

Section 8



INTRODUCTION TO BATTLE DRILLS

Key Points

- 1 Characteristics of Battle Drills
- 2 Key Types of Battle Drills

You must prepare yourself. If you are not competent in a tactical and technical sense, you will not be fit to lead. You will be a danger to your Soldiers, exposing them needlessly, and destroying their confidence in themselves as well as in you.

BG S. L. A. Marshall

From DA PAM 600-65, *Leadership Statements and Quotes*

Introduction

Efficient performance in any activity depends on your training, practice, and reflexes. That's as true for military action as for anything else. In the days when Soldiers had to load their rifles and muskets by stuffing gunpowder and bullets down the barrel, officers would drill them constantly on the complex procedure so they could do it automatically, even under heavy fire.

In the previous section, you learned about squad formations, movement techniques, and how small units maneuver effectively on the battlefield. In this section, you will explore the more specific types of **battle drills** and why mastering them is crucial to preserving combat power and accomplishing your mission.

You and your Soldiers will have the opportunity to train and rehearse battle drills before you have to rely on them to survive in combat. Your skill in battle drills will ensure that they become second nature, which can save your life. Consider how one Army Soldier earned a Silver Star for valor in Fallujah, Iraq.

1st Cav Soldier Earns Silver Star in Fallujah

(April 11, 2005)—Injured by the flying fragments of an enemy grenade, a Soldier collected himself and noticed his buddies were down. He rushed to protect them, firing round after round at his attackers as bullets punched into the walls around him. If he and his friends were to live, there was nothing he could do but continue to fight alone and wait for reinforcements.

This was the situation SGT Benny Alicea, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 1st Cavalry Division—then SPC Alicea—faced during a battle in Fallujah in November 2004. Alicea's actions that day earned him the Silver Star, just one of the many awards he earned during his year in Iraq. He also received two Purple Hearts and two Army Commendation Medals—one with a V device for valor in another battle.

Members of A Company were in Fallujah to take part in Operation Phantom Fury, which aimed to bring the rogue city under coalition control. As the sun rose over Fallujah, insurgents operating from a complex of houses fired on the company's 1st platoon. The platoon returned fire from their Bradley Fighting Vehicles and began clearing the complex to secure the area.

The company detained 20 suspected insurgents and also found a cache of weapons and ammunition. As the Soldiers dealt with the detainees, another group of insurgents attacked the troops from a nearby house. Alicea's squad got the order to eliminate the new threat.

While clearing a house, the platoon cleared an empty room and moved toward a closed door with apprehension. "The door was not even fully open when a hailstorm of bullets started coming out," Alicea said. "It was chaotic, and I felt the rounds passing by me. We didn't realize how many people were in there until they started shooting and we heard their voices."

battle drill

a collective action, rapidly executed without applying a deliberate decision making process, in which a unit applies fire and maneuver to common situations of enemy combat

The squad found itself battling 15 insurgents. Bullets and debris flew everywhere as both sides suffered casualties. Fragments from two enemy grenades caught Alicea in the hip and buttocks. As the squad backed out of the house, Alicea laid down suppressive fire before falling to the ground in pain. Three of his comrades were also injured, and Alicea positioned himself to protect them. "I just loaded my weapon and kept on firing as I was staying around my brothers to protect them," said Alicea. "At this point, in my mind I felt like I was going to die."

Alicea was running out of ammunition when a Bradley came to rescue him and the other wounded Soldiers.

With the skirmish over, Alicea helped load the wounded into vehicles, ignoring his own pain. The three Soldiers Alicea protected all suffered severe wounds. One of those Soldiers, SPC Jose Velez, didn't survive.

Despite his heroism, Alicea remains humble about his actions. According to his friends and fellow Soldiers, that attitude describes the type of person he is.

While he is proud of what he did to earn the Silver Star, the award also brought back the harsh memories of a fallen friend. "It is an honor to get it, but the award also reminds me of Velez a lot," he said, his eyes welling up with tears.

Now in Kuwait, the first stop on his way home, Alicea prepares for his return to Fort Hood, Texas. He looks forward to spending time with his wife, organizing his life and thinking about the future. "I appreciate life a lot more," he said. "Some people don't take life seriously until they see someone close to them being picked up off the ground."

Soldier Stories



To lead an untrained people to war is to throw them away.

Confucius

From DA PAM 600-65, *Leadership Statements and Quotes*

Characteristics of Battle Drills

As you read in the vignette above, when in combat, you need to assess and make decisions rapidly, issuing brief oral orders quickly. SGT Benny Alicea's training in performing Battle Drill 07-4-D9109: *Enter a Building and Clear a Room* (from ARTEP 7-8-Drill) probably saved his life and the lives of others that November day in Fallujah. Infantry battle drills help you teach your platoon and squads to apply fire and maneuver in typical battlefield situations without going through a deliberate decision making process. Battle drills require continual practice, and repetition is the key to proficiency.

Battle drills are very similar to standing operating procedures (SOPs), which are the pre-established unit guidelines or protocols for operations, but there are important differences. Battle drills are an immediate response to enemy contact that requires fire and maneuver in order to succeed. SOPs don't necessarily require immediate response to enemy contact and don't require fire or maneuver to succeed. For example, your unit may have an SOP on how to operate an access control point (ACP) at your forward operating base (FOB). Operating the ACP does not depend on whether you have enemy contact. If the enemy does attack the FOB, however, you immediately execute Battle Drill 07-3-D-9103: *React to Contact*. Your unit may have also developed its own battle drill to address the uniqueness of reacting to contact at an ACP.

The main characteristics of battle drills are speed, minimal leader commands, trained responses, and sequential actions.

Speed

The small unit's ability to accomplish its mission often depends on your Soldiers' ability to execute key actions quickly. You and your people must know—almost automatically—what to do upon enemy contact. Soldiers must be able to count on one another immediately to move without hesitation. Where seconds mean the difference between life and death, there's no time for confusion or hesitation. The survival of your troops and preservation of combat power depends on your unit's proficiency at battle drills.

Minimal Leader Commands

Battle drills require minimal leader commands. They are trained responses to enemy actions or to your orders. The actions are sequential—Soldiers conduct them in a specified order—and standard throughout the Army. Battle drills address both offensive and defensive actions in training and in combat. Once your Soldiers have trained and retrained in the standard battle drills, their skill, or proficiency, will carry them through almost any combat situation.

Trained Responses

Trained responses are like reflexes and result from continual practice. Battle drills provide small units with the standard procedures essential for building unit strength, cohesion, and aggressiveness. You should train your team leaders and subordinates until they reach a state of coordination and readiness that you will continually fine-tune.

Characteristics of Battle Drills

- minimal leader commands
- trained responses
- sequential actions.

Review of Combat Power Maneuvers

Firepower
Protection
Leadership.



Critical Thinking

Reflect on a skill you've mastered through training, practice, and use of your reflexes. How long did it take you to master the skill? How has it become an automatic part of you?

Sequential Actions

Learning the sequential actions is critical to gaining skill in battle drills and to success in combat. Army Training Evaluation Program (ARTEP) 7-8-Drill, *Battle Drills for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, contains detailed instructions on battle drill sequences for each typical combat scenario. Memorizing the steps for each scenario, practicing the sequence, and then rehearsing again and again are the keys to building battle drills into your Soldiers' skill sets. Learning these steps and practicing together is an excellent way to build unit cohesion and morale.

Additional Characteristics

Battle drills allow Soldiers to move to different units anywhere in the world and already know how to work with a new group of people. This saves time and avoids confusion. While battle drills may have been initially designed for use by infantry platoons and squads, insurgents and terrorists in the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE) do not discriminate between military occupation specialties (MOS) and will engage any type of military unit. It has become imperative, therefore, that all units train and become proficient in all battle drills.

Key Types of Battle Drills

While the Army identifies 12 typical battle drill scenarios, this section will outline the five most commonly encountered situations. In future sections, you will become familiar with the specifics of small-unit actions in each type of combat situation.

While it's beyond the scope of this section to cover all of the standard battle drills, one drill is the foundation for virtually all the others—*React to Contact*. Once you know the *React to Contact* drill by heart, you will understand the combat unit's basic response, which supports all other Army battle drills.

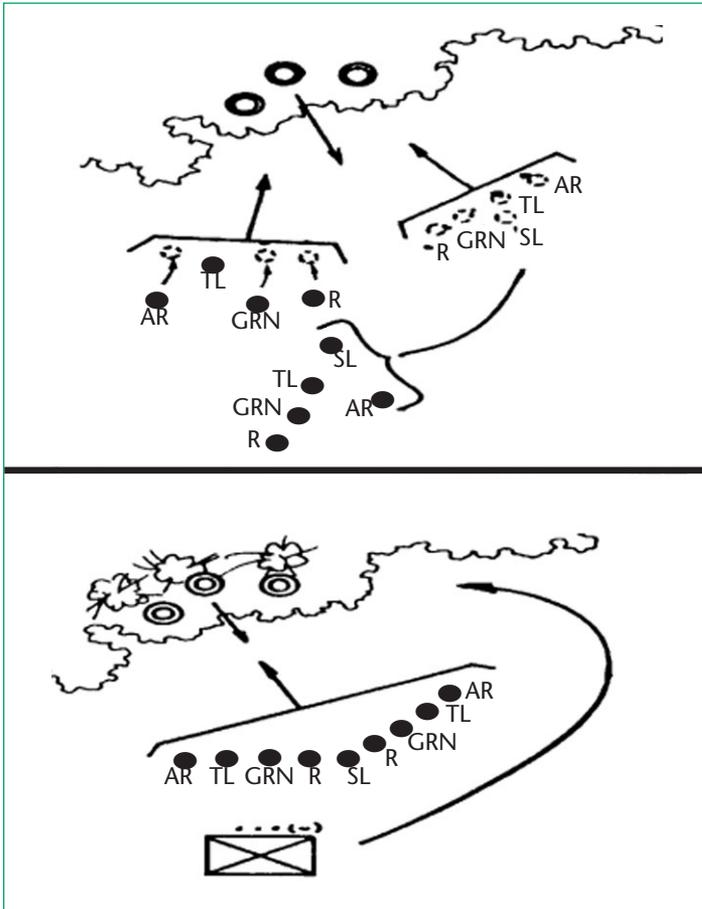


Figure 8.1 React to Contact

React to Contact

In this key scenario, your squad or platoon receives fire from individual enemy or crew-served weapons or unexpectedly encounters an enemy force or position (Figure 8.1).

1. Your Soldiers immediately take up the nearest covered positions and return fire in the direction of contact.
2. Your squad and team leaders locate and engage known or suspected enemy positions with well-aimed fire and pass information to the squad or platoon leader.
3. Fire team leaders control fire using these standard fire commands:
 - Alert
 - Direction
 - Description of target
 - Range
 - Method of fire (manipulation/rate)
 - Command to commence firing

Example: "Enemy bunker, 11 o'clock, 200 meters, suppressive fire!"
4. Your Soldiers maintain contact with their team members on the left and right.

5. They also maintain contact with their team leaders and report the location of enemy positions.
6. Your team and squad leaders check the status of their personnel.
7. The team and squad leaders maintain contact with the squad or platoon leader.
8. The squad or platoon leader moves up to the fire team or squad in contact and links up with its leader. The squad or platoon leader then determines whether the squad or platoon must move out of the engagement area; assesses the situation; and determines the next course of action.
9. Team leaders lead their teams by example.
10. Leaders relay all commands and signals from the platoon chain of command.

Break Contact

The skills your Soldiers learn to use in *React to Contact* can serve in other battle drills, such as breaking contact. In this situation, your squad or platoon is under enemy fire and based on METT-TC, you decide that your unit cannot destroy the enemy, your unit cannot fix the enemy and wait for reinforcements, or your mission was to avoid contact or preserve combat power. So you make the decision to break contact (Figure 8.2).

base of fire

direct fire placed on an enemy force or position to reduce or eliminate the enemy's capability to interfere with friendly maneuver element(s) by fire and/or movement—it may be provided by a single weapon or a grouping of weapons systems

1. The squad or platoon leader directs one fire team or squad in contact to support disengagement of the rest of the unit by establishing a **base of fire** to achieve suppressive fire onto the enemy.
2. The squad or platoon leader orders the fire team or squad that is not designated the base of fire element to move at a distance and direction determined by the leader, or toward an easily identifiable and defensible terrain feature, or toward the last en route objective rally point (ORP).
3. While the base of fire element suppresses the enemy, the other element breaks contact and moves toward the new objective.
4. The moving element uses fragmentation, concussion, and smoke grenades to mask its movement.
5. The moving element takes up the designated position and becomes the base of fire element so that the first base of fire element can disengage from the enemy.
6. When the new base of fire element has gained fire superiority or has laid down suppressive fire, the leader directs the base of fire element to move to its next location. Based on the terrain and the volume and accuracy of the enemy's fire, the moving fire team or squad may need to use fire and movement techniques.
7. While continuing to suppress the enemy as it breaks contact, the squad or platoon continues to bound away from the enemy until it breaks contact, passes through a higher-level support-by-fire position, or reaches the assigned position to conduct the next mission.
8. The platoon leader should consider changing the direction of movement once contact is broken. This will reduce the ability of the enemy to place effective indirect fire on your units.
9. If the squad or platoon is disrupted, Soldiers should stay together and move quickly to the last designated rally point.
10. Squad and platoon leaders will account for Soldiers, report, reorganize as necessary, and continue the mission.

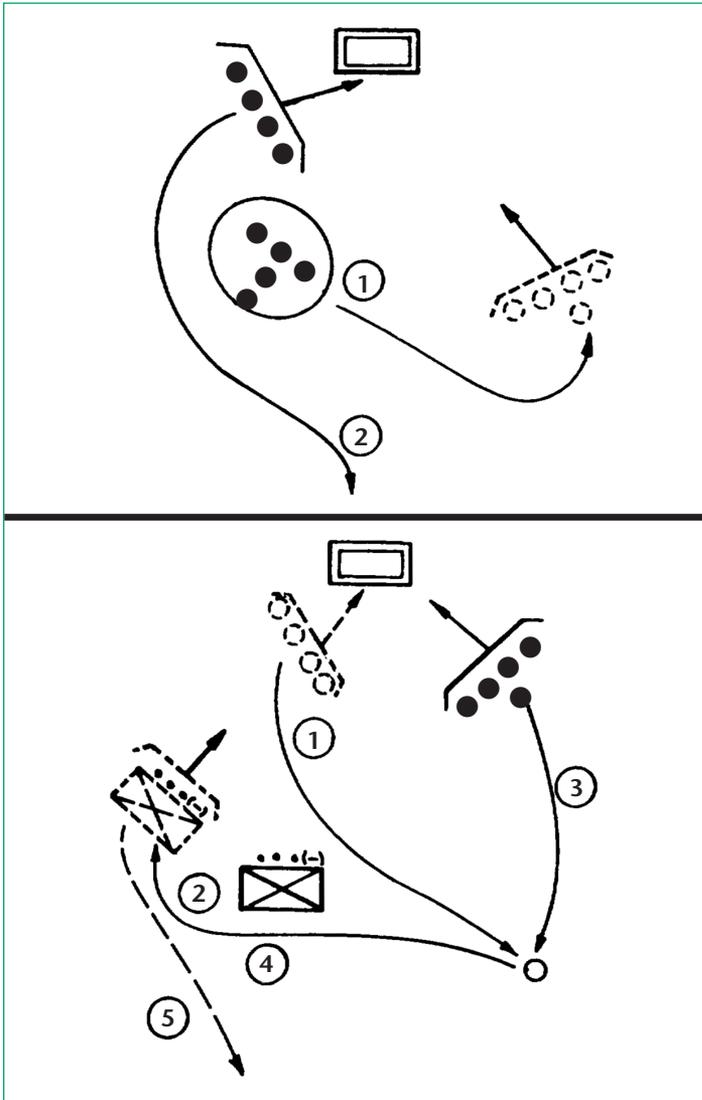


Figure 8.2 Break Contact

Critical Thinking

Reflect on what you have learned about movement techniques. What characteristics and similarities does the break contact battle drill have with the bounding overwatch movement technique? Compare and contrast the two methods of bounding overwatch with the break contact battle drill.

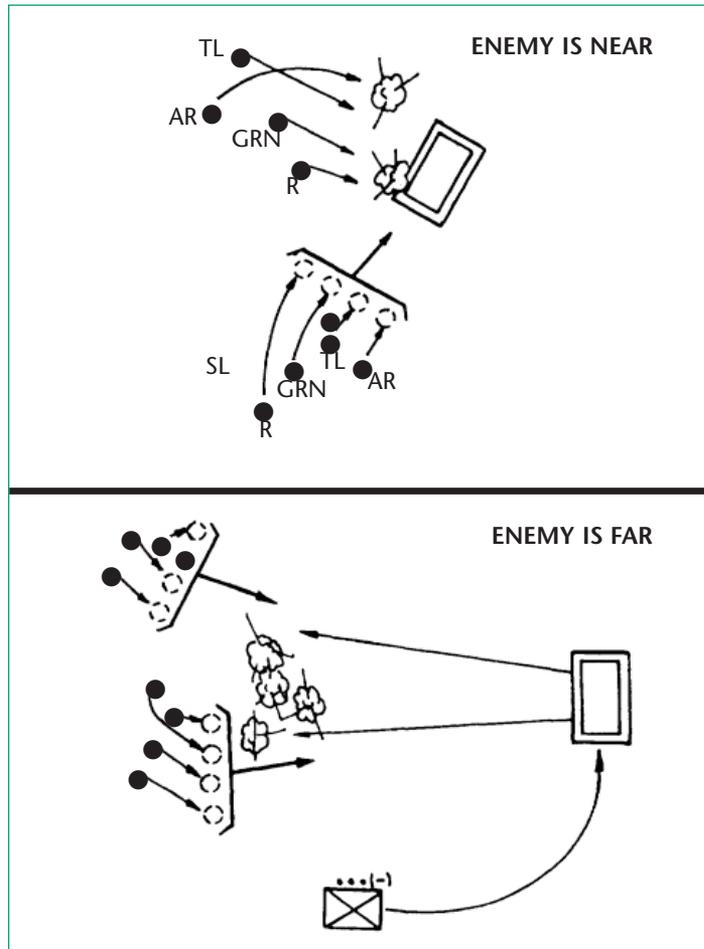


Figure 8.3 React to Ambush

React to Ambush

suppressive fire

a condition achieved when a unit's volume and accuracy of fire against an enemy force permits greater freedom to maneuver

In this combat encounter, your squad or platoon is attacked by the enemy in an ambush using a casualty-producing device (for example, a grenade or an improvised explosive device [IED]) and a high volume of fire (Figure 8.3). Your unit will then take the following actions:

1. In a *near ambush* (within hand-grenade range), your Soldiers receiving fire immediately return fire, take up covered positions, and throw fragmentation, concussion, and smoke grenades. Immediately after the grenades detonate, Soldiers assault through the ambush using fire and movement. Soldiers not in the kill zone immediately identify enemy positions, initiate immediate **suppressive fires** against the enemy, take up covered positions, and shift fire as your Soldiers in the kill zone assault through the ambush.
2. In a *far ambush* (beyond hand-grenade range), your Soldiers receiving fire immediately return fire, take up covered positions, and suppress the enemy by destroying enemy crew-served weapons first, obscuring the enemy position with smoke (using the M203 grenade launcher), and keeping up suppressive fire. Soldiers not receiving fire move by a covered and concealed route to a vulnerable flank of the enemy position and assault using fire and movement techniques. Soldiers in the kill zone continue suppressive fire and shift fire as the assaulting team or squad fights through the enemy position.

3. The leader or the unit's forward observer (FO) calls for and adjusts fire as directed by the platoon leader.
4. The squad or platoon leader reports, reorganizes as necessary, and continues the mission.

Enter a Building and Clear a Room

In this scenario, operating as part of a larger force, your squad is moving and identifies an enemy force in a building (Figures 8.4 and 8.5).

Note: Urban Environment Limitations

The preferred method of entering a building is to use a tank main gun round; direct-fire artillery round; or a TOW, Dragon, Hellfire missile; or even C-4 (military-grade plastic explosives) to clear the first room. Some military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT) situations, however, may require precise application of firepower—in an environment where the enemy is mixed with noncombatants, for example. The presence of civilians can restrict the use of fire and limit the combat power available to you as a platoon leader. You may sometimes have to operate within “no fire” areas. You must include the precise use of weapons in planning for MOUT missions. In addition, your rules of engagement (ROE) may prohibit using certain weapons until a specific hostile action takes place.

1. The fire team initiating contact establishes a base of fire and suppresses the enemy in and around the building.
2. The squad leader determines that the squad can maneuver by identifying the building and any obstacles, the size of the enemy force engaging the squad, an entry point, and a covered and concealed route to the entry point.
3. The fire team in contact destroys or suppresses enemy crew-served weapons first, obscures the enemy position with smoke (M203), and sustains suppressive fire.
4. The squad leader directs the fire team in contact to support the entry of the other fire team into the building.
5. If necessary, the supporting fire team repositions to isolate the building as well as continue suppressive fires.
6. The squad leader designates the entry point of the building. The platoon and squad shift direct fire and continue to suppress the enemy in adjacent positions and to isolate the building. The platoon FO lifts indirect fire or shifts them beyond the building.

Assaulting fire teams should enter buildings at the highest level possible.

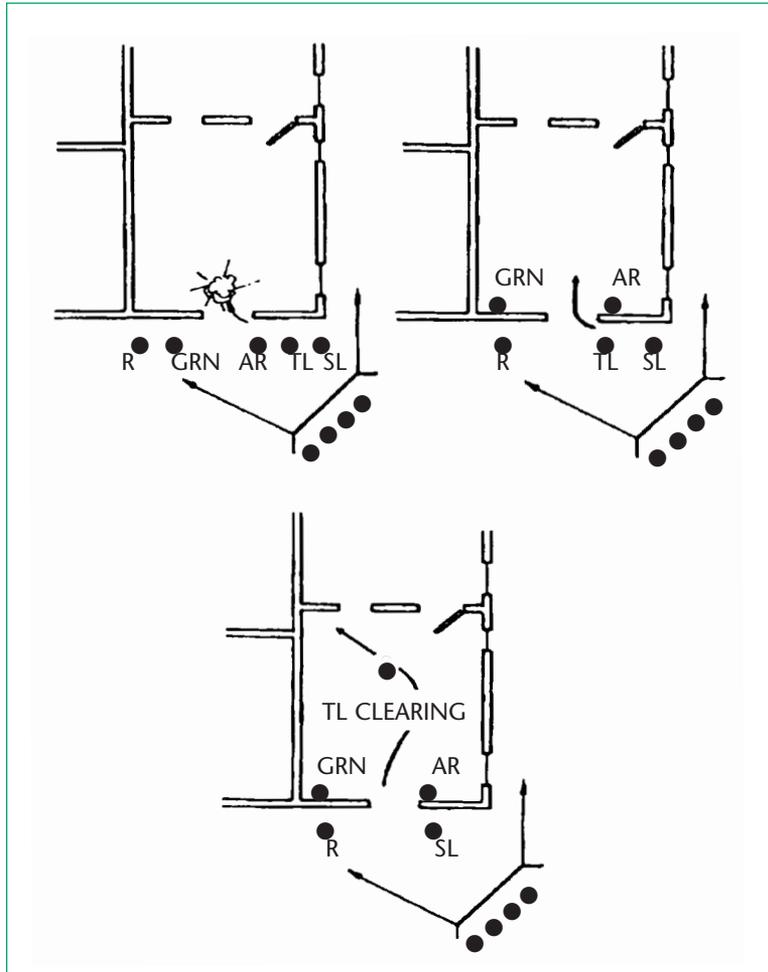


Figure 8.4 Enter a Building (Squad)

7. The squad leader and the assaulting fire team approach the building and position themselves at either side of the entrance.

Note: Soldiers should avoid entering buildings through doors and windows because those entrances will naturally be covered by enemy weapons inside the building.

8. Pulling the pin on a grenade (cooking off the grenade for no more than two seconds) and shouting, “FRAG OUT!”, the lead Soldier of the assaulting fire team prepares and throws a grenade into the building.

Note: If walls and floors are thin, they do not provide protection from hand-grenade fragments.

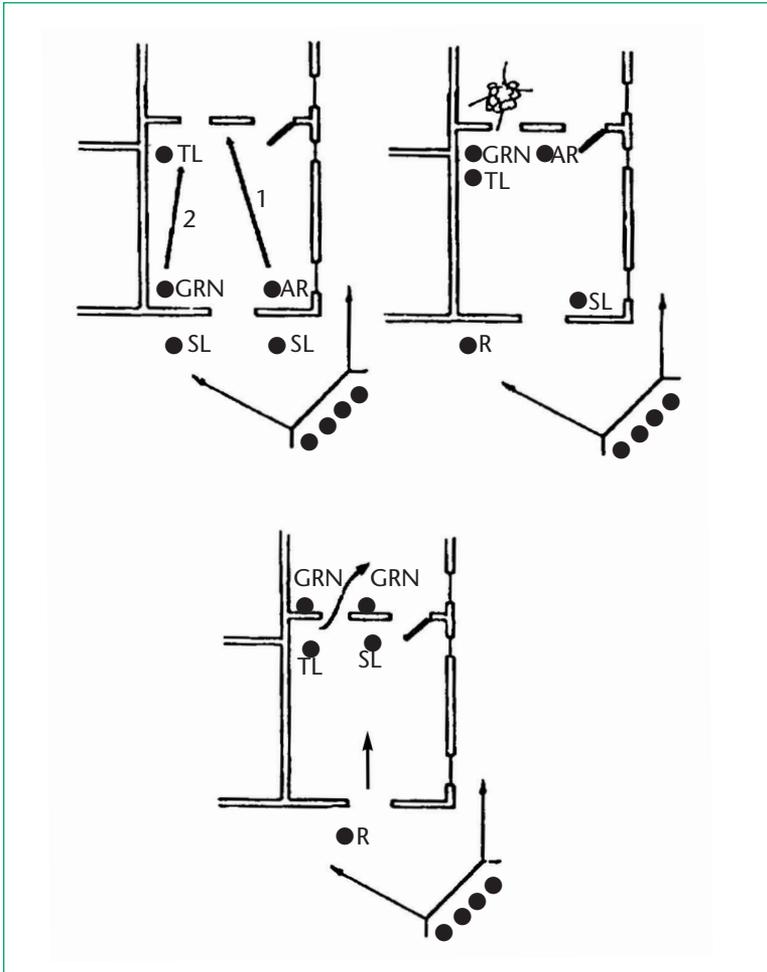


Figure 8.5 Clear a Building (Squad)

9. After the explosion, the next Soldier enters the building and takes a position up against the wall to the right or left of the entrance, engages all identified or likely enemy positions with rapid, short bursts of automatic fire, and scans the room. The rest of the team provides immediate security outside the building.

The size and shape of the room may cause the Soldier entering the room to move to the left or right. The first Soldier in the room decides where the next should position himself and gives the command, “NEXT MAN (LEFT OR RIGHT)!” The next Soldier shouts, “COMING IN (LEFT OR RIGHT)!”, enters the building, takes up position to the left or right of the entrance, up against the wall, and scans the room. Once in position, he shouts, “NEXT MAN IN (LEFT OR RIGHT)!”

Depending on the enemy’s situation, the size of the entry, and the training of the squad, two Soldiers can enter the room simultaneously after the grenade detonates. The Soldier from the right side of the entry enters, fires from left to right, and moves to the right with his back to the wall. At the same time, the Soldier on the left enters from the left, fires from right to left, and moves to the left with his back to the wall. One Soldier goes high, the other low, to prevent firing at one another. This method puts more firepower in the room more quickly, but is more difficult and requires more practice. When both Soldiers are in position, the senior Soldier gives the command “NEXT MAN IN (RIGHT OR LEFT)!”

10. The assaulting fire team leader shouts, “COMING IN (RIGHT OR LEFT)!”, enters the building initially moving left or right and against the wall, and takes a position where he or she can now control the actions of the team. The leader does not block the entrance, but makes a quick assessment of the size and shape of the room, and begins to clear the room. He or she determines whether the remaining Soldier in the team needs to assist in clearing the room.

If the team leader decides not to bring the last Soldier in, he or she shouts, “NEXT MAN, STAND FAST!” The last Soldier remains outside the building and provides security from there.

Note: While clearing rooms, Soldiers must be alert for trip wires and booby traps. They should not expose themselves through open windows or doors.

11. Once the room is clear, the team leader signals to the squad leader that the room is clear.
12. The squad leader enters the building and marks the entry point according to SOP. The squad leader determines whether the squad can continue to clear rooms and still maintain suppressive fire outside the building. Normally, it takes a platoon to clear a building.
13. The squad leader and assault fire team move to the entrance of the next room to be cleared and position themselves on either side of the entrance. The squad enters and clears all subsequent rooms by repeating the actions discussed in Paragraphs 8 through 12 above.
14. The squad leader directs the team to continue and clear the next room. The squad leader rotates fire teams as necessary to keep the Soldiers fresh, to distribute the dangerous duties equally, and to continue the attack’s momentum.
15. The squad leader follows the fire team that is clearing to ensure that cleared rooms are properly marked in accordance with the SOP.
16. The squad leader assesses the situation to determine if the squad can continue clearing the building and reports the situation to the platoon leader. The platoon follows the success of the entry into the building.
17. The squad consolidates its position in the building and reorganizes as necessary. Leaders redistribute ammunition.

Note: When operating in the nonlinear COE, it is difficult to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. When you encounter individuals while clearing rooms, focus on their hands first. What they have in their hands is the first indicator of their intent.

React to Indirect Fire

In this scenario, your platoon or squad is moving, halted, or occupying a firing position. Any Soldier gives the alert, “INCOMING,” or a round lands nearby.

1. When in defensive positions, Soldiers seek the protection of their fighting positions.
2. While moving or halted in unprotected positions, Soldiers immediately “hit the dirt,” assuming prone positions. After the initial incoming rounds impact, the platoon leader determines the extent of the impact area (its length and width) and the nearest edge out of it (still heading roughly in the direction of travel, if possible). Then the leader gives the direction and distance to move out of the impact area (for example, “*2 o’clock, 200 meters, follow me*”).
3. Squad and team leaders report and continue the mission.



CONCLUSION

Using infantry battle drills, you teach your platoon and squads to apply fire and maneuver in typical combat situations that require you to make rapid decisions and issue a few clear, brief, oral orders. Through careful training, your unit should eventually require very few commands, allowing your Soldiers to exercise their trained responses to enemy actions.

The battle drills covered in this text are sequential and standard throughout the Army. In addition, many units develop battle drills unique to the unit's mission or required for the tactical environment in which they operate.

Battle drills are vital to success in combat and critical to preserving life. When enemy contact warrants initiating a battle drill, Soldiers, as members of fire teams or squads, must either fight to break contact or maneuver to destroy the enemy. Like a well-conditioned sports team, the small unit's ability to accomplish the mission relies on people's ability to perform key actions quickly. Standard battle drills also permit Soldiers to move to other assignments in other theaters of operation already trained in the basic combat skills, saving time and avoiding confusion. Battle drills therefore sustain platoons and squads as cohesive, effective fighting units throughout the Army.

Key Words

battle drill

base of fire

suppressive fire

Learning Assessment

1. Define a battle drill.
2. Explain the purpose of battle drills.
3. List the five battle drills discussed in this section.

References

1st Cav Soldier Earns Silver Star in Fallujah. *Soldier Stories*. (2005). Retrieved 5 August 2005 from http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/Soldierstories/?pageNum_rsContent=4&totalRows_rsContent=142

ARTEP 7-8-DRILL, *Battle Drills for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. 25 June 2002.

DA PAM 600-65, *Leadership Statements, and Quotes*. 1 November 1985.

Field Manual 3-21.8, *The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. 28 March 2007.