

Section 3



INTRODUCTION TO TACTICS II

Key Points

- 1 The Three Individual Movement Techniques
- 2 The Two Fire Team Movement Formations

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. . . . The art of making sound decisions quickly lies in the knowledge of tactics, the estimate process, and platoon and squad techniques and procedures.

Introduction

From the introduction of the muzzle-loaded smoothbore musket until the mid-19th century, infantry units in Europe and the Americas **maneuvered** in long lines and large formations. The idea was to subject the enemy, who stood or knelt in similar formations, to massed fire at short range. Often these formations got off one shot, then charged the enemy with fixed bayonets.

That changed during the American Civil War with the advent of the rifled musket, conical bullet, repeating rifle, and primitive machine gun. Infantry tactics did not keep pace with these advances in weaponry, and this led to the increased carnage at battles like Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor.

The bloodbaths on World War I battlefields, where British, French, and German infantry charged futilely into machine-gun and grenade fire with massive losses, showed the gap between increasingly lethal military technology and outdated infantry tactics.

Fortunately for the Soldiers of today, much has changed. The modern, trained Army uses traveling techniques, movement formations, and **cover** and **concealment** to advance on or defend objectives with the fewest possible casualties. In this section, you will learn how to move under fire, as an individual and as part of a fire team.

In his book, *Steel My Soldiers' Hearts*, COL David Hackworth relates how his battalion surgeon, CPT Byron Holley, welcomed a young medic to Vietnam:

Learning to Crawl

Holley couldn't help remembering his own baptism by fire and told Billy how when he heard the bullet snapping by barely a foot above his head, "it was the first realization I had that, hey, a guy can get killed pretty easy over here. I looked up at the moon and prayed, 'God, please don't let me die in this hellhole.' And it was just like I heard a voice saying: Relax, everything's going to be just fine, just remember what you learned in basic training—when the lead's flying, get your butt down. It was like a protective shield came around me and I lost any fear. And I learned fast that you can cover a lot of territory crawling.

David H. Hackworth

The Three Individual Movement Techniques

As Holley learned, knowing how to move on the battlefield is the key to staying alive. But before you move, you must know where you want to move to next. Stay on the route that your leader selects for the team. Then identify the next covered or concealed position that is nearby. Select your route to your next position so you are exposed to the least amount of enemy fire. And don't forget—you don't want to cross in front of your other squad members' fires, either.

To protect yourself, it's important to consider the difference between *cover* and *concealment*. Cover will afford you a degree of protection from enemy direct or indirect fire. Depending on the type of cover, cover can also provide concealment from enemy observation. Concealment means the enemy can't see you, but concealment doesn't protect you from enemy direct or indirect fire.

maneuver

employment of forces in the battlespace through movement in combination with fires to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy in order to accomplish the mission

cover

protection from the effects of direct and indirect fires

concealment

protection from observation and surveillance

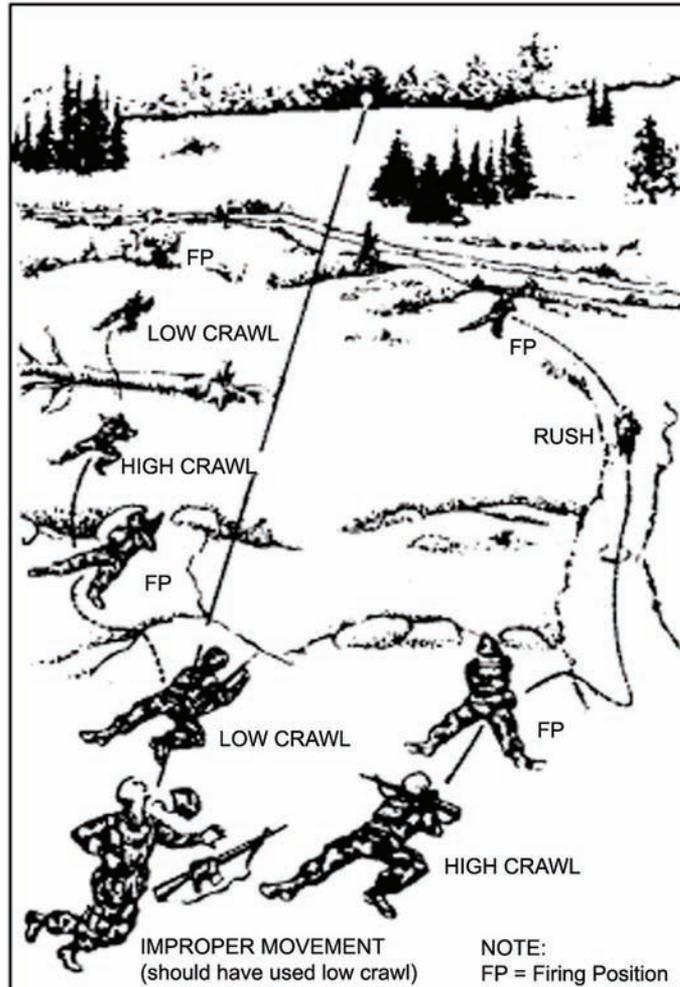


Figure 3.1 Three Types of Movement

There are varying degrees of cover and concealment. Tall grass or dense vegetation will help conceal your movement, but will not stop a bullet or shrapnel from direct or indirect fire. Getting behind a tree or a wall will help stop bullets, and may improve your concealment, but will not afford much protection from indirect fire. Occupying a position inside a building will improve your cover from direct and indirect fire and may offer better concealment from enemy observation.

So now you have identified your next covered position, and you know which route provides the best cover or concealment. You have three options for movement: the *high crawl*, the *low crawl*, and the *3–5 second rush*. You choose which one to use depending on the conditions you face—such as the terrain and the likelihood of enemy contact—or, if you are already receiving enemy fire, on the enemy fire’s degree of accuracy. Features such as a gully, ditch, ravine, or wall can provide cover and concealment when you use the low or high crawl. Features such as hedgerows or lines of thick vegetation offer concealment only when you use the low or high crawl. (Remember that high grass or weeds only partially conceal you, since the movement of the grass as you crawl could give away your position.) Large trees, rocks, stumps, folds or creases in the ground, or vehicle hulks can give you cover and concealment in a temporary position.

If the enemy fire you are receiving is from a great distance or is inaccurate fire, it may be best for you to move quickly out of the enemy’s line of fire by conducting 3-5 second

rushes. If the enemy's fire is close, and somewhat accurate or effective, you may need to high crawl out of the enemy's fires or to a covered position. If you are receiving close, accurate, or effective enemy fire, then in order to survive, you must give the enemy the smallest possible target by low crawling to the nearest cover.

An exception to this would be if you were the target of a close ambush. In this case, you would immediately return fire and assault through the ambush in order to get out of the kill zone and survive. This technique is known as a *battle drill*. You will learn more about battle drills later in ROTC.

The Low Crawl

The low crawl offers you the greatest protection with the slowest movement. Use the low crawl when you do *not* have to move quickly and you have less than a vertical foot of cover and concealment (or when the enemy has good visibility).

With the low crawl, you hug the ground:

1. Keep your body as flat as possible.
2. Grab the upper sling swivel of your weapon and let the weapon trail behind you (see Figure 3.2). The hand guard will rest on your forearm and the butt of the weapon will drag on the ground. Keep the muzzle off the ground.
3. Push both arms forward and pull your right leg forward. Move forward by pulling with your arms and pushing with your right leg. Continue to push, pull, and move. Switch legs as you get tired. *Stay low*.

The High Crawl

Use the high crawl when you have to move quickly and your route offers cover and concealment (or when poor visibility limits enemy observation).

The high crawl is a modified version of crawling on your arms and legs:

1. Keep your torso off the ground and rest your weight on your forearms and lower legs—or your elbows and your knees.
2. Cradle your weapon in your arms and keep the muzzle off the ground (see Figure 3.3).
3. Keep your knees behind your buttocks so your buttocks stay low.
4. Move forward on your right elbow and left knee, then follow with your left elbow and right knee.



Figure 3.2 The Low Crawl



Figure 3.3 The High Crawl

The 3-5 Second Rush

The 3-5 second rush—as the name implies—offers you the fastest movement with the least protection. *You will be exposed.* Use the rush when you have no cover or concealment, and breaks in enemy fire allow you to expose yourself *briefly*.

1. Roll or crawl away from your fighting position.
2. Push up with your arms. Spring to your feet. Carry your weapon at a modified position of port arms. Be ready to fire—or return fire—on the run.
3. *Run* to your next position. Run a short distance. Keep your exposure time to no more than 3-5 seconds. Do not let the enemy fire on you. Speed and surprise are your best friends.
4. Just before you hit the ground, plant both feet and fall forward. As you fall forward, slide your hand to the heel of the butt of your weapon, and use the butt of your weapon to break your fall.
5. Take up a good prone firing position and cover your buddy's movement.

In the last section, you learned that you work with a buddy on your fire team. Always move as a team. Cover one another. Never move without your buddy covering your movement. Never let your buddy move without you covering his or her movement with your weapon.

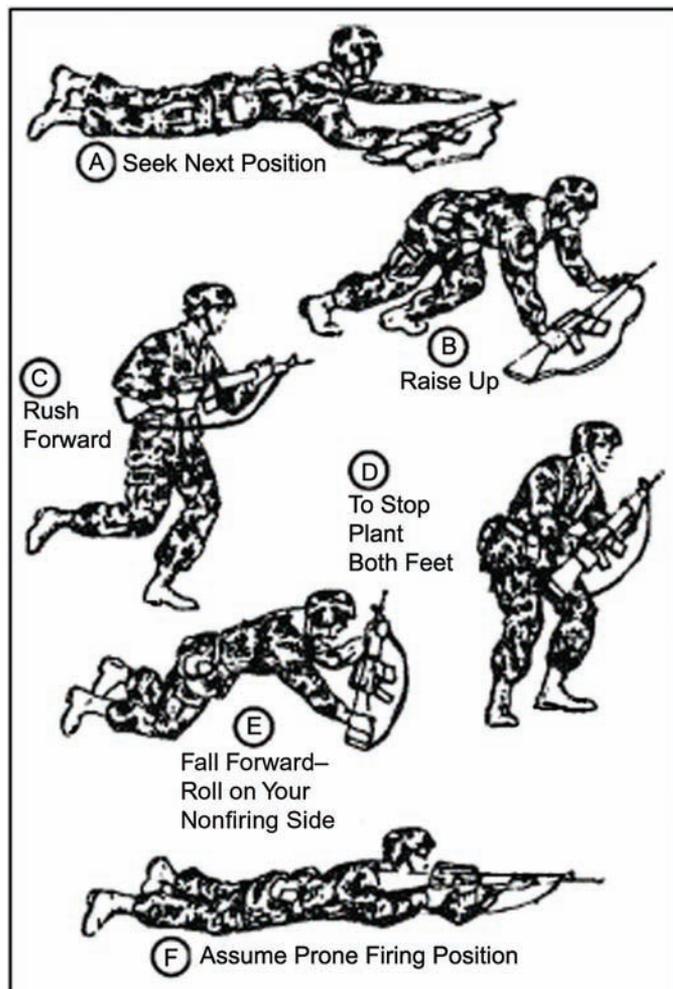


Figure 3.4 The 3-5 Second Rush

Communicate with your buddy. Make sure you and your buddy understand who moves when and where and when to provide covering fires to protect each other's movement. More important, in order to prevent fratricide (your buddy accidentally shooting you or vice versa), you and your battle buddy must also communicate when you will cease your covering fire.

The Two Fire Team Movement Formations

Fire teams, squads, and platoons use movement formations because:

- they allow the leader to maintain control over the Soldiers
- they allow the Soldiers to protect each other
- they allow the Soldiers to react flexibly when making contact with the enemy
- they make the best use of the team, squad, or platoon's firepower.

In both of the following fire team formations, the fire team leader moves at the front of the formation. This allows the fire team leader to lead by example, allows each fire team member to see the leader, and allows the fire team leader to fire and maneuver the fire team by using hand and arm signals.

Fire teams have two options for movement formations: the wedge formation and the file formation.

The Wedge Formation

The wedge is the basic fire-team formation. The Soldiers are spaced about 10 meters apart, depending upon the terrain. The team leader moves at the point of the wedge. Behind the leader and to his or her sides are the automatic rifleman and the grenadier. The rifleman trails the automatic rifleman or the grenadier in the wedge (see Figure 3.5). If the fire team is moving independently, or is the last element in part of a squad or platoon movement,

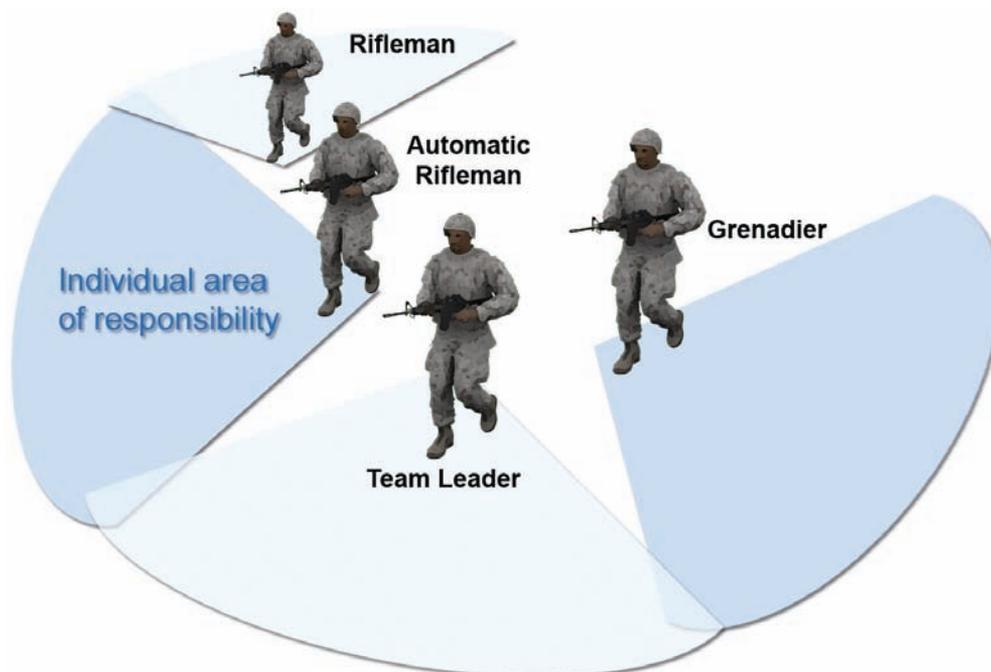


Figure 3.5 The Wedge Formation

the rifleman will occupy the center rear of the wedge formation and the wedge will resemble a diamond shape (see Figure 3.6).

The fire team leader adjusts the distance between Soldiers based on the terrain and the chance of enemy contact. If the terrain becomes restrictive, or if enemy contact is not likely, the fire team leader will contract, or collapse, the wedge formation by closing up the distance and dispersion between Soldiers. This allows easier command and control over the fire team. In severely restricted terrain or very low visibility, the fire team leader may collapse the wedge to the point where the wedge looks like a single-file formation. If the terrain is more open, or if enemy contact is likely or expected, the fire team leader expands the wedge formation by increasing the distance between Soldiers. This increases the difficulty of command and control, but also increases the protection and security of the fire team from enemy contact. In all cases, the fire team leader modifies the formation by reducing or increasing the interval—while still allowing each team member to see the fire team leader and the fire team leader to see the squad leader.

The wedge is easy to control, is flexible, provides good security, and allows the team members to fire immediately in all directions.

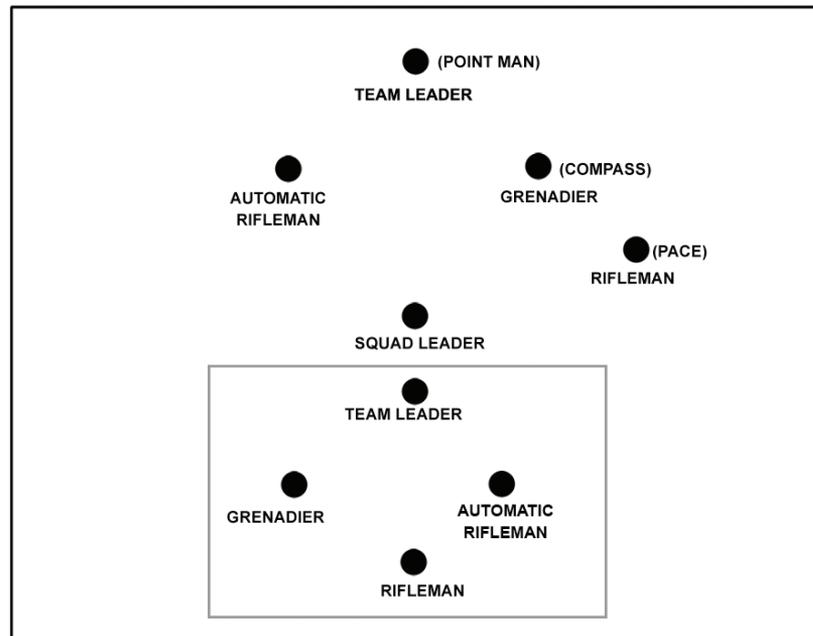


Figure 3.6 Squad Column With Fire Teams in Wedge

Critical Thinking

Why is it so crucial that team members be able to see one another? Why is control so important?

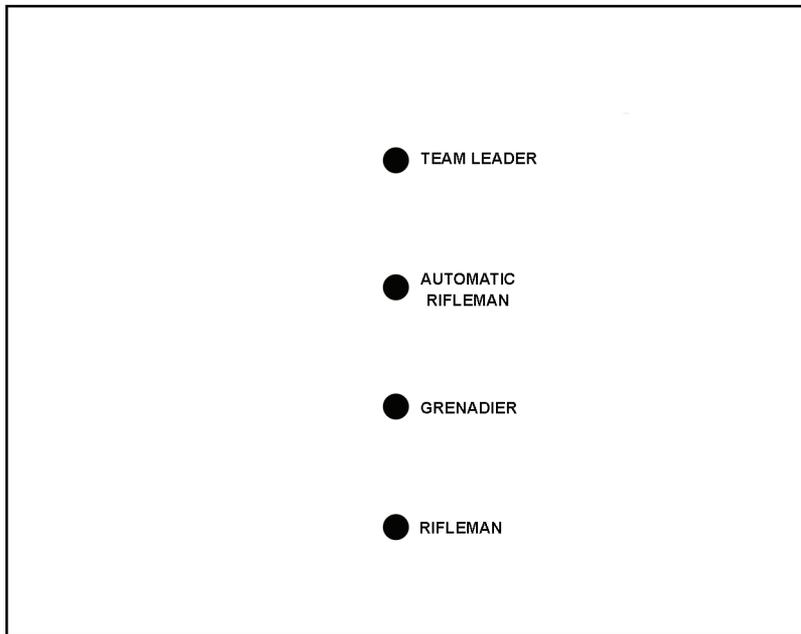


Figure 3.7 The File Formation

The File Formation

If terrain or visibility prevents the team members from using the wedge, they use the file formation. The team leader walks at the point, followed by the automatic rifleman, the grenadier, and the rifleman. They walk about 10 meters apart.

While the file provides the team leader greater control than the wedge does, it is less flexible, less secure, and prevents the team from firing to the front and rear.

TABLE 3.1

A Comparison of the Wedge and File Formations

CHARACTERISTICS					
Movement Formation	When Normally Used	Control	Flexibility	Fire Capabilities/ Restrictions	Security
Fire Team Wedge	Basic fire team formation	Easy	Good	Allows immediate fires in all directions	Good
Fire Team File	Close terrain, dense vegetation, limited visibility conditions	Easier	Less flexible than the wedge	Allows immediate fires to the flanks, masks fires to the front and rear	Not as good

Critical Thinking

Using Table 3.1, compare and contrast the characteristics of the fire team wedge and file. Why is the file easier to control than the wedge? How is it that the file is easier to control than the wedge, but is less flexible than the wedge? Consider fire capabilities and dispersion. Why does the wedge afford better security than the file?



CONCLUSION

An Army adage dictates, “The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle.” In the opening vignette, Holley was reminded to “just remember what you learned in basic training—when the lead’s flying, get your butt down.”

The Army has developed individual movement techniques and movement formations through years of experience in infantry tactics during combat. Just as Holley discovered, if you are to survive in combat, your training must become natural, instinctive, and automatic. The better you learn these techniques, the better your chances of surviving and prevailing in combat. You learned about individual movement techniques and moving as a buddy team in this section. In later ROTC courses, you will learn how small units use movement techniques and formations to survive on the battlefield.

Learning Assessment

1. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the low crawl.
2. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the high crawl.
3. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the 3-5 second rush.
4. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the wedge formation.
5. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the file formation.
6. Which Soldier takes point in a fire-team formation?

Key Words

maneuver

cover

concealment

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