when the leader expects contact. The key to this technique is the proper use of terrain. Subordinate units fall into one of three categories: bounding, overwatching, or awaiting orders.

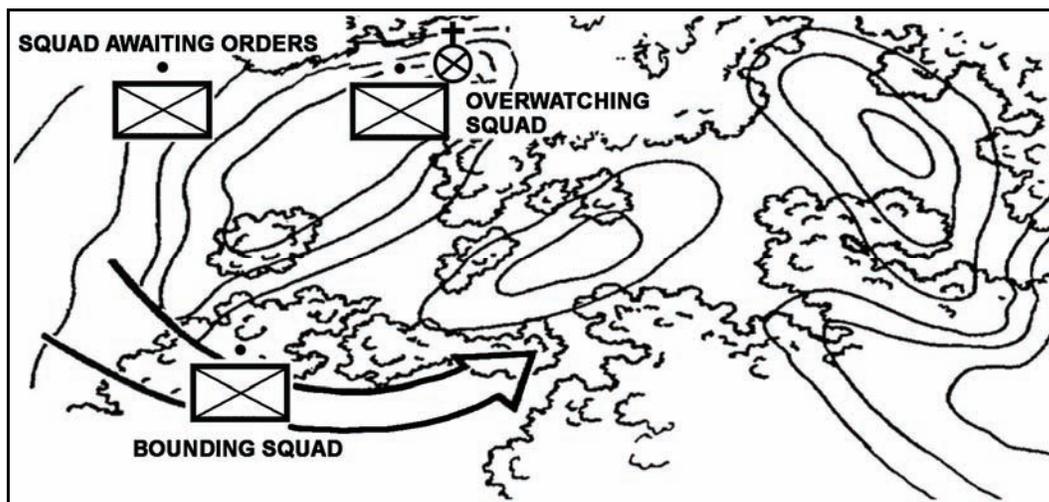


Figure 3-21. Platoon bounding overwatch.

One Squad Bounding

3-83. One squad bounds forward to a chosen position; it then becomes the overwatching element unless contact is made en route. The bounding squad can use traveling overwatch, bounding overwatch, or individual movement techniques (low and high crawl, and three to five second rushes by fire team or pairs).

3-84. Factors of METT-TC dictate the length of the bounds. However, the bounding squad(s) should never move beyond the range at which the base-of-fire squad(s) can effectively suppress known, likely, or suspected enemy positions. In severely restrictive terrain, the bounding squad(s) makes shorter bounds than it would in more open areas. The destination of the bounding element is based on the suitability of the next location as an overwatch position. When deciding where to send his bounding squad, a platoon leader considers—

- The requirements of the mission.
- Where the enemy is likely to be.
- The routes to the next overwatch position.
- The ability of an overwatching element's weapons to cover the bound.
- The responsiveness of the rest of the platoon.

One Squad Overwatching

3-85. One squad overwatches the bounding squad from covered positions and from where it can see and suppress likely enemy positions. The platoon leader remains with the overwatching squad. Normally the platoon's machine guns are located with the overwatching squad.

One Squad Awaiting Orders

3-86. Based on the situation, one squad is uncommitted and ready for employment as directed by the platoon leader. The platoon sergeant and the leader of the squad awaiting orders position themselves close

to the platoon leader. On contact, this unit(s) should be prepared to support the overwatching element, move to assist the bounding squad, or move to another location based on the platoon leader's assessment.

Weapons Squad

3-87. Machine guns are normally employed in one of two ways:

- Attached to the overwatch squad or the weapons squad that supports the overwatch element.
- Awaiting orders to move (with the platoon sergeant [PSG]) or as part of a bounding element.

Command and Control of the Bounding Element

3-88. Ideally, the overwatch element maintains visual contact with the bounding element. However, the leader of the overwatch element may have the ability to digitally track the location of the bounding element without maintaining visual contact. This provides the bounding element more freedom in selecting covered and concealed routes to its next location. Before a bound, the platoon leader gives an order to his squad leaders from the overwatch position (Figure 3-22). He tells and shows them the following:

- The direction or location of the enemy (if known).
- The positions of the overwatching squad.
- The next overwatch position.
- The route of the bounding squad.
- What to do after the bounding squad reaches the next position.
- What signal the bounding squad will use to announce it is prepared to overwatch.
- How the squad will receive its next orders.

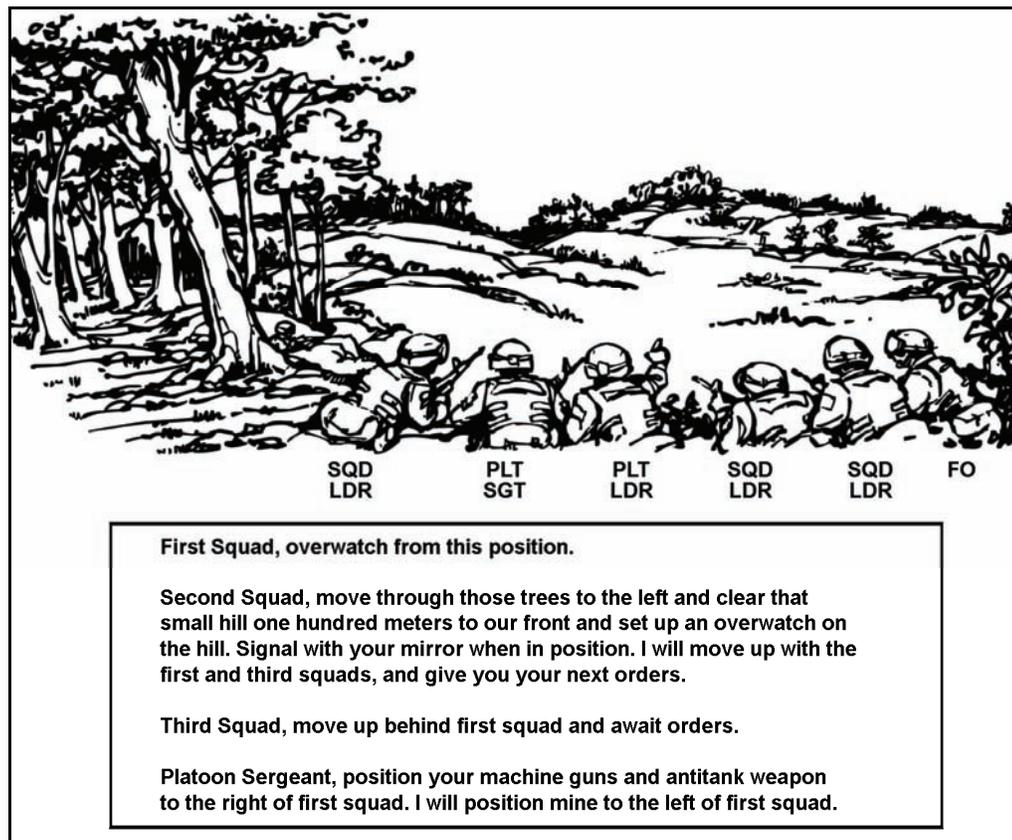


Figure 3-22. Example of platoon leader's orders for bounding overwatch.