

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Basic Officer Course
The Basic School
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5019

B0317.1

INITIAL FIRE TEAM/SQUAD TACTICS**Student Handout**

1. **Introduction.** In order to prepare you for individual, fire team, squad, and platoon tactics you will first need to understand basic formations and movement. While at The Basic School you will progress from team to squad tactics beginning with this period of instruction. By successfully understanding and executing the material presented during this instruction, you will be able to control a squad in the attack.

Prior to class and in accordance with the consolidated advance sheet, read and be familiar with *FMFM 6-5 (Chapters 1-4, Appendix H)*, and *FMFM 6-7 (Chapter 1, Section IV)*. Read the learning objectives. **YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO EXECUTE THESE PRINCIPLES!**

2. Basic Definitions

- a. **Base unit.** A specific unit used by the leader to control direction and speed of an attack.
 - b. **ADDRAC.** The abbreviation for the six elements of a fire command: **ALERT, DIRECTION, TARGET DESCRIPTION, RANGE, TARGET ASSIGNMENT, FIRE CONTROL.**
 - c. **Formations.** Groupings of individuals and units for efficient tactical employment.
 - d. **Fire and maneuver.** The process whereby elements of a unit establish a support by fire position to engage the enemy, while another element maneuvers to an advantageous position from which to close with and destroy or capture the enemy.
 - e. **Fire and movement.** Individuals, fire teams and squads provide cover fire while other individuals, fire teams or squads advance toward the enemy or assault the enemy position.
 - f. **Squad rushes.** Occur when the squad moves in a series of squad rushes.
 - g. **Team rushes.** Occur when fire teams rush in a series of alternating team rushes.
 - h. **Individual rushes.** When individuals move forward singly.
 - i. **S.A.F.E.** The acronym used to describe priority of work during the initial phase of establishing a hasty defense. **SECURITY, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS EMPLACEMENT, CLEAR FIELDS OF FIRE, AND ENTRENCH.**
 - j. **Assembly area.** An area in which a force is assembled to prepare for further action. These activities are conducted in the assembly area: weapons are checked, ammunition is distributed, troops are allowed to rest (security maintained), attachments may be joined, etc.
 - k. **Attack position.** The last position before crossing the line of departure. It is where final coordination, last minute preparations, and if not already accomplished, deployment into initial attack formations are effected.
 - l. **Line of departure.** Is a line designated to coordinate the beginning of an attack.
 - m. **Assault position.** The position between the line of departure and the objective, from which the assault on the enemy position is launched. (Should be easily recognizable).
 - n. **Consolidation.** Rapid organization of a hasty defense in order to permit the attacking unit to hold the objective just seized in the event of an enemy counter attack. **SAFE** takes place here.
3. **Base Unit Concept.** The base unit is used to control the direction and speed of an attacking force in the absence of verbal commands.
- a. **Reasons for Base Unit**

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- (1) Allows for the squad leader to control his unit when verbal commands cannot be heard.
- (2) Allows for ease of control when visibility restrictions do not allow Team Leaders to see the Squad Leader.
- (3) Extends the flexibility of small unit direction changes down to the Fire Team Leader, enabling him to maximize the use of microterrain.
- (4) Allows the fire teams to maximize the use of movement and fire power within the team.
- (5) Allows the squad leader to quickly change the direction and speed of the attack by directing the Base Unit Fire team, using hand and arm signals, and allowing the other two teams to follow the Base Unit.
- (6) Should the Base Unit become pinned down or otherwise unable to continue movement forward as a result of an enemy surface, the Squad Leader can quickly reposition himself with another fire team and continue with the attack using a new Base Unit.

b. Application of Base Unit Concept

- (1) The Squad Leader positions himself behind the Fire Team he designates as Base Unit. The Squad Leader controls the squad by using the Base Unit Fire Team Leader. Speed and direction are dictated by the Squad Leader using the fighter/leader concept. The fighter/leader concept allows squad leaders to establish direction and speed of unit movement by their own individual movements and positioning near the base fire team.
- (2) The Fire Team Leaders must have the ability to move short distances to the left, right, forward, and back during movement, but must be careful to guide off the general direction and speed of the Base Unit, not to fire into other teams, and maximize the available microterrain.
- (3) The following graphic represents a Squad Leader with a designated Base Unit:
- (4) The following graphic represents a Squad Leader controlling his unit by initiating the movement in a given direction and speed using Base Unit:
- (5) The following graphic represents a Squad Leader changing the direction and speed of an attack:

c. Considerations of the Base Unit Concept

- (1) In heavy vegetation and limited visibility the flanking fire team members nearest the Base Unit must maintain visual or physical contact with the Base Unit in order for the Squad Leader to direct.
- (2) Transition from the squad to fire team, and individual rushes is situational dependent, usually dictated by the volume of fire the unit is receiving, by terrain, cover and concealment.

4. **Formations.** See Chapter 3 of FMFM 6-5.

a. Formations. Specific control measures will be dictated by enemy situation, speed, terrain, and visibility. The following formations are only examples, and speed/security will dictate the formation to be used in different environments:

- (1) Assembly Area to Attack Position/Line of Departure - Column
- (2) Line of departure to Assault Position - Wedge or column
- (3) Assault Position to Limit Of advance - line

b. CHANGING FORMATIONS. See FMFM 6-5 Chapter 3, Pages 3-13 to 3-33.

c. Formations and methods of movement upon contact.

- (1) The squad and fire team must develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to guide the units in their movement. Depicted is an example of a fire team conducting fire and movement in accordance with their SOP:
- (2) Depicted is a fire team employing a Squad Automatic Weapon during Team rushes:
- (3) The squad automatic weapon (SAW) is capable of a high volume of accurate fire out to extended ranges. It

is, therefore, the primary weapon with which the fire team leader can gain fire superiority over the enemy so that he can begin to advance his team against them. The SAW then also provides the primary means by which fire superiority is maintained, ensuring that the enemy is suppressed and the fire team's movement continuously covered by fire. The SAW must be positioned after each rush so that effective fire and suppression will allow uninterrupted movement of the fire team. The speed of the team's movement is determined by the speed in which the SAW can be displaced from one firing position to the next. The team leader must be careful not to outrun his SAW during rushes or its firepower could be rendered useless. The automatic rifleman is a key member of the fire team. His ability to effectively employ the SAW is essential to achieving and maintaining fire superiority and to covering his team's movement against the enemy.

5. Individual and Unit Movement

a. Movement not under fire

- (1) Select route remembering the use of microterrain
- (2) Enemy and terrain will dictate security
- (3) Weapon carriage
 - (a) Muzzle follows eye movement (Taper this concept with common sense. Not all eye movement requires the muzzle to follow, especially when angle of sight requires wide sweeping movements.)
 - (b) Watch muzzle awareness
 - (c) Weapons should be carried using the appropriate carry (tactical, alert or ready), and in accordance with the individual's primary carriage technique (left or right handed shooter). Weapons are not always carried facing outboard simply for the sake of safe carriage.

b. Movement under fire

(1) In controlling the squad when taken under enemy fire, the squad leader takes into account the fact that the battlefield is a very noisy and confusing place. If enemy fire is light he may be able to control his fire team leaders by voice, whistle, or arm-and-hand signals. As the volume of enemy fire increases, this type of control becomes impossible. In this situation the squad leader must rely on the skill and initiative of the fire team leaders to carry out the instructions he previously gave them. To maintain control of the squad under heavy enemy fire, the squad leader positions himself near the fire team leader of the designated base fire team. By regulating the actions of the base fire team leader, the squad leader retains control of the squad. The base fire team leader controls the action of his fire team; the other fire team leaders base their actions on those of the base fire team. This type of control must be practiced and perfected in training if the squad is to be effective in combat.

The base fire team is used by the squad leader to control the direction, position, and rate of movement of the squad. It is not intended that the other fire teams maintain rigid positions in relation to the base fire team; the base fire team is used as a general guide. If another fire team can move forward more rapidly than the base fire team, it should do so. For instance, if the base fire team is receiving enemy fire, but the terrain in front of another fire team provides cover from enemy fire, the latter team should move rapidly forward to a position where they can deliver fire on the enemy. Covering the base fire team's movement by fire takes pressure off them and permits them to move forward. Once the base fire team comes generally abreast, the other fire teams can then resume fire and movement.

(2) On contact the Squad/Team Leader issues a fire command using the "ADDRAC" or a portion of this format to the squad/team. See *FMFM 6-5, Chapter 2, Pages 2-19 to 2-25* for examples.

(3) Based on the volume and concentration of fire, the squad will begin squad, fire team, or individual rushes. It is critical that emphasis is placed on the SAW as suppressive fire. Without suppression and fire superiority the unit will not gain ground with minimal casualties. Bottom line: suppression is what makes the rushes effective.

(4) Use high crawl to gain ground and be able to access weapon if needed. Used when under sporadic fire or negotiating low obstacles.

(5) Use low crawl when under intense fire or negotiating low obstacles.

(6) Rushes should be executed in short intervals to covered and concealed positions. The commonly referred to method is to begin movement by saying to yourself, "I'm up - they see me - I'm down." The individual should get in the prone position when he says "I'm down."

(7) Once the individual begins movement, he should immediately choose a covered position to move to.

If none are available the Marine should get down and shuffle using the "low crawl" method.

- (8) Once in position the individual should be aware of two things:
 - (a) Watch for other Marines. Also, be prepared to continue your rushes.
 - (b) Place well-aimed shots on the target to kill or suppress the enemy.
- (9) Maximize the use of microterrain.

c. Hand and Arm Signals. See FMFM 6-5, Chapter 3, Pages 3-35 to 3-51.

d. Gear and Equipment Preparation

- (1) Camouflage unfamiliar shapes
- (2) Equipment/weapons silencing
 - (a) Tape or tie down all gear
 - (b) Tape sling swivels to weapon

e. Arrangement of 782 Gear by SOP

- (1) Should be symmetrical on load bearing vest
- (2) Gas mask around hip or underarm carry

6. **Summary.** You must understand the concepts of Base Unit, individual and unit movement principles, formations and the fighter/leader concept in order to effectively control a rifle squad. The emphasis in the attack is on nonverbal control using the Concepts of the fighter/leader and base unit. Fighter/leader concept will help to initiate and sustain an effective attack, and is essential when using base unit. Solid planning from the Assembly Area to the Limit of Advance as well as proper employment of men and weapons will contribute to a successful attack.





