INFANTRY RIFLE PLATOON AND SQUAD

HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

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INFANTRY RIFLE PLATOON AND SQUAD

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PREFACE

This manual provides doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures on how infantry rifle platoons and squads fight. Infantry rifle platoons and squads include infantry, airborne, air assault, ranger, and light infantry platoons and squads. This manual supersedes FM 7-8, Infantry Platoon and Squad dated April 1981, as well as FM 7-70, The Light Infantry Platoon and Squad dated September 1986, and is aligned with the Army’s AirLand Battle doctrine. It is not intended to be a stand-alone publication. An understanding of FM 7-10, The Infantry Rifle Company, and FM 7-20, The Infantry Battalion, is essential.

The primary audiences for this manual are the infantry rifle platoon leader platoon sergeant, and squad and fire team leaders; instructors in TRADOC schools; and writers of infantry training literature. Secondary audiences include other infantry leaders and staff officers, service schools, and ROTC and military academy instructors.

This manual is organized with separate chapters covering doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures, and includes a tactical standing operating procedure. This manual is designed to fit in the cargo pocket of the leader's Battle Dress Uniform. It should be used in the field as a guide to training and combat operations. It is written with a heavy bias toward the tactics, techniques, and procedures that make infantry soldiers successful in battle. Leaders must use the tactics, techniques, and procedures, but they must not lose sight of the simple doctrinal principles outlined in Chapter 1, Doctrine. Additionally, infantry leaders should use this manual in developing an estimate of the situation and an analysis of mission, enemy, terrain, and troops and time available. This analysis leads to an effective plan and to successful execution of the assigned mission.

Tough, realistic training is the key to successful execution. The specifics of how to train the infantry platoon and squad are explained in ARTEP 7-8-MTP. This manual provides the tasks, conditions, and standards for training, and outlines how to integrate individual, leader, and soldier tasks. Use these manuals to train.

The terms doctrine, tactics, techniques, procedures, drills, and tactical standing operating procedure have come to be used almost interchangeably over the years. This manual is written in closer adherence to the established Army definition of these important terms:

Doctrine. The fundamental principles by which military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application. (JOINT Pub 1-02.)
Tactics. 1. The EMPLOYMENT of units in combat. 2. The ordered ARRANGEMENT and MANEUVER of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to utilize their full potential. (JOINT Pub 1-02.)

Techniques. The general and detailed METHODS used by troops or commanders to perform assigned missions and functions, specifically, the methods of using equipment and personnel. Techniques describe A WAY, not the only way. (AR 310-25, The Army Dictionary)

Procedures. A standard detailed COURSE OF ACTION that describes how to perform a task. Procedures prescribe THE WAY of accomplishing tasks. (TRADOC Reg 11-7, Armywide Doctrinal and Training Literature Program)

Drills. Drills provide small units standard procedures essential for building strong, aggressive units. They provide standardized actions that link soldier and collective tasks at platoon level and below. There are two types of drills that apply to all type units—battle drills and crew drills.

Battle Drill. A collective action rapidly executed without applying a deliberate decision-making process. Battle drills are further defined in Chapter 4.

Crew Drill. A collective action that the crew of a weapon or piece of equipment must perform to use the weapon or equipment. This manual does not discuss crew drills. (FM 25-101.)

Tactical SOP. A set of instructions covering those features of operations which lend themselves to a DEFINITE or STANDARDIZED PROCEDURE without loss of effectiveness. The procedure is applicable unless ordered otherwise. (JOINT Pub 1-02.)

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This publication implements the following international agreement: STANAG 2003, Patrol Reports.

Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.
CHAPTER 1

DOCTRINE

The US Army’s basic fighting doctrine is called AirLand Battle. It reflects time proven fundamentals, the structure of modem warfare, and the experience of combat. AirLand Battle doctrine provides a specific mission for infantry forces.

Section I. FUNDAMENTALS

Among the infantry’s basic fundamentals are the principles of war, the elements of combat power, and the tenets of AirLand Battle. These fundamentals have application at the platoon and squad level. This section provides the mission of the infantry and the doctrine principles basic to the infantry rifle platoon and squad. These principles form the basis for platoon and squad tactics, techniques, procedures, and drills. This section also discusses the elements of combat power and the skills required of leaders and soldiers at the small-unit level.

1-1. MISSION

The mission of the infantry is to close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver to defeat or capture him, or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.

a. Despite any technological advantages that our armed forces might have over an enemy, only close combat between ground forces gains the decision in battle. Infantry rifle forces (infantry, airborne, air assault, light, and ranger) have a key role in close combat situations. They—

- Attack over approaches that are not feasible for heavy forces.
- Make initial penetrations in difficult terrain for exploitations by armor and mechanized infantry.
- Retain existing obstacles and difficult terrain as pivots for operational and tactical maneuver.
- Seize or secure forested and built-up areas.
- Control restrictive routes for use by other forces.
• Operate primarily at night or during other periods of natural or induced limited visibility.
• Follow and support exploiting heavy forces when augmented with transportation.
• Conduct rear area operations, capitalizing on air mobility.

b. Success in battle hinges on the actions of platoons and squads in close combat; on their ability to react to contact, employ suppressive fires, maneuver to a vulnerable flank, and fight through to defeat, destroy, or capture the enemy. The successful actions of small units relies on the ability of leaders and soldiers to use terrain to good advantage; to operate their weapons with accuracy and deadly effect; to out think, out move, and out fight the enemy.

c. Infantry fight platoons and squads normally operate as part of a larger force. They benefit from the support of other infantry units, armor, artillery, mortars, close air, air defense, and engineer assets. They also provide their own suppressive fires either to repel enemy assaults or to support their own maneuver.

1-2. COMBAT POWER
The doctrine that guides infantry forces is based on the four elements of combat power: maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership.

a. Maneuver. Maneuver is the movement of forces supported by fire to achieve a position of advantage from which to destroy or threaten destruction of the enemy. Infantry forces move to gain a position of advantage over the enemy and to hold that advantage. They maneuver to attack enemy flanks, rear areas, logistics points, and command posts. In the defense, they maneuver to counterattack a flank of the enemy attack. Maneuver, properly supported by fires, allows the infantry to close with the enemy and gain a decision in combat.

b. Firepower. Firepower is the capacity of a unit to deliver effective fires on a target. Firepower kills or suppresses the enemy in his positions, deceives the enemy, and supports maneuver. Without effective supporting fires the infantry cannot maneuver. Before attempting to maneuver, units must establish a base of fire. A base of fire is placed on an enemy force or position to reduce or eliminate the enemy’s ability to interfere with friendly maneuver elements. Leaders must know how to control, mass, and combine fire with maneuver. They must identify the most critical targets quickly, direct fires onto them, and ensure that the volume of fires is sufficient to keep the enemy from returning fire effectively, and the unit from expending ammunition needlessly.

c. Protection. Protection is the conservation of the fighting potential of a force so that it can be applied at the decisive time and place. Units
must never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage. Platoons and squads take active and passive measures to protect themselves from surprise, observation, detection, interference, espionage, sabotage, or annoyance. Protection includes two basic considerations: care of the soldier and his equipment, and action to counter enemy combat power.

(1) The first consideration involves sustainment techniques necessary to maintain the platoon and squads as an effective fighting force. It includes keeping soldiers healthy to maintain fighting morale through personal hygiene, physical conditioning, and rest plans. It also includes keeping equipment in good working condition, and providing and protecting supplies. It means managing the soldier’s load so that he carries only what is needed and is fit to fight when required.

(2) The second involves security, dispersion, cover, camouflage, deception, and suppression of enemy weapons. Ultimately, the infantryman must remain undetected to survive. Once found, the infantryman becomes vulnerable to all the fires of the enemy and he must either fight to break contact or to close with and finish the enemy. The infantry always wants to set the time and place of battle, and must protect itself so that it can do so with maximum combat power and the important element of surprise.

d. Leadership. Military leadership is a process by which a soldier influences others to accomplish the mission. Leaders coordinate the other three elements of combat power. Their competent and confident leadership results in effective unit action. The right leadership gives purpose, direction, and motivation in combat. Leaders must know their profession, their soldiers, and the tools of war. Only this kind of leader can direct soldiers to do difficult tasks under dangerous and stressful conditions.

1-3. LEADER SKILLS
Infantry platoon and squad leaders must be tacticians. They cannot rely on a book to solve tactical problems. They must understand and use initiative in accomplishing the mission. This means that they must know how to analyze the situation quickly and make decisions rapidly in light of the commander’s intent. They must be prepared to take independent action if necessary. The art of making sound decisions quickly lies in the knowledge of tactics, the estimate process, and platoon and squad techniques and procedures. The skills required of infantry leaders include physical toughness, technical knowledge, mental agility, and a firm grasp of how to motivate soldiers to fight on in the face of adversity.
1-4. SOLDIER SKILLS
Soldiers with sharply honed skills form the building blocks of combat
effective squads and platoons. They must maintain a high state of
physical fitness. They must be experts in the use of their primary
weapons. They must be proficient in infantry skills (land navigation,
camouflage, individual movement techniques, survival techniques, and
so forth). Finally, they must know and practice their roles as members
of fire teams, squads, and platoons.

1-5. TRAINING
Infantry units must train properly for combat. Training must conform to
Army doctrine. Doctrinal manuals provide leaders correct procedures
and principles to conduct training properly. Leaders and soldiers must
understand standardized doctrinal principles found in applicable publica-
tions. They should refer to ARTEP 7-8-MTP to find the specific condi-
tions and standards for the techniques and procedures discussed in this
manual. Training must require unit leaders to use their initiative and
make decisions quickly. The training environment must be realistic and
stressful. Training must challenge soldiers to master all infantry tasks,
individual and collective, and it must constantly remind them of their
mission, their heritage, and the physical and mental toughness that is
required of them. Platoon training must also promote the cohesion of the
unit so that, when all else fails, units continue to fight.

Section II. PLATOON OPERATIONS

This section describes the three basic tactical operations under-
taken by infantry platoons and squads—movement, offense, and
defense. It also discusses the requirement for security which is
inherent in all platoon operations. Infantry tactics build on the
following five principles:

1. Squads and platoons fight through enemy contact at the
   lowest possible level.

2. Squads in contact must establish effective suppressive
   fire before they or other squads can maneuver. If the
   squad cannot move under its own fires, the platoon must
   attempt to gain suppressive fires and then maneuver
   against the enemy position.

3. Platoons and squads will fight as organized with fire
teams and squads retaining their integrity. Even buddy
teams slay the same. The team leader and the automatic
rifleman form one buddy team, and the grenadier (M203) and a rifleman form the other buddy team.

4. Success depends upon all soldiers understanding what the platoon is trying to do and the specific steps necessary to accomplish the mission.

5. The platoon leader never waits for the squad in contact to develop the situation. Anytime a fire team makes contact, the platoon also begins taking action. That way the platoon can quickly provide additional support, maneuver to take up the assault, or follow-up on the success of the squad that made contact.

1-6. MOVEMENT
Movement refers to the shifting of forces on the battlefield. The key to moving successfully involves selecting the best combination of formations and movement techniques in each situation. Leaders consider the factors of mission, enemy, terrain, and troops and time available (METT-T) in selecting the best route and the appropriate formation and movement technique. The leader’s selection must allow moving squads to-

• Maintain cohesion.
• Maintain momentum.
• Provide maximum protection.
• Make contact in a manner that allows them to transition smoothly to offensive or defensive action.

   a. Formations. Formations are arrangements of units and of soldiers in relation to each other. Platoons and squads use formations for control, security, and flexibility.

      (1) Control. Every squad and soldier has a standard position. Soldiers can see their team leaders. Fire team leaders can see their squad leaders. Leaders control their units using arm-and-hand signals.

      (2) Security. Formations also provide 360-degree security and allow units to give the weight of their firepower to the flanks or front in anticipation of enemy contact.

      (3) Flexibility. Formations do not demand parade ground precision. Platoons and squads must retain the flexibility needed to vary their formations to the situation. The use of formations allows soldiers to execute battle drills more quickly and gives them the assurance that their leaders and buddy team members are in their expected positions and performing the right tasks.

   b. Movement Techniques. Movement techniques describe the position of squads and fire teams in relation to each other during movement.
Platoons and squads use three movement techniques: traveling, traveling overwatch, and bounding overwatch.

(1) Like formations, movement techniques provide varying degrees of control, security, and flexibility.

(2) Movement techniques differ from formations in two ways:
   (a) Formations are relatively fixed; movement techniques are not. The distance between moving units or the distance that a squad bounds away from an overwatching squad varies based on factors of METT-T.
   (b) Formations allow the platoon to weight its maximum firepower in a desired direction; movement techniques allow squads to make contact with the enemy with the smallest element possible. This allows leaders to establish a base of fire, initiate suppressive fires, and attempt to maneuver without first having to disengage or be reinforced.

(3) Leaders base their selection of a particular movement technique on the likelihood of enemy contact and the requirement for speed.

c. Other Considerations. In planning tactical movement, leaders should also consider the requirements for—
   • Reconnaissance.
   • Dispersion.
   • Security.
   • Cover and concealment.
   • Speed.
   • Observation and fields of fire.
   • Maneuver space.
   • Command and control.

1-7. OFFENSE
Units undertake offensive operations to destroy the enemy and his will to fight; to seize terrain; to learn enemy strength and disposition; or to deceive, divert, or fix the enemy. Infantry platoons and squads normally conduct offensive operations as part of a larger force. However, they can perform some offensive operations independently. The company commander’s application of combat power at the decisive point determines the outcome of the battle. Offensive operations are characterized by flexibility, surprise, concentration, speed, and audacity. Offensive operations include movements to contact, attacks, raids, reconnaissance and security operations, and ambushes.

a. Movement to Contact. A movement to contact is an offensive action that seeks (to gain or regain contact with the enemy. Usually, a unit moving to contact lacks detailed information about the enemy. Upon making contact, a unit identifies the enemy strengths and weaknesses as it develops the situation. A platoon conducts a movement to contact as
part of a company. Considerations for planning and conducting movements to contact include—

- Make enemy contact with the smallest element possible.
- Prevent detection of elements not in contact until they are in the assault.
- Maintain 360-degree security at all times.
- Report all information quickly and accurately.
- Maintain contact once it is gained.
- Generate combat power rapidly upon contact.
- Fight through at the lowest level possible.

b. **Infiltration.** Infiltration is a form of maneuver in the offense. It is a means of reaching the enemy’s rear without fighting through prepared defenses. Infantry platoons infiltrate to move into or through an area without being seen or heard. An infiltration is not an end in itself but a means to an end.

   (1) Platoons infiltrate—
   - To gather information.
   - To attack enemy positions from the rear.
   - To conduct raids or ambushes in enemy rear areas.
   - To capture prisoners.
   - To seize key terrain in support of other operations.
   - To aid a main attack.

   (2) An infiltration has five phases.
   (a) **Patrol.** Find gaps, weak areas in enemy defenses and enemy positions.
   (b) **Prepare.** Make plans, give orders, coordinate with forward and flank units, and rehearse.
   (c) **Infiltrate.** Use the specified infiltration method. Avoid contact. Ignore ineffective enemy fire. The three methods of infiltration are—

   1. Multiple lanes. When many gaps exist and the terrain can support a large number of lanes, each squad uses its own lane.

   2. Single lane—staggered squads. Units move along a single lane at staggered times. This method can be used when few gaps exist or when the ground restricts the number of lanes.

   3. Single lane—one squad. A single gap exists on which the whole squad can move at the same time.

   (d) **Consolidate.** Do this in the enemy rear or along a final linkup point; then, move to an assault position or an objective rally point to continue the mission.
(e) **Execute.** Carry out the assigned mission. The mission can be destroy enemy forces or equipment, seize key terrain or an area, capture prisoners, or gather information.

c. **Types of Attack.** An attack is an offensive action characterized by movement supported by fire. There are two types of attack: hasty and deliberate. They are distinguished chiefly by the time available for preparation. Additionally, special-purpose attacks include raids and ambushes. Successful attack depends on concentrating the maximum possible shock and violence against the enemy force. Infantry forces combine shock and violence with surprise. The objective is to shatter the enemy’s nerve, ruin his synchronization, unravel his plan, and destroy his unit’s cohesion and the willingness of his soldiers to fight. A successful attack combines a scheme of maneuver with a coordinated plan of direct and indirect fire support. The focus of an attacking platoon’s fire and maneuver is a weak point, a vulnerable flank, or the rear of an enemy. Once he has identified the point of attack, the leader establishes a base of fire to kill, fix, or suppress the enemy at that point. He then maneuvers the rest of his force to a position from which it can assault.

(1) **Hasty attack.** A hasty attack is conducted with the forces immediately available to maintain momentum or to take advantage of the enemy situation. It does not normally allow for extensive preparation.

(2) **Deliberate attack.** A deliberate attack is carefully planned and coordinated. More time is available to perform thorough reconnaissance, evaluation of all available intelligence and relative combat strength, analysis of various courses of action, and other factors affecting the situation. It is generally conducted against a well-organized defense when a hasty attack is not possible or has been conducted and failed.

(3) **Raid.** A raid is an operation involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, to confuse the enemy, or to destroy his installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal after completion of the assigned mission.

(4) **Ambush.** An ambush is a surprise attack by fire from concealed positions on a moving or temporarily halted enemy unit. It combines the advantages and characteristics of the offense with those of the defense.

d. **Initiative in the Attack.** Seizing and retaining the initiative involves more than just achieving tactical surprise. It involves a process of planning and preparing for combat operations, finding the enemy first, avoiding detection, fixing the enemy, locating or creating a weakness, and maneuvering to exploit that weakness with a quick and violent assault.

(1) **Plan and prepare.** Leaders use the troop-leading procedure to make sure that all necessary steps are taken to prepare for an operation. Leaders use the estimate of the situation to analyze the factors of METT-T
and to determine the best course of action and to ensure that leaders, soldiers, and their equipment can perform the tasks necessary to accomplish the mission.

2. **Find the enemy.** Platoon leaders find the enemy by knowing how he fights, by analyzing the terrain in light of this knowledge, and by actively reconnoitering to locate him.

3. **Avoid detection.** Platoons avoid detection by moving along the least expected, generally the most difficult, route. They use the terrain to mask their movements. They use proper camouflage techniques and move with stealth. This allows platoons to capitalize on surprise. All of this requires imagination in leaders and stamina in all soldiers.

4. **Fix the enemy.** Platoons and squads fix enemy forces by employing suppressive fires that kill exposed enemy soldiers and destroy their weapons. As a minimum, they render the volume and accuracy of the enemy’s fire ineffective.

5. **Find or create a weakness.** Leaders look for vulnerable flanks, gaps in lines, or lulls in enemy fire. When they cannot readily find a weakness, they create one with suppressive fire and the surprise effect of its suddenly coming from an unexpected direction.

6. **Maneuver to exploit the weakness.** Leaders must exploit this weakness by moving to the best covered and concealed position and then assaulting to destroy, defeat, or capture the enemy.

7. **Consolidate and reorganize.** Finally, platoons and squads must quickly consolidate the position to defend it against an enemy counter-attack. Units then reorganize themselves and prepare to continue the mission.

e. **Control Measures.** Leaders use graphic control measures to regulate or direct the platoon’s movement, positions, and fire.

1. Control measures are not intended to restrict the exercise of initiative (the function of command). Leaders use control measures to clarify their intent, focus the platoon or squad effort, and ensure synchronization. Each control measure should have a specific purpose that contributes to mission accomplishment. If a control measure fails the purpose test, leaders should not use it.

2. Control measures can be drawn on a map, overlay, sketch, or a terrain model. Leaders should strive to keep control measures easily identifiable and simple. Graphic control measures in the offense include assembly area, attack position, line of departure, boundaries, route, release point, start point, axis of advance, direction of attack, phase line, checkpoint, assault position, objective, contact point, link-up point, infiltration lane, probable line of deployment, and limit of
advances. FM 101-5-1 discusses these control measures in detail and provides examples of their use.

g. Attacks During Limited Visibility. Attacks during limited visibility achieve surprise, avoid heavy losses, cause panic in a weak and disorganized enemy, exploit success, maintain momentum, and keep pressure on the enemy. Platoons and squads attack whenever possible during limited visibility. Darkness, fog, heavy rain, falling snow, and the smoke and dust of combat create limited visibility conditions that allow infantry platoons and squads to move undetected.

(1) Fundamentals. The fundamentals for a daylight attack apply to limited visibility attacks. Limited visibility attacks require:
- Well-trained squads.
- Natural light sufficient to employ night vision devices.
- A simple concept with sufficient control measures.
- Detailed, successful reconnaissance of the objective, routes, passage points, support-by-fire positions, and other key locations.

(2) Considerations. Leaders must consider the increased difficulty during limited visibility operations in performing the following:
- Controlling the movement of individuals and squads.
- Identifying targets and controlling direct and indirect fires.
- Navigating and moving.
- Identifying friendly and enemy soldiers.
- Locating, treating, and evacuating casualties.
- Locating and bypassing or breaching enemy obstacles.

1-8. DEFENSE
This paragraph describes the characteristics of defensive operations, the role of the commander's concept in focusing the efforts of platoons and squads in the defense, and other considerations for planning defensive operations. Defensive operations are characterized by preparation, disruption, concentration, and flexibility. Platoons and squads normally defend as part of a larger force to disrupt, disorganize, delay, or defeat an attacking enemy, deny an area to an enemy, or protect a flank. They may also defend as a part of a larger unit in a retrograde operation. The challenge to the defender is to retain the initiative, that is, to keep the enemy reacting and unable to execute his own plan.

a. Initiative in the Defense. Since the enemy decides the time and place of the attack, leaders seize and retain the initiative in the defense through careful planning, preparation, coordination, and rehearsal. Leaders plan and establish the defense to find the enemy first, without being found; fix the enemy with obstacles and fires; locate or create a
weakness in the enemy’s attack plan; and maneuver to exploit that weakness with quick violent counterattack.

(1) **Plan and prepare.** Leaders use the troop-leading procedure to make sure that all necessary steps are taken to prepare for an operation. They analyze the factors of METT-T to determine the best course of action. In the defense, they determine where best to kill the enemy with fires. They position key weapons to concentrate fires into that area, tie in fires with obstacles, position the remaining platoon and squad weapons to support and protect the key weapons, and reconnoiter and rehearse counterattacks.

(2) **Find the enemy.** Platoon leaders find the enemy by knowing how he fights, by analyzing the terrain in light of this knowledge, by positioning OPs along likely avenues of approach, and by actively patrolling to locate him.

(3) **Avoid detection.** Platoons avoid detection by securing their defensive positions or sectors early and continuously, by positioning squads and weapons away from natural lines of drift or obvious terrain features, and by employing effective camouflage and noise and light discipline.

(4) **Fix the enemy.** Platoons use a combination of tactical obstacles and direct and indirect fires to disrupt the enemy attack and fix the enemy in a place where the platoon can destroy him with fires.

(5) **Find or create a weakness.** Platoons create a weakness by destroying the enemy’s command and control nodes, by isolating an attacking or assaulting enemy formation from its support, by causing mounted forces to dismount and thereby slowing the attack and making the enemy vehicles more vulnerable, by use of night vision devices to gain a visibility advantage, or by the effective use of illumination to blind or expose the enemy during his attack.

(6) **Maneuver to exploit the weakness.** Having created a weakness, platoons must exploit it with counterattacks against the flank or rear of the enemy attack by fire or maneuver. Platoons must carefully coordinate and rehearse all counterattacks to ensure the proper synchronization in lifting and shifting of direct and indirect fires. They must also consider the threat of follow-on enemy forces against their counterattack.

(7) **Reorganize.** Platoons and squads must be able to reorganize quickly to continue the defense against follow-on forces.

b. **Defense on a Reverse Slope.** An infantry company or platoon can organize a defense on the reverse slope of a hill (Figure 1-1, page 1-12). This defense is on the part of the hill or ridge that is masked by the crest from enemy direct fire and ground observation. The platoon must control the crest by fire.