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Chapter 4
Combat Maneuvers, Formations, Patrols, and Ambushes

Topics

1.0.0 Movement
2.0.0 Rushing
3.0.0 Hitting the Deck
4.0.0 Crawling
5.0.0 Moving Silently
6.0.0 Walking Silently
7.0.0 Assuming the Prone Position Silently
8.0.0 Combat Formations
9.0.0 Patrol and Ambush
10.0.0 Reconnaissance Patrol
11.0.0 Patrol Planning and Preparation
12.0.0 Ambush

To hear audio, click on the icon:

Overview
Moving through enemy-controlled terrain either on your own or in small groups is a dangerous task. Usually in such instances, your movement must not be seen or heard. When this cannot be avoided, you must at least be able to move quickly with a minimum of exposure. Actions, such as moving, rushing, hitting the deck, crawling, moving silently, and taking action under flares, are discussed in this chapter.

Objectives
When you have completed this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Specify methods of moving individuals and formations in a combat area and conditions under which individual methods should be used.
2. Indicate actions to be taken by an individual when caught in the light of an overhead or ground flare.
3. Differentiate between types of fire team formations relative to purpose, use, and their limitations under given combat conditions; specify the duties of the fire team leader assigned to basic fire team formations and movements.
4. Specify the kinds of rifle squad formations used in given combat situations and how squad formations are changed to meet changing tactical situations.

5. Specify the kinds of rifle platoon formations used under given combat conditions.

6. Specify the purpose and use of the weapons unit formation during an attack.

7. Describe a patrol in terms of its objective and orders.

8. Define the duties and positions of patrol personnel and techniques of control, security, and movement.

9. Define the duties and positions of patrol personnel and techniques of control, security, and movement.

10. Point out principles and techniques of ambush.

**Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for completing this manual.

**Features of this Manual**

This manual has several features which make it easy to use online.

- Figure and table numbers are italicized within the handbook text. Figure and table reference numbers are conveniently located next to (or near) the applicable handbook text.

- Audio and video clips are included in the text, with italicized instructions telling you where to click to activate the appropriate link.

- Review questions are included at the end of this chapter as the chapter assignment. To submit assignments log into https://www.courses.netc.navy.mil, go to “Student Services”, in the drop down click on “Active Courses”, go to “View/Submit Answers” next to the course you wish to submit answers for. Assignments may be submitted to the above Web site as they are completed, and instant scoring is available. Your completion letter is available as soon as you pass all assignments.

- A form at the end of each chapter allows your input for improving the manual or correcting errors to be brought to the attention of CSFE’s Technical Review Committee. Your input is important and will help keep this manual up to date and free of technical errors.
1.0.0 MOVEMENT

When moving in a combat situation, it is best to travel a short distance quickly; then stop, listen, observe, and move on again. Before moving from the concealment or cover of one position, always pick out the next position. In addition, look for an alternate new position in case the original cannot be reached. Observe the area carefully for enemy activity; then select the best available routes to the new location. Take advantage of darkness, fog, smoke, or haze to assist in concealing movement.

Change direction from time to time when moving through tall grass. When moving in a straight line, the grass waves with an unnatural motion that could attract attention. The best time to move is when the wind is blowing the grass.

When stopping between movements, observe briefly whether birds or animals are alarmed. Their flight or movement may attract the attention of the enemy, or they may provide a clue as to the location of the enemy.

Take advantage of distractions caused by noises, such as bombing, shelling, rifle fire, or vehicle movement.

Travel across roads, trails, and rivers where the most cover and concealment exists. Search for a large culvert, a low spot, or a curve; keep in mind that these are the most likely spots for enemy mines and booby traps. Avoid steep slopes and areas with loose stones or gravel. Also, avoid ridges or clearings where it is possible to make a good silhouette.

2.0.0 RUSHING

Rushing is the fastest means of moving from one position to another. It should always be used when moving and not concealed. Generally, start rushing from the prone position (Figure 4-1, frame 1). Slowly move your head to select the new position to move (Figure 4-1, frame 2). Avoid raising your head too high, and always look around the side of an object rather than over the top, to avoid making a sharp silhouette.

Slowly lower your head; then draw your arms in close to the body; keep elbows down, and pull your right leg forward (Figure 4-1, frame 3). With one movement, raise your body by straightening your arms (Figure 4-1, frame 4). Spring to your feet quickly, step off with the left foot (Figure 4-1, frame 5), and run to the new location by the quickest and shortest route. Keep low and use all available cover (Figure 4-1, frame 6).

Figure 4-1 — Rushing and hitting the deck.
3.0.0 HITTING THE DECK

After reaching the new position at the end of the rush, quickly get into the prone position again. Getting into the prone position from rushing is known as hitting the deck or dirt. To do this, plant your feet firmly—about 18 inches apart—and while sliding your hand to the heel of the rifle butt (Figure 4-1, frame 7), drop to the knees (Figure 4-1, frame 8). Fall forward, breaking the fall with the butt of the rifle (Figure 4-1, frame 9) unless you are armed with the M16; then, after shifting weight to the left side, bring the rifle forward (Figure 4-1, frame 10). Place the butt of the rifle in the hollow of the firing shoulder; then roll into a firing position (Figure 4-1, frame 11). If the weapon has a stock made of plastic or fiberglass, such as the M16, do not use it to break the fall. Instead, grasp the rifle in one hand and break the fall with the other.

Lie as flat as possible. If it was possible the enemy detected the movement, move to the right or left, preferably where there is cover and concealment.

4.0.0 CRAWLING

There are times when a person must move with their body close to the ground to avoid enemy fire or observation. There are two ways of doing this, the LOW CRAWL and the HIGH CRAWL. It is up to the individual to decide which method is best suited to the conditions of visibility, cover and concealment, and the speed required.

Use the LOW CRAWL method when cover and concealment are scarce, when visibility permits good enemy observation, and when speed is not essential. Keep your body as flat as possible against the ground. Grasp the rifle sling near the upper sling swivel. Allow the balance to rest on the forearm, and let the butt drag along the ground. Keep the muzzle and operating rod clear of the ground (Figure 4-2, frame 1). To start forward, push your arms ahead and pull the right leg forward (Figure 4-2, frame 2). Move by pulling with your free arm and pushing with the right leg. Every so often, change the pushing leg to avoid getting tired (Figure 4-2, frame 3).

Use the HIGH CRAWL method when cover and concealment are available, when poor visibility reduces enemy observation, and when more speed is needed.
Keep your body off the ground and rest your weight on the forearms and lower legs. Cradle the rifle on your arms, keeping the muzzle off the ground. Keep your knees well behind the buttocks so the rump remains low. Move forward by alternately advancing with your right elbow and left knee and then left elbow and right knee (Figure 4-3).

The low crawl and high crawl are not suitable for moving silently. To crawl silently, move on your hands and knees: Start by laying the weapon carefully on the ground to the side (Figure 4-4, frame 1). With your right hand, feel or make a clear spot for the knee. While keeping your hand on the spot, bring the right knee forward until it meets the hand (Figure 4-4, frame 2). Next, clear a spot with your left hand and move the left knee up in the same manner. Be sure the weapon is always within reach! To move the weapon, feel for a place, clear a spot, and lift the weapon into position. Crawl very slowly and keep movements absolutely silent.

5.0.0 MOVING SILENTLY

The rushing and crawling movements just explained are not particularly useful when close to the enemy because they often create a shuffling noise. When extremely quiet movement is necessary, especially when on patrol or stalking an enemy, use the movements described below. These movements are particularly useful when moving at night. The movements must be made slowly; they are tiring and require extreme patience and self-control to be performed properly.

6.0.0 WALKING SILENTLY

While walking, hold your weapon at port arms. Make footing sure and solid by keeping your weight...
on one foot while stepping with the other. When stepping, raise your foot high. This enables the feet to clear the brush and grass. With all the weight on the rear leg, gently let down the foot of the forward leg, toe first (Figure 4-5). Feel softly with toe to pick a good, solid spot; then lower the foot. Shift weight and balance to the foot that is forward and then continue. Take short steps to avoid losing balance. At night and when moving through dense vegetation, avoid making unnecessary noise by holding the weapon with one hand and extending the other hand forward to feel for obstructions while moving.

7.0.0 ASSUMING THE PRONE POSITION SILENTLY

To assume the prone position silently, hold the weapon under one arm and crouch down slowly (Figure 4-6, frame 1). Feel for the ground with one hand, making sure it is clear by removing small twigs and other objects that make noise. Lower knees one at a time until your weight is on both knees and your free hand (Figure 4-6, frame 2). Shift your weight to the free hand and opposite knee. Raise the free leg up and back slowly; then lower it to the ground gently, feeling with your toe for a clear spot (Figure 4-6, frame 3). Roll gently to that side and move your other leg into position in the same way. Roll quietly into the prone position (Figure 4-6, frame 4).
7.1.0 Action under Flares

7.1.1 Reacting To Ground Flares

The enemy puts out ground flares as warning devices. They can be set off by either the enemy or there can be trip wires attached so you set them off. Usually the flares are set up in a position so the enemy personnel can watch and see when they are set off.

If you are caught in the light of a ground flare (Figure 4-7), move quickly out of the lighted area. The enemy will know where the ground flare is and will be ready to fire into that area. Move well away from the lighted area. While moving out of the area, look for other team members. Try to follow or join them to keep the team together.

Figure 4-7 — Reacting to ground flares.

The sudden light of a bursting flare may temporarily blind both you and the enemy. When the enemy uses a flare to spot you, he spoils his own night vision. To protect your night vision, close one eye while the flare is burning. When the flare burns out, the eye that was closed will still have its night vision.

7.1.2 Reacting To Aerial Flares

The enemy uses aerial flares to light up vital areas. They can be set off like ground flares; fired from hand projectors, grenade launchers, mortars, and artillery; or dropped from aircraft.

If you hear the firing of an aerial flare while you are moving, hit the ground (behind cover if possible) while the flare is rising and before it bursts and illuminates.

If moving where it is easy to blend with the background (such as in a forest) and you are caught in the light of an aerial flare (Figure 4-8), freeze in place until the flare burns out.

If you are caught in the light of an aerial flare while moving in an open area, immediately crouch low or lie down.

If you are crossing an obstacle, such as a barbed-wire fence or a wall, and get caught in the light of an aerial flare, crouch low and stay down until the flare burns out.
If assaulting an enemy position and a flare bursts, it is imperative to continue the assault.

8.0.0 COMBAT FORMATIONS

Combat formations are designed to group individuals into effective fighting teams that can move to and assault an enemy position with minimum confusion. The use of combat formations, with related arm-and-hand signals, enables a squad leader to control the fire and to maneuver their unit just as the quarterback of a football team uses plays and signals. A person who cannot remember the plays or signals on the ball field endangers the ability of the team to win the game. On the battlefield, the stakes are much higher. The success of the mission, as well as survival, depends on teamwork.

When the situation, terrain, or enemy activity does not permit close formations, the unit leader should deploy the team in an extended formation. Deployment is executed on signals or commands. The leader may deploy the unit in a variety of formations at any one time, depending on the situation. Relative positions within these formations are flexible, and the leader should take advantage of the cover and concealment offered by the terrain; however, they must take care not to mask the fire of another unit. Maintaining exact distances between individuals and units is unnecessary as long as control is not lost; however, under ideal conditions, the recommended space between individuals is 5 yards. All leaders and units must maintain sight and voice contact with each other. Any changes in formation should be by the shortest practical route. Leaders must take full advantage of cover and concealment and avoid backward or lateral movement.

8.1.0 Fire Team Movement

The FIRE TEAM LEADER controls the use of the formations. They are placed in a position where they can best observe and control the fire team and, in addition, receive orders from the squad leader. The fire team leader must also be in a position to quickly and effectively control the employment of the automatic rifle.
The AUTOMATIC RIFLEMAN is an interior person. They should position themselves between the fire team leader and rifleman No. 1. Here, they can quickly deliver fire to either flank, as directed by the fire team leader, or receive help and protection from the adjacent rifleman.

RIFLEMAN NO. 1 assists the automatic rifleman by keeping the supply of loaded magazines ready and therefore keeps the automatic rifle in action. Rifleman No. 1 coordinates both position and movement with those of the automatic rifleman.

RIFLEMAN NO. 2 is at the place in the fire team formation that enemy action or probable enemy action threatens. This person acts as a security element; for example, when the team is moving toward the enemy, they are in the foremost position.

The basic fire team formations are COLUMN, WEDGE, SKIRMISHERS RIGHT or LEFT, and ECHELON RIGHT or LEFT.

8.1.1 Fire Team Column
The fire team column formation (Figure 4-9, frame 1) is used when speed and control are governing factors, such as moving through woods, fog, smoke, and along roads and trails. This formation is favorable for fire and maneuvers to either flank but is vulnerable to fire from the front because its own fire in that direction is limited.

8.1.2 Fire Team Wedge
The fire team wedge formation (Figure 4-9, frame 2) is used when the enemy situation is unknown but contact is possible. When the terrain and the visibility require dispersion of the men, the wedge formation provides all-around protection and flexibility and is easy to control.

8.1.3 Fire Team Skirmishers Right or Left
Fire team skirmishers right or left (Figure 4-9, frame 3 and 4) can be used most effectively when assaulting a known enemy position. It is also useful for “mopping up” operations (searching for enemy stragglers) and crossing short, open areas. Because the fire team is in a line, skirmishers right or left provides maximum firepower to the front. However, the formation is difficult to control.

8.1.4 Fire Team Echelon Right or Left
Fire team echelon right or left (Figure 4-9, frame 5 and 6) is used primarily to protect an exposed flank. This formation permits heavy firepower to both the front and the direction of echelon. As with skirmishers, the formation is difficult to control; therefore, movement is generally slow, especially during conditions of reduced visibility.
8.1.5 Changing Fire Team Formations

Depending upon the changing terrain features or the tactical situation, the fire team leader should change formations to meet these new conditions. *Figure 4-10, frames 1-6* show the manner in which each individual moves when changing from one formation to another.

8.1.6 Rifle Squad Formations

The squad formations are similar to those of the fire team. However, an additional formation known as the SQUAD VEE is used by the squad, and skirmishers right or left is called SQUAD LINE.

The SQUAD LEADER designates the type of formation to be used, and is placed in a location where they can readily observe their fire teams and the enemy. Normally, the fire team formation within the squad formation is left to the discretion of the fire team leader. For example, the squad may be in SQUAD VEE, but the fire team(s) may be in the fire team wedge (*Figure 4-10, frames 1-6*). The exact formation is flexible at any level and is influenced by the terrain and the circumstances.

The grenadier always remains close to the squad leader regardless of the formation. Their exact location in any formation depends upon the orders of the squad leader.

*Figure 4-10 — Changing fire team formations.*

*Figure 4-11 — Rifle squad formations.*
8.1.6.1 Squad Column
In SQUAD COLUMN (Figure 4-12, frame 1), the fire teams are arranged in succession, one behind the other. This formation is vulnerable to fire from the front, but controlling and maneuvering are easy. It is especially suitable for low, covered routes of advance; for maneuvering through gaps between areas receiving hostile artillery fire; for maneuvering through woods; and for moving in fog, smoke, or darkness.

8.1.6.2 Squad Wedge and Squad Vee
The squad wedge (Figure 4-12, frame 2) and squad vee (Figure 4-11) formations provide good security to both the front and the flanks. These formations are relatively easy to maneuver and control and can be quickly adapted to meet new tactical situations. The nature of the terrain generally determines which of the two formations should be used, the amount of frontage to cover, and the proximity and actions of the enemy.

8.1.6.3 Squad Echelon Right or Left
In squad echelon right or left, the fire teams are placed diagonally, one behind the other (Figure 4-12, frame 3). This formation is used to protect an exposed flank, particularly when the enemy is known to be on that flank. From this formation, maximum firepower can be promptly delivered to the right or left flank or toward the right or left front.

8.1.6.4 Squad Line
The squad line, as the name implies, places all three fire teams on a line abreast of one another (Figure 4-12, frame 4). This permits maximum firepower to the front in the shortest time, so the squad line is used extensively during an assault on a known enemy position. The squad line is suitable for rapidly crossing an unavoidable open area covered by enemy machine guns or artillery.
8.1.6.5 Changing Squad Formations

Squad leaders change squad formations in the same way and for the same reasons as the fire team leaders change the fire team formations. *Figure 4-13, frames 1-8* show these changes. Notice that the first fire team is used as a pivot for all formations and that the other fire teams take the most direct route to their new location. Although any formation shown can also be used to show the opposite movement, remember that all movement is to the front. For example, *Figure 4-13, frame 1* shows a squad column moving to the squad line. To move from the squad line back into the squad column, fire teams two and three would not move to the rear and fall in behind team one. Instead, fire team one would move forward rapidly. Then teams two and three would move at a forward angle in behind it.

8.1.7 Rifle Platoon Formations

The platoon commander selects the initial attack formation for the platoon. However, the platoon commander may change this formation as the attack progresses to meet a changing tactical situation. The available avenues of approach toward the enemy affect the platoon commander’s choice to a great degree. Also, the need for security, control, flexibility, and speed influences the choice. On occasion, the platoon commander may prescribe the initial formation of the fire teams within the squads. Platoon formations (*Figure 4-14*) are similar to squad formations and are described below.

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*Figure 4-13 — Changing squad formations.*

*Figure 4-14 — Rifle platoon formations.*
8.1.7.1 Platoon Column

The platoon column makes control easier and action to the flanks favorable. It uses minimum firepower in a forward direction and is useful when speed and control are governing factors and when visibility is limited. The platoon column is suitable for advancing through narrow covered avenues of approach with maximum speed and control.

8.1.7.2 Platoon Wedge

The platoon wedge makes control easier, provides good all-around security, and is extremely flexible. It permits reasonable firepower to both the front and the flanks. When the enemy is known to be in the area but the exact strength and location are unknown or not clear, the platoon wedge should be used. Also, it is useful when the terrain and visibility require a greater dispersion of the platoon. The wedge tends to keep the bulk of the platoon from becoming engaged with the enemy too soon. It also permits flexibility in the employment of squads when contact is established.

8.1.7.3 Platoon Vee

The platoon vee uses movement into the platoon line formation. The platoon vee provides excellent firepower to both the front and the flanks, and it is useful primarily when the strength of the enemy and their location to the front are known. The platoon vee is easy to control and provides good security but is less maneuverable than the wedge.

8.1.7.4 Platoon Echelon Right or Left

The platoon echelon right or left formations are hard to control; therefore, movements are slow and maneuvering difficult. However, it does provide heavy firepower to the front and in the direction of echelon. The platoon echelon is used primarily in protecting an exposed flank either right or left.

8.1.7.5 Platoon Line

The platoon line formation allows the platoon to deliver maximum firepower to the front. It is difficult to control and is most often used in the coordinated assault of all three squads.

8.1.7.6 Changing the Platoon Formation

Generally, the relative positions of the squads within the platoon remain fairly constant. However, since combat is unpredictable, changes are often necessary. As usual, these changes must be made as rapidly and smoothly as possible.

Platoon formation changes are identical to those of the squads. The platoon commander, along with the staff, tries to stay in a central location to best observe the situation and to control the attack.

8.1.8 Rifle Company Attack Formations

The rifle company commander distributes the company into three elements: a main attacking force, a supporting attack force, and a reserve force. Attacking forces, fire support forces, and the reserves are all specifically designated in an ATTACK ORDER issued by the senior commander. Usually, the supporting attack is an attack by fire, whereas one or more rifle platoons maneuvering to seize the assigned objective(s) compose the main attack force. The supporting attack force may contain units from the
weapons platoon. In fact, the two major construction or rifle companies (Charlie and Delta) of a construction battalion each have their own weapons platoon. The reserve force is kept to the rear of the attacking forces where it can readily move to the attack should the need arise. There are no fixed conditions to determine the most appropriate formation for a given situation. The company commander must weigh all circumstances of terrain, the strength and location of the enemy, and the friendly fire support available to decide on one of the following attack formations (Figure 4-15, frames 1-8).

8.1.8.1 One Platoon in Attack
A formation of one platoon in attack and two platoons in reserve provides limited firepower to the front and a strong reserve. This formation should be used when information about the enemy is vague or when the company attacking has one or both flanks exposed. This formation may be used when only a single, narrow avenue of approach is available or when attacking to seize an objective deep in enemy territory. The reserve platoons may follow the attacking platoon in company column, or they may be positioned to protect one or both flanks. This formation provides a lot of variety in positioning and moving reserve platoons and allows the company commander maximum flexibility in maneuvering and controlling these platoons.

8.1.8.2 Two Platoons in Attack
Two platoons in attack and one platoon in reserve provide moderate firepower to the front while retaining a reserve large enough to influence the action. This formation may be appropriate when relatively detailed information concerning the enemy is available.

8.1.8.3 Three Platoons in Attack
When formation has three platoons in attack and none in reserve, the company lacks a reserve force to influence the action. This formation provides maximum firepower to the front and is useful when a wide area must be cleared rapidly or when the enemy situation is known.

9.0.0 PATROL AND AMBUSH
A patrol is a detachment of troops sent out from a larger body on a mission of combat, reconnaissance, security, or contact with friendly units. There are two general classes of patrols—reconnaissance and combat—either of which could have a mission of security. The classification is derived from the mission assigned to a patrol. The Seabees are
primarily concerned with defensive combat; therefore, when training in patrolling, emphasis should be on security patrolling, rather than aggressive patrolling.

In security patrolling, both reconnaissance (recon) and combat patrols are used. The typical Seabee defense is a static defense; therefore, the recon patrol is mainly used to detect enemy movement toward the position. The combat patrol is used to destroy enemy recon patrols and to delay and confuse an enemy attack.

10.0.0 RECONNAISSANCE PATROL

Reconnaissance patrols are sent out to gain information about the enemy or the terrain. These patrols engage in combat only when it becomes necessary to accomplish their mission or to protect themselves. In general, they should avoid combat and accomplish their mission by stealth.

Reconnaissance patrols have a variety of missions, but their primary mission is to obtain and report information in a timely manner to the commander who desires it.

A reconnaissance patrol might be dispatched to do the following:

- Locate and observe the characteristics of a hostile position or installation.
- Investigate a possible route of march for an enemy force.
- Investigate a certain terrain feature or the general nature of the terrain in a given locality.
- Patrol the perimeter of the defense area in a static defense. Of primary importance are enemy troop buildup or movement and the type of weaponry in their possessions.

The missions mentioned above are by no means all-inclusive and are provided merely as examples.

10.1.0 Primary and Secondary Missions

A patrol should never be given more than a single primary mission. However, an ALTERNATE mission can be assigned that may be carried out if the primary mission cannot be achieved. In addition, Secondary missions may be assigned when they are consistent with carrying out the primary or alternate mission.

10.2.0 Size of Patrols

A patrol may consist of two Seabees, a fire team, or a larger tactical unit. The size of a combat patrol or reconnaissance patrol depends on several influencing factors that must be considered before the patrol is dispatched. Sometimes, a small patrol may be able to execute the mission. At other times, a strong combat patrol may be needed. In general, a patrol is comprised of the least number of Seabees needed to carry out a given mission, with careful thought given to safety, time available, and messenger requirements.

The size of a patrol is influenced by the following factors:

- Mission
- Terrain and visibility
- Distance from friendly troops
- Time the patrol will be out
- Number of messages the patrol may have to send back
- Whether prisoners are to be captured and sent back

Patrols with missions requiring combat or a strong likelihood of combat are usually stronger than patrols on reconnaissance missions. Also, when a patrol intends to be gone for some time and is going to operate at a considerable distance from friendly troops, the patrol must be stronger because there is greater danger from enemy attack.

A reconnaissance patrol rarely exceeds a squad in size. Units larger than a squad are too noisy, more difficult to control, move more slowly, and have greater difficulty approaching the enemy without detection. The fire team is ideal for short-range reconnaissance patrols.

The patrol leader receives a PATROL ORDER containing all the instructions, information, and guidance needed to plan, prepare for, and accomplish a particular type of mission.

A patrol order varies according to circumstances, such as checkpoints, general route, and communications plan.

The TIME OF DEPARTURE may be in general terms: “Leave after dark” or “Leave before daylight.” However, a patrol order may give a specific time of departure to avoid congestion in a particular area, to reduce the possibility of collision between patrols, to maintain strict control by the command, or for other reasons.

The TIME OF RETURN may be either general or specific. Information obtained by a reconnaissance patrol can have a significant impact on future combat operations. Every effort must be made to provide reports at the time(s) specified.

CHECKPOINTS are points along the patrol route from which the patrol is expected to report in—usually by radio.

The GENERAL ROUTE is usually designated by checkpoints. An exact route is seldom feasible except in reconnaissance. When a command desires to maintain strict control of the patrol, the order may specify an exact route.

The COMMUNICATIONS PLAN lists the reports the patrol must make and the medium (usually radio) by which they are to be sent.

10.3.0 Patrol Formations

A particular patrol formation should provide for all-around security and good control. The formation chosen should be such that only a minimum number of Seabees within the patrol are likely to be pinned down at any one time by surprise fire.

Patrol formations must be fluid and flexible. They must be changed to meet varying terrain and visibility conditions. The patrol leader designates the original formation. Individual members then maintain assigned positions as long as they can see each other and, at the same time, make full use of available cover and concealment.

Patrols use basic combat formations. For small patrols in open terrain, the wedge is a suitable formation. For larger patrols, or when visibility becomes restricted, the column formation (with its necessary security elements), should be used.

When enemy contact is near or has already been made, patrol leaders should adopt more deployed formations.

Normally, the following factors influence and change a patrol formation:

- Mission
• Terrain
• Visibility
• Enemy situation
• Size of patrol
• Required speed of movement

The formations taken by a patrol are ALWAYS influenced by the need for maintaining:
• Security,
• The mission
• The route of the patrol

10.4.0 Control

The patrol leader is placed where they can best maintain control. Normally, this is at, or near, the head of the patrol but depends somewhat upon the patrol route. When the route is clearly defined, the leader should take a position within the patrol wherever patrol members can best see the signals. If the route is ill defined as in dense woods, jungle, or at night, the leader must be in, or with, the leading group.

The second in command—the assistant patrol leader—assists the patrol leader in controlling the patrol. They help the patrol leader by controlling the rear of the patrol and by preventing Seabees from falling behind or getting out of position. They are continually alert for signals or orders and watch to see the other members receive those orders or signals. They observe the rear to prevent the patrol from attack from that direction. They are ready to assume command of the patrol if the leader becomes a casualty.

Patrols are controlled in the daytime by arm-and-hand signals and oral orders. Each member of a patrol must be thoroughly familiar with the standard arm-and-hand signals. Before contact with the enemy has been made, the patrol leader must issue the orders. Oral orders are a sure means of control. Commands should be just loud enough to be heard by patrol members. When near the enemy, halt the patrol before issuing orders. The leader moves from man to man and quietly provides instructions. Sound signals may be used if they will not be confused with other noises. When a sound signal is to be used, the patrol leader should rehearse it before beginning the patrol. Control by voice is usually better than by other sound signals.

Though darkness helps a patrol move close the enemy without being detected, it increases the problem of control. To overcome this, each Seabee is required to keep in sight of the person to their front and flank. This procedure ensures everyone is in position to receive signals and orders.

10.5.0 Security

All-around security must be maintained at all times. This is done within a patrol by using formations that provide protection to the front, flanks, and rear. These elements are the eyes, ears, and fingers of the patrol leader. The patrol moves by following the signals. They must maintain contact at all times, except when a bush or small terrain feature briefly gets in the way. To maintain contact with the patrol leader, security elements must glance in their direction every few steps.
10.5.1 Point and Scouts

Small patrols may use only one person or as many as a fire team as the point. The size depends on the enemy situation, terrain, and patrol route. Normally, a squad-size patrol uses two riflemen as scouts; however, should the patrol come into a dangerous area or get too close to the enemy, the leader might increase the number in the point. The leader may use an entire fire team to cover the advance of the patrol.

The automatic rifleman moves slightly behind the rest of the fire team. From this position, the automatic rifleman can cover the movements of the scouting element. The size of the point increases in relation to the size of the patrol. The point is responsible for investigating the route of advance immediately to the front of the patrol. When visibility is good, it may precede the main body by as much as 100 yards. The point must always maintain visual contact with the patrol leader.

10.5.2 Flanks

One man on each side may provide flank security for a patrol the size of a squad, or less. The flanks move as directed by the patrol leader. In special instances, a group of two may be necessary. Such a group keeps one person where they can see the patrol leader at all times. That person remains within 100 yards of the leader. The team member farther out remains in sight of the inside member—normally within 20 to 25 yards.

In open terrain, the flankers should investigate cover within 100 yards of the general route of march of the patrol. Flankers may become impractical because of reduced visibility in dense woods or jungle. Then the group normally assigned to flank protection move with the patrol itself. They maintain close observation to their assigned flank.

10.5.3 Rear Point

A small patrol normally has only one rifleman assigned as rear point. The rifleman remains in sight and within about 50 yards of the last member of the patrol. This rifleman maintains rear security for the patrol by constantly observing to the rear. If the patrol is ambushed, they stay out of the firefight. If the patrol is annihilated, or obviously will be, they are the getaway person and return to friendly lines to report the situation. The rear point varies in size, depending on the enemy situation and the size of the patrol. Usually, keeping a sharp lookout to the rear to prevent a surprise enemy attack from that direction is necessary.

10.6.0 Movements

Before leaving friendly lines, the patrol leader must select a route to the final destination; this may be done on a map, on an aerial photograph, or on the actual ground to be covered. Intermediate objectives should be selected along that route. These successive objectives regulate the progress of the patrol.

A patrol should always designate one or more rally points where it can reassemble if it is dispersed, ambushed, or surprised by enemy attack. Normally, an intermediate objective becomes the rallying point as the patrol moves beyond it. In this way, the patrol leader can be sure each individual of the patrol is thoroughly familiar with the rallying point locations.

Members of a dispersed patrol should try to reach the designated rallying point quickly so the mission may be readily resumed. If the patrol leader does not arrive within a
reasonable period of time, the second in command must reorganize the patrol and carry out the mission.

10.7.0 Special Organization

A special organization is simply a general organization varied to suit a particular mission or a particular set of circumstances. For example, in area reconnaissance, a patrol might be organized into several reconnaissance teams with each team providing its own security and NO separately organized security element; however, the patrol leader uses the same security techniques used for a day patrol, modifying them only as necessary.

11.0.0 PATROL PLANNING AND PREPARATION

For a patrol to succeed, all members must be well trained, briefed, and rehearsed. The patrol leader must have a complete understanding of the mission and a thorough understanding of the enemy and friendly situations. The patrol leader should make a complete reconnaissance of the terrain to be covered (either visual or map), and must issue an order to the patrol, supervise preparations, and conduct rehearsals.

The patrol leader organizes and prepares the patrol by using the six troop-leading steps to make the best use of resources available. To organize thinking, the patrol leader uses the acronym BAMCIS, which consists of:

1. **Begin planning.**
2. **Arrange for reconnaissance and coordination.**
3. **Make reconnaissance and complete the estimate.**
4. **Complete the plan.**
5. **Issue the order.**
6. **Supervise.**

11.1.0 Begin Planning

The patrol leader begins by evaluating all factors affecting the mission. The patrol leader looks for possible courses of action that lead to a decision, and then transforms this decision into an order. The first step includes making an initial assessment and decision on using available time, issuing a warning order and initial preparatory tasks, and initiating the estimate.

The initial planning effort assesses the time, assistance, and information available, and plans the proper use of each. Time allowances include reconnaissance; completion of the estimate and order; troop preparation; and such briefings, rehearsals, and inspections as required before beginning the patrol.

The patrol leader reviews the mission and the attachments and/or support available and decides what preparatory efforts must begin immediately. Proper use of subordinates to manage these initial tasks during this period reduces preparation time and frees the patrol leader for proper planning and reconnaissance. A warning order is issued using a modified five-paragraph order format (Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and logistics, and Command and signal [SMEAC]) as a checklist.

Once the initial preparations are set in motion, the patrol leader begins estimating by analyzing the mission; considering the friendly, enemy, and operating environments; considering each course of action available against what the enemy might do; comparing the courses of action in terms of mission accomplishment, capabilities, and
probable casualties; and choosing one that becomes the basis for concept and order. While the patrol leader should use and organize notes, estimates must be done quickly and accurately—particularly for immediate situations. To organize thinking, the patrol leader uses the acronym **METT-T**, which consists of:

- **MISSION**—the mission assigned to the patrol and how it relates to the mission of the commander who is sending the patrol
- **ENEMY**—known or suspected enemy presence and capabilities, habits and characteristics, and fighting techniques; for this report, utilize the acronym **SALUTE**.
  - Size of the enemy
  - Activity
  - Location
  - Unit
  - Time
  - Equipment
- **TERRAIN** and weather—including ground, vegetation, drainage, weather, and visibility
- **TROOPS** and support available—friendly situation and support available
- **TIME** available—the constraints and impact of time on preparation and mission accomplishment

The estimate begins with mission analysis, which is the most important part of the entire planning process. Here, the patrol leader considers the specified tasks of the mission assigned and identifies other significant actions (specified and implied tasks) that must be undertaken to accomplish the stated mission. These tasks are arranged in sequence of accomplishment. The tasks and sequence create the framework for developing courses of action for the patrol concept of operations.

### 11.2.0 Arrange for Reconnaissance and Coordination

The patrol leader arranges a personal reconnaissance to observe as far forward as possible and also coordinates with the appropriate commanders for the patrol’s “passage of lines” and supporting fires. The patrol leader also coordinates with other patrol leaders who may be operating in the same or adjacent areas and requests that the commander assigning the patrol mission coordinate the patrol action with adjacent commanders, local security, and night defensive fires, as appropriate. The patrol leader may delegate any or all of these arrangements to the assistant patrol leader if the patrol leader requires the time for planning.

### 11.3.0 Make Reconnaissance and Complete the Estimate

The patrol leader uses personal reconnaissance to answer questions that arise from the map reconnaissance and METT-T evaluation. Specific points include passage points, lanes through obstacles, locations of friendly listening posts and observation posts, possible approach and return routes, enemy positions (if any), and intermediate observation points on the way to the objective.

In selecting approach and return routes, the patrol leader chooses routes that best use concealment and avoid opposition and obstacles. To lessen the chances of ambush by
the enemy, the return trip is planned along a different route. In addition to personal reconnaissance and review of the map and aerial photographs, the advice of other patrol leaders who are already familiar with the terrain and the objective area should be considered.

After compiling information about the situation and possible time constraint, the patrol leader completes an estimate. The first step is developing courses of action, each of which will provide for movement to the objective area, mission accomplishment, and the return, based on the tasks and their sequencing identified in mission analysis. While the eventual concept of operations is presented in order of occurrence, the patrol leader must develop the courses of action by either backward or forward planning. In situations where the objective is well defined and there is sufficient information to plan the action for mission accomplishment (reconnaissance or combat), the patrol leader begins the scheme for accomplishing the mission at the objective and then, planning backwards, considers the options for getting there and back.

The following sections on movement to and return from the objective area, reconnaissance missions, and combat missions discuss methods and options available to the patrol leader in developing the courses of action. The principal variables between courses of action will be who, where, and how in the following:

- Patrol task organization
- Routes to the objective area
- Observation point(s) (reconnaissance patrol), ambush site, form of maneuver, type of ambush (combat patrol), fire support plan
- Return routes

The patrol leader then mentally considers the progress of each course of action (a map or simple sketch is a useful aid) against expected and unexpected enemy action. By comparing the options against each other and prospective enemy opposition, the patrol leader chooses the course of action that has the best chance of success. Included in this mental preview process is the time to determine the patrol plan for unexpected contingencies (enemy attack/counterattack, casualty handling). These contingency actions, together with the selected course of action, become the patrol concept of operations.

Once the patrol leader determines the scheme of maneuver, the fire support required to accomplish the mission is addressed including the firepower organic to the patrol and what additional indirect fire support will have to be provided by other units. When planning for indirect fire support, the patrol leader considers the following questions:

1. Will artillery, mortar, or close air support be required at the objective area (combat patrols)?
2. What artillery and mortar targets exist along the routes to and from the objective area that can be employed by the patrol if it encounters the enemy during movement (reconnaissance patrols and combat patrols)?
3. What additional fire support will be required to cover the patrol’s movement from the objective area back to the friendly area once the enemy is aware of the patrol’s actions at the objective area (combat patrols)?

The effect that casualties have upon the patrol depends upon many factors. Generally, more casualties can be expected in a combat patrol than in a reconnaissance patrol. A patrol may continue on to the objective carrying its casualties, send them back with a
detail of Marines, abort the mission and return the entire patrol with the casualties, or
call their parent unit for assistance.

Some factors that determine what action the patrol leader takes are: patrol’s mission;
unit’s standing operating procedure for handling wounded; number of casualties and
nature of their injuries; availability of aid, helicopters or other means of casualty
evacuation. Helicopter evacuation should only be used for the most serious casualties.
For infantry units conducting patrols in proximity to the enemy, helicopter evacuation of
casualties may compromise the patrol’s mission and force the patrol to return to friendly
positions before the mission is completed.

The patrol leader determines the requirement for Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical
(NBC) defense equipment. Gas masks should always be carried due to the availability
of Riot Control Agents (RCAs) to the enemy. If chemical or biological agents have been
employed in the area that the patrol must pass through, protective garments will have to
be worn by patrol members for part of or the entire patrol. Wearing extra clothing and
carrying extra equipment affects the speed of the patrol’s movement. A contingency
plan for post patrol decontamination must be developed.

11.4.0 Complete the Plan

At this point, the patrol leader has completed the basic thinking necessary for
accomplishing the assigned mission. The patrol leader prepares the patrol order to spell
out the details, assign tasks to subordinates, and explain the entire endeavor for ease of
understanding by the other members of the patrol.

11.5.0 Issue the Order

The patrol leader asks for a status report on the initial preparatory tasks assigned to
subordinate leaders and specialists when the warning order was issued. When the
patrol leader has completed planning and initial preparations have progressed to the
point where the patrol order may be issued, the members of the patrol are assembled.
Roll call is taken to ensure all patrol members are present, and then the prepared order
is issued.

This will be the only opportunity for the patrol leader to issue detailed instructions. The
mission, in particular, must be unmistakably clear so that once the patrol is committed,
all subordinate leaders can act with unity of purpose.

Whenever possible, the patrol leader should have a Seabee, such as the navigator,
build a terrain model using dirt, sand, twigs, etc., explaining the concept of operations
for movement to the objective area, actions at the objective area, and the return. Terrain
models provide patrol members with a clear and simple layout of the area of operations
and key terrain.

11.6.0 Supervise

Inspections and rehearsals—vital to proper preparation—are conducted even though
the patrol leader and patrol members are well experienced in patrolling. Inspections
determine the patrol’s state of physical and mental readiness.

The patrol leader inspects before rehearsals to ensure completeness and correctness of
uniform and equipment. The following areas are checked:

- Camouflage
- Identification tags, Geneva Convention cards
- Prescribed equipment, weapons, and ammunition available and serviceable
- Tape and other items used to “silence” equipment (prevent noise produced during movement)
- Items that could provide information to the enemy (e.g., letters and papers) remain behind
- Unnecessary equipment and excess weight remain behind

The patrol leader questions each patrol member to ensure the following is known:
- The mission, planned routes (primary and alternate), and the fire support plan of the patrol
- The individual’s role—what to do and when to do it
- What others are to do and how their actions impact the mission
- Challenges and passwords, codes, reporting times, radio call signs, frequencies, and any other pertinent details

There is usually a period of time between final rehearsal and departure. The patrol leader reinspects just before departure to ensure all equipment is still in working order and the unit is ready to embark on the mission.

Rehearsals ensure the operational proficiency of the patrol. Plans are checked and necessary changes are made. The patrol leader verifies the suitability of equipment. It is through rehearsals that patrol members become thoroughly familiar with actions to take during the patrol.

If the patrol will operate at night, both day and night rehearsals are conducted. Terrain similar to that over which the patrol will operate is used. All actions are rehearsed. If time is limited, the most critical phases are rehearsed. Action at the objective is the most critical phase of the patrol and is always rehearsed.

An effective method is to talk the patrol through each phase; describing the actions and having each member perform individual duties. When satisfied, the patrol leader walks the patrol through all phases of the plan using only the signals and commands to be used during the actual conduct of the patrol. Rehearsals continue until the patrol is thoroughly familiar with the plan. The rehearsal is also used to test the soundness of the patrol order and patrol organization.

After the rehearsal, the patrol leader makes final adjustments to the plan and patrol organization based on what was learned during the rehearsal and from other sources, such as adjacent patrols. When this is completed, the patrol leader issues final instructions to subordinate leaders noting any changes made in the patrol organization or plan. While the subordinate leaders are briefing the remainder of the patrol members, the patrol leader reports to the commander stating that the patrol is ready to begin the mission. The patrol leader also coordinates the location and time that the patrol can test fire all weapons prior to departure.

**11.7.0 Execute the Mission**

The successful completion of a patrol is the end result of the continuing efforts of every patrol member, who has earnestly applied knowledge, skills, and ingenuity to accomplish the mission.

Some of the principles to follow in the conduct of patrol and some of the techniques used are provided below. Remember, details vary with different circumstances.
11.7.1 Formation and Order of Movement

The elements of the patrol are established by its general organization. The formation in which the patrol moves forward and the location of elements in the formation are called Organization for Movement. An example of a reconnaissance patrol organization for movement is shown in Figure 4-16, frame 1. An example of a combat patrol organization for movement is shown in Figure 4-16, frame 2.

11.7.2 Departure and Reentry of Friendly Areas

Move cautiously when approaching positions in friendly areas; it is possible to be regarded as an enemy until identified otherwise. The patrol leader should halt the patrol near the position; then go forward and contact the position and, if possible, the local Leader. The leader will take at least one team member or more if the situation permits, but remember that unusual activity at a forward position may attract enemy attention. The patrol leader tells personnel at the position the information they may need to assist the team, such as the size of the patrol, general route, and expected time of return.

Request the latest information on the enemy, the terrain to the front, and any known obstacles or dangers. Check for communication facilities, fire support, and other assistance they can provide. Check the challenge and password, and determine whether the same personnel will be manning the position when returning. If not, ask them to relay information about the patrol to their relief. If intended to be out longer than 1 day, obtain the challenge and passwords for each day out.

11.7.3 Rallying Points

A rallying point is a designated place where a patrol that has been dispersed can assemble and reorganize. It should provide cover, concealment, and be defensible for at least a short time. It must be easily recognizable and be known to all members of the patrol. Until a rallying point has been actually reached and found to be suitable, designate it as a Tentative Rallying Point. To designate a definite rallying point, the patrol leader halts the patrol upon arrival. Then announces, “This is a rallying point,” and points out the identifying features.

There are three Types of rallying points:

1. Initial rallying point. This is a point within the friendly area where the patrol can rally if it becomes scattered before leaving the friendly area or before reaching the first tentative rallying point outside the friendly area.
2. En Route rallying point. This is a rallying point lying between the foremost friendly area and the objective.

3. Objective rallying point. This is a rallying point near the objective where the patrol assembles after accomplishing the mission.

The patrol leader must select and designate a tentative initial and objective rallying point before the patrol starts off. If these points prove suitable when they are reached, then they are confirmed by declaring them rallying points. Other points will be selected en route, as suitable positions are reached.

The following are general rules for the use of rallying points:

1. Select the initial and the en route rallying points to prevent complete disintegration of the patrol if it is unavoidably dispersed before reaching the objective.

2. The objective rallying point makes it possible for the patrol to reassemble after it has dispersed to carry out the objective.

3. If the patrol is dispersed in friendly areas, it reassembles at the initial rallying point.

4. If the patrol is dispersed between the initial rallying point and the first en route rallying point, it will assemble at one or the other of these points. The patrol leader must designate in the patrol order whether they desire reassembly at the initial rallying point or the first en route rallying point.

5. If the patrol is dispersed between en route rallying points, it will assemble either at the last rallying point or at the next (tentative) rallying point. Again, the patrol leader must designate which of these alternatives is desired. In this, and the former case, circumstances will control the decision.

11.7.4 Action on Enemy Contact

A patrol is subject to two types of enemy contact—Chance contact and Ambush.

In chance contact, meeting with the enemy is unexpected, and the enemy is not prepared.

In a chance contact, break contact as quickly as possible and continue the mission. Engaging the enemy longer than necessary could jeopardize the mission. The “clock” system is one way of breaking contact. The line of direction along which the patrol is moving is considered to be 12 o’clock. If the patrol leader called out “10 o’clock-200,” that would order the patrol to move off 200 yards in the 10 o’clock direction. The patrol must, as far as possible, keep the original formation.

Fire and Movement is another way of breaking a chance contact. One portion of the patrol returns enemy fire while another portion moves off. The two groups alternate covering fire and movement until both have broken contact.

In Ambush, the patrol is subjected to an intentional surprise attack by an enemy that is concealed and lying in wait.
In an ambush, the patrol may have the alternative of an assault in force to break through the ambush or a withdrawal like that used in a chance contact; however, a well-placed ambush usually prevents withdrawal by the flank. When the patrol must break through by assault, quickly determine the point of weakest enemy fire and assault this point with maximum firepower.

11.7.5 Action at Patrol Objectives

On a reconnaissance patrol, the patrol leader halts and conceals the patrol near the objectives; this is usually done at the objective rallying point. The patrol leader will then conduct a leader’s reconnaissance to pinpoint the objective, then return to the patrol and position security teams according to the plan. The leader places these teams where they can best provide early warning of enemy approach and best cover the reconnaissance element, then scout the objective.

The patrol leader may be able to get the required information quickly and simply. Usually, the patrol leader must move to several positions, perhaps making a circle around the objective. In the event the leader must do this, the patrol leader instructs the assistant patrol leader to continue the mission if the leader does not return within a reasonable time. When reconnaissance is complete, the patrol leader assembles the patrol at the objective rallying point and tells everyone what was seen and heard. They have each person contribute anything significant that may have been seen or heard. A preliminary report is made by radio whenever possible; then return to the unit as quickly as possible to make a full report.

12.0.0 AMBUSH

An ambush is a surprise attack from a concealed position upon a moving or temporarily halted target. The ambush is one of the oldest and most effective military operations. Ambush may include assault to close with, and decisively engage, the target or the attack may be by fire only. Ambush is highly effective in conventional operations but is even more suitable and effective in guerrilla and counterguerrilla operations.

Ambush is a favorite tactic of guerrilla forces because it does not require that ground be seized and held. Also, it enables small forces with limited weapons and equipment to harass or destroy larger, better armed forces. An ambush is an effective counterguerrilla measure because it forces the guerrillas to engage in decisive combat at unfavorable times and places. An ambush denies the guerrillas the freedom of movement on which their success so greatly depends. It also derives the guerrillas of weapons, ammunition, and equipment that is difficult to replace; and the death or capture of “hard core” personnel greatly weakens the guerrilla force.

Ambushes are executed for the general purpose of reducing the overall combat effectiveness of the enemy and for the specific purposes of destruction and harassment. Destruction is the primary purpose because the loss of Seabees killed or captured and the loss of equipment and supplies destroyed or captured critically affects the enemy. The capture of equipment and supplies may assist our enemy forces.

Harassment is a secondary purpose. Though less apparent than physical damage, it is very important. Frequent ambushes force the enemy to divert forces from other missions to guard convoys, troop movements, and carrying parties. When patrols fail to accomplish their missions because they have been ambushed, the enemy is deprived of the valuable contributions these patrols would make to the combat effort. A series of successful ambushes causes the enemy to be less aggressive and more defensive. They become apprehensive, overly cautious, reluctant to go on patrols, to move in
convoys, or to move in small groups. After being ambushed, the enemy seeks to avoid night operations, is more subject to confusion and panic, and generally decline in effectiveness.

The two main types of ambush are point ambush and area ambush. A Point Ambush is one where forces are deployed to support the attack of a single killing zone. An Area Ambush is one where forces are deployed for multiple, related point ambushes.

In a deliberate ambush (an ambush planned as a specific action against a specific target), detailed information about the target is required: the size, nature, organization, armament, equipment, route of movement, and the times the target will reach or pass certain points on its route. There are two situations where deliberate ambushes should be planned. The first situation is when reliable information is received on intended movement of a specific force; the second is when patrols, convoys, carrying parties, or similar forces establish patterns of size, time, and movement sufficient to permit detailed planning for this ambush.

The ambush of a target of opportunity is often the action of a search and attack patrol. When available information does not permit the detailed planning required for deliberate ambush, an ambush of opportunity is planned. Then the ambush force plans and appeals. A search and attack patrol, before departing, plans and rehearses the ambush of the types of targets that may be encountered. This force establishes and executes ambushes as targets of opportunity arise.

12.1.0 Fundamentals of Successful Ambush

Surprise, coordinated fire, and control are the basic elements essential to a successful ambush.

Surprise must be achieved or the attack is not an ambush; surprise distinguishes ambush from other forms of attack. Also, surprise allows the ambush force to seize and retain control of the situation. When complete surprise cannot be achieved, it must be so nearly complete that the target is not aware of the ambush until too late for effective reaction. Surprise is achieved by careful planning, thorough preparation, and exact execution. Only through detailed planning and thorough preparation can a leader make a sound decision on when, where, and what type of targets should or should NOT be attacked and how to attack so the enemy is Least prepared.

All weapons, including mines and demolitions, must be positioned. All firepower, including that of available artillery, must be coordinated to achieve the isolation of the killing zone to prevent escape or reinforcement. An ambush must also achieve the surprise delivery of a large volume of highly concentrated fire into the killing zone. The fire must inflict maximum damage so, when desired, the team can speedily assault and completely destroy the target.

Close control must be maintained during movement to, occupation of, and withdrawal from the ambush site. The ambush commander must effectively control all elements of the ambush force. Control is most critical at the time of approach of the target. Control measures must provide for the following:

1. Early warning of target approach
2. Withholding of fire until the target has moved into the killing zone
3. Opening fire at the proper time
4. Initiation of the right actions if the ambush is prematurely detected
5. Lifting or shifting of supporting fires when the attack includes assault of the target
6. Timely and orderly withdrawal of the ambush force to an easily recognizable rally point

The ambush force must maintain maximum control over them so they do not compromise the ambush. They must use patience and self-discipline by remaining still and quiet while waiting for the target to appear. They may have to endure insect bites, to thirst in silence, to resist the desire to sleep, to ease cramped muscles, and to perform normal body functions. When the target approaches, the team must resist the temptation to open fire before the signal is given.

12.2.0 Point Ambush

A point ambush can be used independently or as part of an area ambush. In a point ambush, the attack force is positioned along the target’s expected route of approach. The formation is an important consideration because it determines whether a point ambush is able to deliver the heavy volume of highly concentrated fire necessary to isolate, trap, and destroy the target.

The formation is determined by careful consideration of possible formations and the advantages and disadvantages of each in relation to the following:

1. The terrain, conditions of visibility, forces, weapons, and equipment
2. The ease of difficulty of control, and the target to be attacked
3. The overall combat situation

In this training manual, a few formations that have been developed for the deployment of point ambushes are discussed. Those discussed are identified by giving them names that correspond to the general pattern formed on the ground by the deployment of the attack force.

12.2.1 Line

The attack force of the Line ambush (Figure 4-17) is deployed generally parallel to the target’s route of movement (road, trail, stream, etc.) This positions the attack force parallel to the long axis of the killing zone and subjects the target to heavy flanking fire. The area that the attack force can effectively cover with a heavy volume of highly concentrated fire limits the size of the killing zone that can trap the target. The target is trapped in the killing zone by natural obstacles, mines (Claymore, antivehicular, and antipersonnel), demolitions, and direct and indirect fire.
A disadvantage of the line formation is the chance that lateral dispersion of the target may be too great for effective coverage. The line formation is appropriate in close terrain that restricts target maneuvers and in open terrain where one flank is restricted by natural obstacles or can be restricted by mines, demolitions, man-traps, or stakes. Similar obstacles can be placed between the attack force and the killing zone to provide protection from the target’s counterambush measures. When a destruction ambush is deployed in this manner, access lines are left so the target can be assaulted. An advantage of the line formation is its relative ease of control under all conditions of visibility.

Figure 4-17 — Line ambush.
12.2.2 The L

The L-shaped formation is a variation of the line formation. The long side of the attack force is parallel to the killing zone and delivers flanking fire. The short side of the attack force is at the end of, and at right angles to, the killing zone and delivers enfilading fire that interlocks with fire from the other leg as shown in Figure 4-18, frame 1. This formation is very flexible. It can be established on a straight stretch of a trail, stream, or at a sharp bend in a trail or stream (Figure 4-18, frame 2). When appropriate, fire from the short leg can be shifted to parallel the long leg if the target attempts to assault or escape in the opposite direction. In addition, the short leg prevents escape in its direction and adds reinforcement from its direction.

Figure 4-18 — The “L” ambush.
12.2.3 The Z

The Z-shaped formation (Figure 4-19) is another variation of the line formation. The attack force is deployed as in the L formation, but with an additional side so the formation resembles the letter Z. The additional side may serve any of the following purposes:

- To engage a force attempting to relieve or reinforce the target
- To seal the end of the killing zone
- To restrict a flank
- To prevent envelopment

![Diagram of the Z formation](image)

Figure 4-19 — The “Z” ambush.
12.2.4 The T

In the T-shaped formation (Figure 4-20), the attack force is deployed across and at right angles to the target’s route of movement so the attack force and the target form the letter T. This formation can be used day or night to establish a purely harassing ambush. At night it can be used to establish an ambush to stop or hamper enemy movement through open, hard-to-seal areas, such as rice paddies.

A small force can use the T formation to harass, slow, and disorganize a larger force. When the lead elements of the target are engaged, they normally attempt to maneuver right or left to close the ambush. Mines, traps, and other obstacles placed to the flanks of the killing zone slow the movements of the enemy. They also permit the ambush force to deliver heavy fire and withdraw without becoming decisively engaged. An ambush established and executed in this manner is called a “bloody nose” ambush.

The T formation can be used to stop or hamper small groups attempting night movement across open areas; for example, deploy the attack force along a rice paddy dike with every other Seabee facing in the opposite direction. The attack of a target approaching from either direction requires only that every other Seabee shift to the opposite side of the dike. Each Seabee fires only to the front and only when the target is at very close range. Attack is by fire only and each Seabee keeps the target under fire as long as it remains on the front. When the target attempts to escape in either direction along the dike, each Seabee takes it under fire as it comes to their vicinity. The T formation is very effective at halting infiltration. However, it has one chief disadvantage—there is a possibility that the ambush will engage a superior force at night while spread out; therefore, use of this formation must fit the local enemy situation.

Figure 4-20 — The “T” ambush.
12.2.5 The V

Deploy the V-shaped attack force along both sides of the target’s route of movement so it forms the letter V as shown in Figure 4-21. Care is taken to ensure that neither group nor leg fires into the other. This formation subjects the target to both enfilading and interlocking fire. The V formation is best suited for fairly open terrain but can also be used in the jungle. When established in the jungle, the legs of the V close in as the head elements of the target approach the apex of the V and open fire from close range. Here, even more than in open terrain, all movement and fire must be carefully coordinated and controlled to ensure that the fire of one leg does not endanger the other. The wider separation of forces makes this formation difficult to control, and there are fewer sites that favor its use. The main advantage of the V formation is the target has difficulty detecting the ambush until the ambush force is well into the killing zone.

12.3.0 Counterambush Drills

When a patrol is ambushed, the immediate action drill to use is determined by whether the ambush is near or far.

In a Near ambush, the killing zone is under heavy, highly concentrated, close-range fire. There is little time or space for warriors to maneuver or seek cover. The longer they remain in the killing zone, the more certain their destruction; therefore, if attacked by a Near ambush, the patrol should react as follows:
1. Seabees in the killing zone, Without Order or Signal, immediately assault directly into the ambush position, occupy it, and continue the attack or break contact as directed. This action moves them out of the killing zone, prevents other elements of the ambush from firing on them without firing on their own men, and provides positions from which other actions may be taken.

2. Seabees not in the killing zone must maneuver against the attack force and other elements of the ambush as directed.

3. To eliminate the ambush or to break contact, the men continue the attack as directed.

In a FAR ambush, the killing zone is also under heavy, highly concentrated fire but from a greater range. This greater range provides Seabees in the killing zone some space to maneuver and an opportunity to seek cover at lesser risk; therefore, if attacked by a far ambush, the patrol should react as follows:

1. Seabees in the killing zone, Without Order or Signal, immediately return fire. They should take the best position available and continue firing until directed otherwise.

2. Seabees not in the killing zone must maneuver against the ambush force as directed.

3. To eliminate the ambush or to break contact, the men should continue the attack as directed.

In each situation, the success of the counterambush drill used is dependent on the Seabees being well trained in recognizing the nature of an ambush and well rehearsed in the proper reaction.

**Summary**

In this chapter you learned about the dangers of conducting a patrol under wartime conditions. By now you have realized that being a Seabee is a dangerous job. Not just because of the hazards of the construction zone, but the hazards of war. You have learned how to plan, set up, and conduct a patrol. You learned how to move silently through the night. The importances of combat formations were discussed with samples of what they look like. Remember that if a Seabee does not know the signals or how to perform the patrols, the unit could be in danger and the survival of the team depends on each member knowing their job.
Assignment 4

Objectives

1. Specify methods of moving individuals and formations in a combat area and conditions under which individual methods should be used.
2. Indicate actions to be taken by an individual when caught in the light of an overhead or ground flare.
3. Differentiate between types of fire team formations relative to purpose, use, and their limitations under given combat conditions; specify the duties of the fire team leader assigned to basic fire team formations and movements.
4. Specify the kinds of rifle squad formations used in given combat situations and how squad formations are changed to meet changing tactical situations.
5. Specify the kinds of rifle platoon formations used under given combat conditions.
6. Specify the purpose and use of the weapons unit formation during an attack.
7. Describe a patrol in terms of its objective and orders.
8. Define the duties and positions of patrol personnel and techniques of control, security, and movement.
9. Define the duties and positions of patrol personnel and techniques of control, security, and movement.
10. Point out principles and techniques of ambush.

Questions

1. While in enemy controlled terrain, what is the ideal method of moving by foot?
   1. short distances quickly
   2. slowly and deliberately
   3. in a zigzag pattern
   4. long distances quickly

2. When crossing roads, trails, and rivers in a combat zone, you should cross at what location?
   1. An area with the most cover and concealment
   2. A culvert large enough to crawl through
   3. A low spot to help avoid detection
   4. A curve to cut down on the distance you can be seen

3. While armed with an M16 rifle, what action should you take when hitting the dirt or deck?
   1. Slide your hand to the heel of the butt
   2. Hold the rifle in one hand and break your fall with the other
   3. Be sure to break your fall with the rifle butt
   4. Grip the rifle by the sling near the sling swivel
4. While conducting the low crawl with an M16 rifle, what is the preferred method of carry?

1. Cradle it in your arms
2. Grip it by the sling near the butt and pull it with the muzzle to the rear
3. Grip it by the sling near the upper sling swivel and let the balance rest in your forearm
4. Grip it by the muzzle and let the butt drag along the ground

5. When on a night patrol near an enemy encampment, what is the required method of moving?

1. Rush
2. Low crawl
3. High crawl
4. Walk silently

6. From a standing position, you are trying to assume the prone position silently. With one hand, you first feel the ground and clear it of noisemaking objects. What is your next step?

1. Lower both knees to the ground at the same time until they support the weight of your body
2. Lower your knees to the ground one at a time until your weight is supported by one hand and both knees
3. Lower both knees while falling forward on your stomach
4. Lower both knees while falling forward on your right or left elbow

7. If you are caught in the open when an overhead flare goes off, what action should you take?

1. Crouch low and remain motionless until the flare burns out
2. Immediately hit the dirt or deck until the flare burns out
3. Move out of the lighted area as quickly and quietly as possible
4. Silently get in the prone position as fast as possible

8. When caught by an overhead flare, what situation requires you to crouch as low as possible and remain motionless?

1. When crossing barbed wire
2. When caught in an open field
3. When crossing a stream
4. When assaulting an enemy position

9. When, if ever, must the squad leader have each individual maintain exact distances between individuals and units that are in combat formations?

1. When the formations are under heavy enemy fire
2. When the squad leader cannot maintain control in another way
3. When the squad leader is using hand-and-arm signals to communicate
4. Never
10. In a basic fire team formation, at what position should the fire team leader be placed?

1. Between rifleman No. 1 and rifleman No. 2
2. Where the fire team leader can best observe the fire team
3. Where the fire team leader can best be protected by the fire team
4. In the foremost position

11. The automatic rifleman is positioned within the basic fire team formation to ensure that the automatic rifleman can perform what function?

1. Direct rifleman No. 1
2. Receive ammunition from rifleman No. 2
3. Provide security for the fire team
4. Quickly deliver fire to each flank

12. In a fire-team column formation, the firepower is limited in what direction?

1. Front
2. Right flank
3. Left flank
4. Rear

13. In regard to firepower, an echelon-right formation provides

1. maximum firepower to the front
2. all-around security
3. minimum firepower to the right and to the front
4. maximum firepower to the front and maximum to the right

14. If you are assigned as fire team leader, what factors will control the type of fire-team formation you use?

1. Visibility and types of weapons
2. Ease of control and speed
3. Enemy firepower and ease of control
4. Terrain features and tactical situations

15. When a unit is moving in the fog or through the woods, the squad column should be used because it provides what benefits?

1. Good control and maneuverability
2. Security to the front and both flanks
3. Maximum firepower to the front
4. Protection to exposed flanks
16. What squad members should be used as the pivot during squad formation changes?

1. Senior rifle unit
2. First fire team
3. Second fire team
4. Third fire team

17. When the enemy’s position is to the front and to the left of you, what type of platoon formation should you use to direct maximum firepower at the enemy?

1. Line
2. Skirmishers left
3. Echelon left
4. Wedge

18. How many different elements are there in a rifle company’s attack formation?

1. Six
2. Two
3. Three
4. Five

19. What element of a rifle company is assigned the task of taking an assigned objective?

1. The main attacking force
2. The supporting attack force
3. The squad
4. The fire team

20. What is the main objective of most Seabee patrols?

1. Static defense
2. Delaying the enemy
3. Security patrolling
4. Aggressive patrolling

21. As the leader of a reconnaissance patrol, what is the only reason to engage the enemy?

1. Destroy an enemy patrol
2. Accomplish your mission
3. Delay an enemy attack
4. Confuse an enemy attack
22. A patrol order should contain the time of departure, time of return, general route and what other type of information?

1. Communication plan
2. Food plan
3. Weapons inventory
4. Patrol chain of command

23. Where in a patrol should the patrol leader be positioned?

1. At the head of the patrol
2. Where best control of the patrol is accomplished
3. Where the most protection is provided by the patrol
4. At the rear of the patrol

24. When you are the patrol leader and the route takes you near an enemy position, how should you issue orders to control the patrol?

1. By halting the patrol and giving each man his orders one at a time
2. By giving hand-and-arm signals only while on the move
3. By using sound signals only while on the move
4. By assembling the patrol and passing the word orally to the assembly

25. The point position in a patrol has the responsibility to investigate what position?

1. The area to both sides of the route of march only
2. The area directly in front of the patrol only
3. The rallying points before the patrol arrives
4. The front and sides of the route of march

26. What series of preplanned objectives regulates the progress of the patrol toward its final objective?

1. Intermediate
2. Primary
3. Secondary
4. Alternate

27. When you are on a patrol that has been ambushed and the patrol is forced to separate, you should immediately proceed to what location?

1. Primary objective
2. Closest alternate objective
3. Closest rallying point
4. Intermediate objective

28. When you plan a patrol, what factor governs the operation?

1. Personnel
2. Mission
3. Time
4. Weapons
29. After a mission has been studied and its tasks identified, what factors must be considered to execute the mission?

1. Objective
2. Time
3. Enemy position
4. Personnel

30. What factors affect the size of a patrol, its route, and the types of weapons and equipment it will carry?

1. Terrain features, cover, and concealment
2. Troop disposition, strength, and capabilities
3. Time left before departure of the patrol
4. Distance the patrol must cover

31. Each of your patrol members should carry a poncho, a pair of gloves, and an extra pair of socks in addition to the uniform and web equipment the patrol member is wearing. All of this gear is classified as what type of equipment?

1. Enroute
2. Control
3. Objective
4. Routine

32. What format is used for the patrol’s mission, general instructions, and a short briefing of the situation given to its members?

1. The patrol order
2. The warning order
3. The complete detailed plan
4. The patrol leaders’ order

33. If your patrol requires fire support to divert the enemy’s attention while you are leaving friendly lines, what patrol planning step is used?

1. Execute the mission
2. Organize the patrol
3. Coordinate
4. Planning

34. When it is not possible to make an aerial reconnaissance while your patrol is preparing for a mission, you should try to obtain the required information in what way?

1. By enlarging area maps
2. By studying aerial photographs
3. By observing from a vantage point
4. By asking indigenous personnel about the area
35. Before issuing orders, what action should the patrol leader take?
   1. Inspect men and equipment
   2. Describe the plan orally
   3. Rehearse the mission by day and by night
   4. Announce departure and return times only

36. Even though time is limited; a patrol must always rehearse its actions. Where is the best place to conduct this rehearsal?
   1. At the point where the patrol will leave friendly lines
   2. At the point where the patrol will return to friendly lines
   3. At the objective area
   4. At the site where the patrol is likely to be ambushed

37. A patrol’s formation in combat or on a reconnaissance mission en route to an objective is known as its __________.
   1. general organization
   2. conduct during the patrol
   3. organization for movement
   4. coordination for the patrol

38. When a patrol departs friendly lines and plans to be out two days, what information must be obtained by the patrol leader?
   1. Challenge for the second day only
   2. Password for the second day only
   3. Passwords and challenges for both days
   4. Codewords and authentication keys for both days

39. When making up the patrol plan, rallying points that the patrol leader selects are known as?
   1. tentative
   2. objective
   3. initial
   4. en route

40. During a patrol, you come upon the enemy unexpectedly and a fire fight occurs. Which of the following actions should you take?
   1. Attack the enemy at their weakest point
   2. Break contact as soon as possible and continue the mission
   3. Disperse and regroup at the designated rallying point
   4. Direct maximum firepower at the enemy until they retreat
41. If caught in an enemy ambush where withdrawal appears impossible, a patrol should be ordered to?

A. surrender
B. break contact by firepower and movement
C. break contact by movement to the right
D. assault the weakest point with maximum firepower

42. What is the primary purpose of an ambush?

1. To harass the enemy
2. To confuse and panic the enemy
3. To divert enemy troops from other missions
4. To destroy enemy personnel and equipment

43. When against a small enemy force that requires you to create only one killing zone, what type of ambush should succeed?

1. Area
2. Deliberate
3. Opportunity
4. Point

44. You are on a patrol sent into enemy territory to destroy small enemy units. You have no definite information about the enemy, so you must ambush the first suitable target. This is an example of what type of ambush?

1. Opportunity
2. General purpose
3. Deliberate
4. Clandestine

45. Although you must always maintain close control of your team at an ambush site, this control is most important at which of the following times?

1. During the ambush
2. When the target is approaching
3. When withdrawing from the ambush site
4. When arriving at the ambush site

46. The formation of a point ambush mainly determines whether or not a point ambush can ........

1. Deliver the coordinated volume of fire required.
2. Achieve the surprise necessary to trap the enemy.
3. Achieve a timely and orderly withdrawal.
4. Approach the target area without detection.
47. In what terrain is the line formation of a point ambush effective?
   1. In open terrain where one flank is restricted
   2. In open terrain where both flanks are accessible
   3. In terrain where lateral dispersion of the enemy is possible
   4. In close terrain where both flanks are accessible

48. The short side of an L-formation should be deployed in what area?
   1. On the opposite side of the enemy’s route of march
   2. Parallel to the enemy’s route march
   3. Across the enemy’s route of march
   4. At the end of and at right angles to the killing zone

49. Which of the following types of ambush formations may be used strictly as a harassing ambush?
   1. Line
   2. L
   3. T
   4. V

50. What is the main advantage of using the V-ambush formation?
   1. It is easy to control
   2. It is hard for one leg of the V to fire into the other leg
   3. It is difficult to detect until the enemy is well into the killing zone
   4. It subjects the enemy to both enfilading and interlocking fire

51. When caught in the killing zone of a near ambush, a patrol should react by?
   1. assaulting the enemy when ordered by the patrol leader
   2. returning fire and taking cover as ordered by the patrol leader
   3. returning fire and taking cover without orders from the patrol leader
   4. assaulting the enemy position without orders from the patrol leader

52. An assault on a near enemy ambush should continue until the patrol is able to?
   1. reach suitable cover and eliminate return fire
   2. make a breach in the ambush so contact can be broken
   3. get room in which to maneuver
   4. eliminate the ambush or break contact as directed

53. Whether a patrol succeeds or fails in breaking out of an enemy ambush depends mainly on the?
   1. purpose of the ambush
   2. extent to which the patrol is trained and rehearsed
   3. type of ambush formation the enemy is using
   4. number of enemy weapons being used against you
ASSIGNMENT 4

Combat Maneuvers, Formations, Patrols, and Ambushes

Directions: Select the correct answer from the list of alternates below each question in the end of chapter assignment. Write in the answer next to the corresponding question number below. Use this answer sheet as a reference to completing the online assignment related to this assignment.

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Additional Resources and References

This chapter is intended to present thorough resources for task training. The following reference works are suggested for further study. This is optional material for continued education rather than for task training.

Scouting and Patroliing, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-11.3
Commander’s Tactical Handbook, Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 3-11.1A
Marine Rifle Squad, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-11.2
Trainee Feedback

Center for Seabees and Facilities Engineering (CSFE) makes every effort to keep their courses up-to-date and free of technical errors. If you have a suggestion, found an error or inaccuracy, please write, FAX or email us by using the form below. Use one form for each comment and be sure to fill in the information as accurately and detailed as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Write: CSFE
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