

FM 3-21.8
(FM 7-8)

The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad

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**HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

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- Prepare sector sketches (leaders).
- Dig fighting positions (stage 1 [see Section VII]).
- Establish communication and coordination with the company and adjacent units.
- Coordinate with adjacent units. Review sector sketches.
- Emplace antitank and Claymore mines, then wire and other obstacles.
- Mark or improve marking for TRPs and other fire control measures.
- Improve primary fighting positions and add overhead cover (stage 2).
- Prepare supplementary and then alternate positions (same procedure as the primary position).
- Establish sleep and rest plans.
- Distribute and stockpile ammunition, food, and water.
- Dig trenches to connect positions.
- Continue to improve positions—construct revetments, replace camouflage, and add to overhead cover.

8-92. Unit priorities of work are normally found in SOPs. However, the commander will dictate the priorities of work for the company based on the factors of METT-TC. Several actions may be accomplished at the same time. Leaders must constantly supervise the preparation of fighting positions, both for tactical usefulness and proper construction.

SECURITY IN THE DEFENSE

8-93. Security in the defense includes all active and passive measures taken to avoid detection by the enemy, deceive the enemy, and deny enemy reconnaissance elements accurate information on friendly positions. The two primary tools available to the platoon leader are observation posts and patrols. In planning for the security in the defense, the platoon leader considers the terrain in terms of OAKOC. He uses his map to identify terrain that will protect the platoon from enemy observation and fires while providing observation and fires into the engagement area. Additionally, he uses intelligence updates to increase his situational understanding, reducing the possibility of the enemy striking at a time or in a place for which the platoon is unprepared.

OBSERVATION POSTS

8-94. An observation post gives the platoon its first echelon of security in the defense. The observation post provides early warning of impending enemy contact by reporting direction, distance, and size. It detects the enemy early and sends accurate reports to the platoon. The platoon leader establishes observation posts along the most likely enemy avenues of approach into the position or into the area of operations. Leaders ensure that observation posts have communication with the platoon.

8-95. Early detection reduces the risk of the enemy overrunning the observation post. Observation posts may also be equipped with a Javelin CLU to increase the ability to detect the enemy. They may receive infrared trip flares, infrared parachute flares, infrared M203 rounds, and even infrared mortar round support to illuminate the enemy. The platoon leader weighs the advantages and disadvantages of using infrared illumination when the enemy is known to have night vision devices that detect infrared light. Although infrared and thermal equipment within the platoon enables the platoon to see the observation post at a greater distance, the observation post should not be positioned outside the range of the platoon's small-arms weapons.

8-96. To further reduce the risk of fratricide, observation posts use GPS, if available, to navigate to the exit and entry point in the platoon's position. The platoon leader submits an observation post location to the company commander to ensure a no-fire area (NFA) is established around each observation post position. The commander sends his operational overlay with observation post positions to the battalion and adjacent units. He receives the same type overlay from adjacent units to assist in better command and control and fratricide avoidance. The platoon leader confirms that the company fire support element (FSE) has forwarded these locations to the battalion FSO and has received the appropriate NFAs on the fire support graphics.

PATROLS

8-97. Platoons actively patrol in the defense. Patrols enhance the platoon's ability to fill gaps in security between observation posts (see Chapter 9). The platoon leader forwards his tentative patrol route to the commander to ensure they do not conflict with other elements within the company. The commander forwards the entire company's patrol routes to the battalion. This allows the battalion S3 and S2 to ensure all routes are coordinated for fratricide prevention, and that the company and platoons are conforming to the battalion intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) plan. The patrol leader may use a GPS to enhance his basic land navigational skills as he tracks his patrol's location on a map, compass, and pace count or odometer reading.

ESTABLISHMENT OF DEFENSIVE POSITIONS

8-98. Platoons establish defensive positions IAW the platoon leader and commander's plan. They mark engagement areas using marking techniques prescribed by unit SOP. The platoon physically marks obstacles, TRPs, targets, and trigger lines in the engagement area. During limited visibility, the platoon can use infrared light sources to mark TRPs for the rifle squads. When possible, platoons should mark TRPs with both a thermal and an infrared source so the rifle squads can use the TRP.

RANGE CARD

8-99. A range card is a sketch of a sector that a direct fire weapons system is assigned to cover. Range cards aid in planning and controlling fires. They also assist crews in acquiring targets during limited visibility, and orient replacement personnel, platoons, or squads that are moving into position. During good visibility, the gunner should have no problems maintaining orientation in his sector. During poor visibility, he may not be able to detect lateral limits. If the gunner becomes disoriented and cannot find or locate reference points or sector limit markers, he can use the range card to locate the limits. The gunner should make the range card so he becomes more familiar with the terrain in his sector. He should continually assess the sector and, if necessary, update his range card.

SECTOR SKETCHES

8-100. Detailed sketches aid in the planning, distribution, and control of the platoon fires. Gunners prepare the range cards. Squad leaders prepare squad sector sketches, section leaders prepare section sketches, and the platoon leader prepares the platoon sketch.

WEAPONS PLACEMENT

8-101. To position weapons effectively, leaders must know the characteristics, capabilities, and limitations of the weapons; the effects of terrain; and the tactics used by the enemy. Additionally, the platoon leader must consider whether his primary threat will be vehicles or Infantry. His plan should address both mounted and dismounted threats. Also, the platoon leader may have an antitank section attached.

CLOSE COMBAT MISSILE SYSTEMS EMPLOYMENT

8-102. The primary role of Close Combat Missile Systems (CCMS) is to destroy enemy armored vehicles. When there is no armored vehicle enemy, CCMS can be employed in a secondary role of providing fire support against point targets such as crew-served weapons positions. CCMS optics (such as the Javelin's command launch unit [CLU]) can be used alone or as an aided vision device for reconnaissance, security operations, and surveillance. Reduced or limited visibility will not degrade the effectiveness of the CCMS. This fact allows the antiarmor specialist to continue to cover his sector without having to reposition closer to the avenue of approach. The platoon leader's assessment of the factors of METT-TC will determine the employment of CCMS. (For a detailed discussion on the employment of the Javelin, refer to Appendix B.) Based on the situation, the platoon leader may employ all or some of the CCMS. He may use centralized control or decentralized control.