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**INFANTRY TRAINING
FOR CHAIN OF COMMAND**

**Part I.—FIELD CRAFT, BATTLE DRILL,
SECTION AND PLATOON TACTICS**

1944

(This part supersedes Military Training Pamphlets Nos. 33 and 42, 1942, Infantry Section Leading, 1938, Infantry Training, 1937, Supplement, Nos. 1 and 2, 1941, and the Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill (Provisional)).

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By Command of the Army Council

H. Jarce

THE LARD OFFICE,
4th March, 1944.

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INTRODUCTION

Since Chain of Command was published last summer, we have seen a constant stream of newcomers to the rules who have been enjoying the World War II tactical flavour that the rules produce. When creating Chain of Command we knew that we wanted to end up with a game which didn't just allow us to play a game with WWII figures and models, but that also gave us the opportunity to use real tactics and fight battles in the way that the actual protagonists did. This is, for us at least, the difference between what is simply a game and what is a wargame.

Of course the men who fought in the Second World War were well trained, not just in how to use their weapons, but also in tactics. When under pressure they could fall back on the "skills and drills" they had been taught. Their officers and NCOs had been prepared for most tactical situations and, when faced with the enemy in battle, they could draw on that training to out-fight their opponent. We, as wargamers, do not have that benefit. So, we thought that providing a tactical primer for Chain of Command, showing how real life tactical solutions can be applied to our tabletop games, would be a great idea.

Of course WWII infantry tactics is a big subject, and this is simply a primer to show the basics. There are many books which go into greater detail as well as period manuals which can still be found regularly on eBay and other such sites. One of these, a British Army Infantry training manual covering battle drill, section and platoon tactics, tells us:

"it is easy to teach the tactics of cricket, football and boxing, because the men's interest in these sports has been stimulated; if training is made interesting the teaching of war tactics can be equally successful."

With that in mind, I shall try to avoid dry theory but instead concentrate on illustrated examples which will be easily recognised by any wargamer.

Richard Clarke
Lard Island
November 2014

PART ONE - SETTING OBJECTIVES

Before we start looking at specific tactics on the tabletop, let us consider what is needed to achieve victory in a game of Chain of Command. Like real warfare, defeating your enemy is not about killing every last man opposing you, but rather about reducing your opponents resolve to resist to the point where he retires, surrendering the battlefield. How do we achieve this?

In Chain of Command both forces will to fight is represented by their Force Morale. This has a numerical value, between 8 and 11, which is reduced by what we describe as "bad things happening". In truth this is rather more polite than what we call it in private, but the system is there to recognise that troops will tend to put up with minor set-backs, but will be affected by major negative events, in other words, when "S**t happens"!

The way the rules reflect that is not through testing the morale of individual units whenever they take a casualty or lose a melee, but by testing the morale of the whole force when a major event occurs. These do, obviously, include events brought about by exchanging fire with the enemy. The loss of leaders has a major effect on the player's ability to control his force and keep it motivated. However, what is often a more effective way of hitting your opponent's morale hard is by taking ground from him. Nothing tells a soldier that his opponents have the upper hand then them seizing key points within his position and, consequently, the loss of ground, as represented by the capturing of your opponent's jump-off points, is a sure way to lower his morale significantly. As such, Chain of command is not just a game about firepower, it puts much emphasis on the combination of fire and manoeuvre which has been a key component to warfare since the introduction of the magazine rifle. The player who best embraces the tactics of fire and movement will be in a stronger position than the player who relies on a static deployment and firepower alone.

THE LESSON

At the end of each piece we will attempt to distill the core lessons down into one pithy paragraph, or maybe two. In this introductory piece there is not much to say other than, when devising your plan of action, do consider how you can best unsettle your opponent by damaging his morale. Seek out "low hanging fruit" where you can win easy victories and establish an early psychological and moral advantage. More often than not this will be by seizing ground where he has over-extended himself or where he has positions which, due to the terrain, cannot be supported from elsewhere. As the manual says:

"It is not necessary to kill or wound a man to defeat him. You can beat him equally well by destroying his morale, by removing his desire to go on fighting, by making him think he has been beaten."

In the next piece we will look at the pre-battle reconnaissance, the Patrol Phase in Chain of Command, and how to manage that phase of the game.

PART TWO – PATROLS & RECONNAISSANCE

The Patrol Phase in Chain of Command is just one of the unique aspects of the game which, we think, makes play more fun as well as accelerating the game through the early phases, so that play tends to begin at first point of contact, or thereabout. On a club evening that in itself is a great reason to use the Patrol Phase but, equally importantly, this phase of the game provides the player with a thorough introduction to the ground they are about to fight over, and gives them the same decisions to make which a platoon leader would be making during the reconnaissance of his objective or when constructing his defence of a position.

What is particularly challenging and dynamic about the Patrol Phase is that both players need to balance the desire to gain the best possible position for their force with the imperative of denying the enemy the ground favourable to them. In many cases this will present a conflict where the player needs to decide which is his higher priority. Moving a few tokens around the table is simple enough, what is important is for the player to focus on what he wants to have achieved by the end of this short but vital phase of the game.

THE ROLE OF RECONNAISSANCE

We must assume that each game will feature at least one, if not both players looking to advance. For the attacker, with a fixed objective his patrols are looking to secure what the 1944 tactical manual refers to as “The ideal line of advance”. This will provide him with “concealment and cover throughout its length and offers good cover from fire”. Above that, he is also seeking to misdirect his enemy, creating a false picture about what he intends to do. It is absolutely key to remember that all of your Patrol Markers will not generate jump off points and that even then you do not need to use all of your jump-off points in the course of a game. To imply a threat to one flank may allow you to draw troops into that area, thereby removing them from the key zone where the decisive action will occur.

The defender will be seeking to secure positions which allow him to form a defensive line with as few chinks in its armour as possible. Ideally these positions will be able to mutually support each other with direct line of sight and good fields of fire. Beyond that, the defender needs to send out his patrols in order to keep the enemy at arm’s length and make any approach they have as long and

problematic as possible. Again, not all Patrol Markers will generate a jump-off point, so using at least one as a “spoiler”, to hold back the enemy advance is a wise tactic.



Let us look at an example. The table here is set up with the Germans defending to the left, the Allies attacking from the right as we look at the map. The table is shown with a 24” grid to give an idea of scale.

Let us now consider the table from the opposing perspectives; firstly, the Allies. On the map below are marked three potentially very good jump-off points, marked in white, which the player should be looking to achieve. 1 is key as it allows the player to deploy troops into three key sections of the battlefield, as can be seen by the arrows. The orchard will allow a covered advance, while the upper arrow will allow fast and easy access to the house. It is worth rushing Patrol Markes forward to seize this first.

Number 2 is the simplest to achieve, but it is also the least likely to be interfered with by the enemy Patrol Markes. It allows deployment into two sections of the table. Number 3 is a better version of 2, with a covered approach to the central house, a good position near 2 from which to support and advance and a clear route up the hedgerow towards the German positions. What is noteworthy is that all three Positions can see, and therefore, support, each other to some degree.

Also shown, in red, are three potentially poor jump-off points. Position 4, in the small outhouse, is close to the house, but it is an isolated position which offers no cover for troops deploying from it. Number 5 is the worst option as it cannot do anything which Number 1 can't do, and it isolates troops on an extreme table edge, especially if, as seems highly likely, the Germans will have troops in the orchard facing it. Number 6 is more contentious as seizing a building does give you hard cover. However, leaving this untouched will encourage the German player to advance into it – wargamers love to put men in buildings – at which point they are easy prey for any troops you have deploying from points 1 and 3. We will look more at troops in buildings later in this series, suffice to say here that they have limited fields of fire, and if the enemy can deploy anywhere close by they are very susceptible to attack by men armed with grenades.



From German perspective, there are three key positions, all of which can be reached with ease. Position 1 should be seized first as it dominates an entire avenue of approach. If it has any failings it

is that it cannot be supported by fire from Position 2 or 3, but it is such a key position it is important to at least have the option of deploying there. Position 2 is an excellent central position which also has a covered and protected route to the small hedgerow covering the upper flank if the enemy come that way. Position 3 is an excellent central reserve from which troops can deploy to support Positions 1 and 2. As stated, all of these can be reached very rapidly, allowing the player to begin his patrol phase by advancing one Patrol Marker directly forward and holding the enemy at arm's length at whatever point he chooses.

As with the Allies, we have three red positions which are less favourable. Position 4 is much too far advanced. It will always prove easy pickings for the Allies, especially as it cannot be effectively supported from Positions 1 to 3. Position 5 is equally too far forward and a great risk. It is tempting to advance rapidly in order to hold back the enemy across a broad front, but in doing so you must still consider which positions are at the heart of the defence. If the defender did wish to push forward more aggressively, then he needs to decide which of his ideal defensive positions he will risk not holding, or at least be conscious of how his forward Patrol Markers are placed when it comes to placing jump-off points. Position 6 is poor for the reasons already stated, it is too far forward and there are very limited fields of fire from buildings.



THE LESSON

Having said all of the above, and here's the conundrum at the heart of this, were the German player to get jump-off points at all of points 4, 5 and 6 it would constitute an excellent position. This is where making a decision about what is desirable as compared to what is achievable comes in. The fact is that the Germans could possibly achieve two of the three jump-off points, but the absence of any one would make the other two untenable and at risk at best. It is important at the outset of any game to practically consider what your enemy is going to want to achieve as well as what you can reasonably expect to do.

PART THREE – DEPLOYMENT: THE ATTACKER

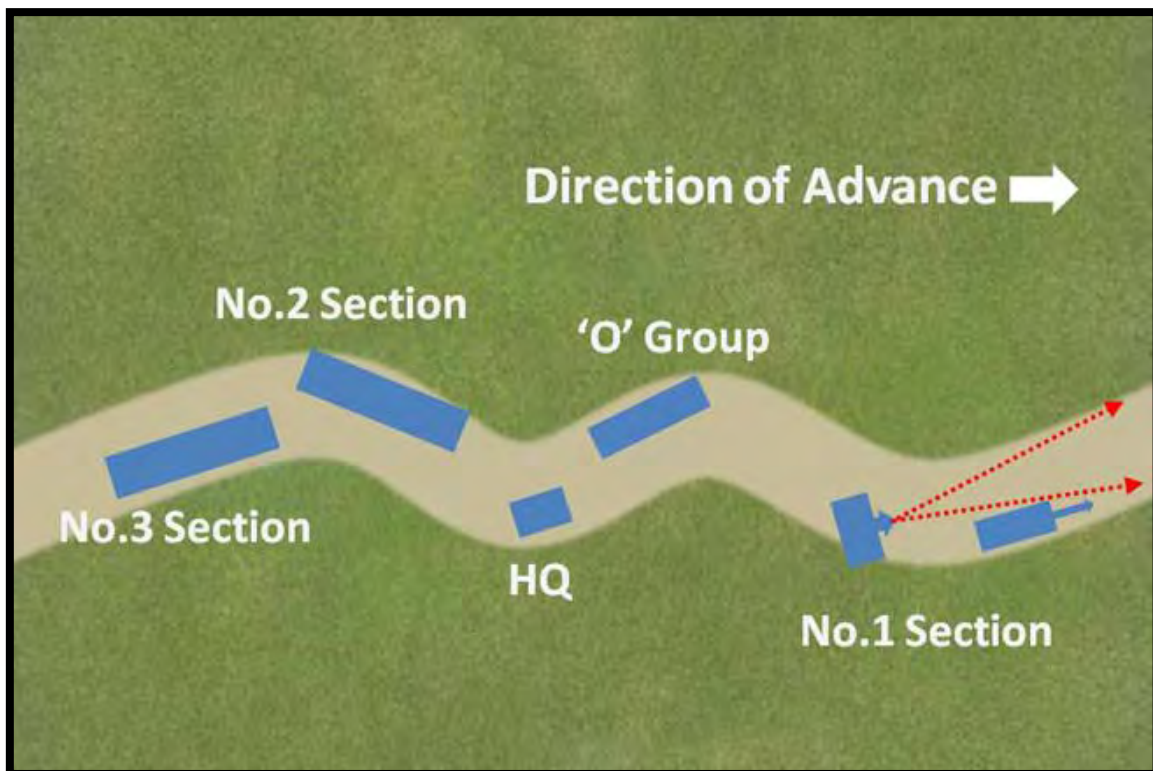
Observation is paramount in offence; concealment is paramount in defence. – This is a war of concealed posts, of camouflage. You cannot kill the enemy unless you can find him. You cannot even start to attack him if you do not know where he is.

The above quote, taken from a platoon leaders manual from 1944 best sums up the tactical problem both players are faced with at the start of each game. The Patrol Phase has told them where the enemy have recently been identified, but not what their strength is, nor precisely what their position is. As the game begins it is important to remember the following quote:

Your determination to attack and kill the enemy can never be put into effect unless you learn to find him first."

Not a line which always appeals to the gamer, but one which is core to game design principles in Chain of Command. If your historical counterpart faced this situation, and he did, then we should be modelling it in our game.

A starting point here is to consider the way that a platoon advances into action. This varies slightly from nation to nation, depending on their tactical doctrines, but in all cases a sub-unit will be sent forward to scout out the ground ahead. For some nations this involved specially trained scouts, for the British it was a lead section. In fact, a look at how the British platoon advanced will illustrate precisely the situation the attacking player in Chain of Command is in.

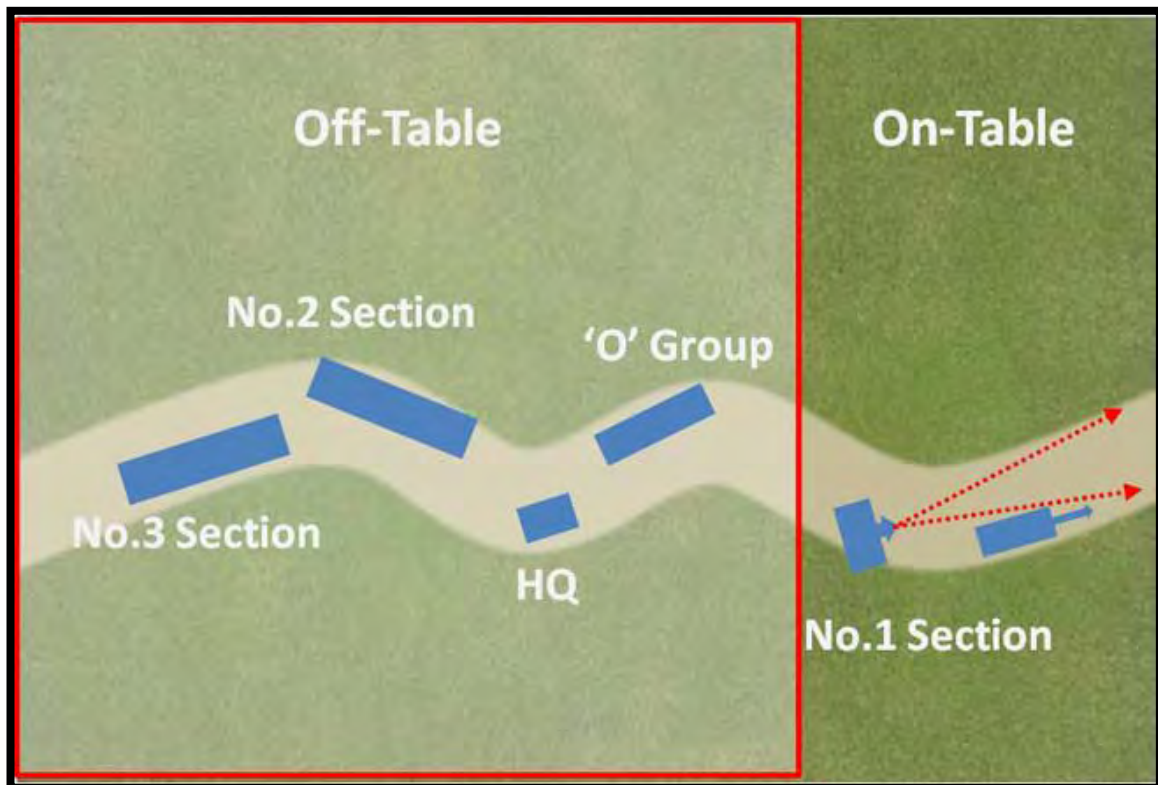


As we can see, the lead section, No.1 Section in this case, has its rifle team advancing forward with its Bren team ready to provide covering fire. The manual suggests that the gap between the two is around 25 yards, so on the tabletop the Bren is about 6" behind the rifles. Behind that lead, or scout, section is the 'O' Group, or Orders Group, with the Platoon commander, his runner, the

section leaders from No.2 and No. 3 sections, a runner from No.1 section and the radio operator. This is one tactical bound behind the scouts (we'll look at tactical bounds in a moment) but close enough to be in visual contact and able to provide support rapidly. This group is well names, as it allows the officer to rapidly issue orders to the two section leaders and deploy them into action once the enemy is located.

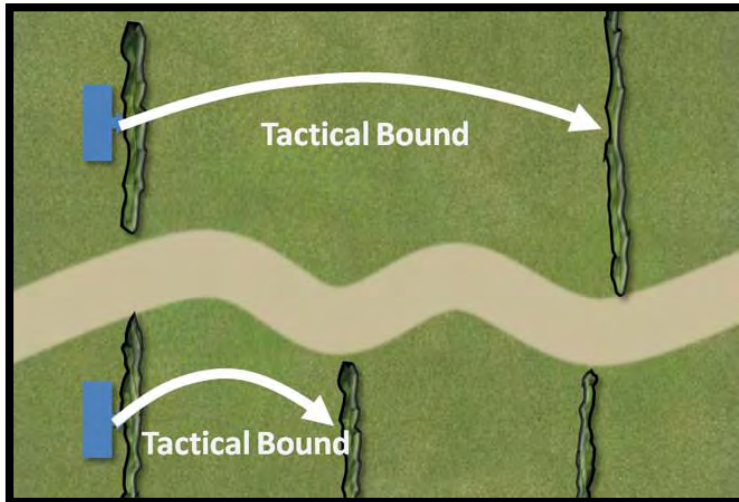
Behind the 'O' Group the platoon HQ, with the Platoon Sergeant and the 2" mortar is ready to provide supporting fire or smoke. No.2 and No.3 sections are 25 yards behind that, waiting to be deployed into action.

This mirrors exactly, or should do, the situation in the first phase of the game. The following image illustrates that, with No.1 Section probing onto the table; the Bren team on Overwatch and the rifle team moving forward. Just off-table is the platoon commander, ready to deploy his men onto the table, but only when the scout section has advanced the first tactical bound and secured that objective.



TACTICAL BOUNDS

Just what is a tactical bound? This is a term which essentially means the distance between one point of cover and the next. There is no set distance, as can be seen on the diagram below, with the amount of time the unit is exposed being determined by the density of terrain. However, routes which present more abundant cover, and therefore involve more tactical bounds, will be the safer option.



Once the lead section reaches cover, the supporting units should move up to that position before the advance continues. In game terms this allows the second unit to cover the first as they advance through the next tactical bound.

Keeping a Reserve

In all warfare, the side who is able to commit their reserves to battle last holds a major advantage. With all of the enemy's cards played, they may then intervene at the

point where their effect is greatest. This is also a key part of game play in Chain of Command. Our platoon leader's manual tells us (in VERY LARGE LETTERS):

A danger that must be guarded against...is the desire for speed in getting the sub-unit into action. This must not be allowed to develop in such haste that all sound military principles are discarded. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PLATOON COMMANDER MUST ALLOW TIME TO FIND OUT WHERE THE ENEMY IS, TO APPRECIATE THE PROBLEM AND THE GROUND, AND THEN TO ISSUE CLEAR ORDERS.

Let us look at an example of that on our terrain. Here we see that the Allies, shown in blue, have deployed Squad A advancing forward covered by the hedgerow whilst Squad B covers them. Red here counters by deploying a Squad 1 to put down fire. By not committing Squad C they are keeping their options open.



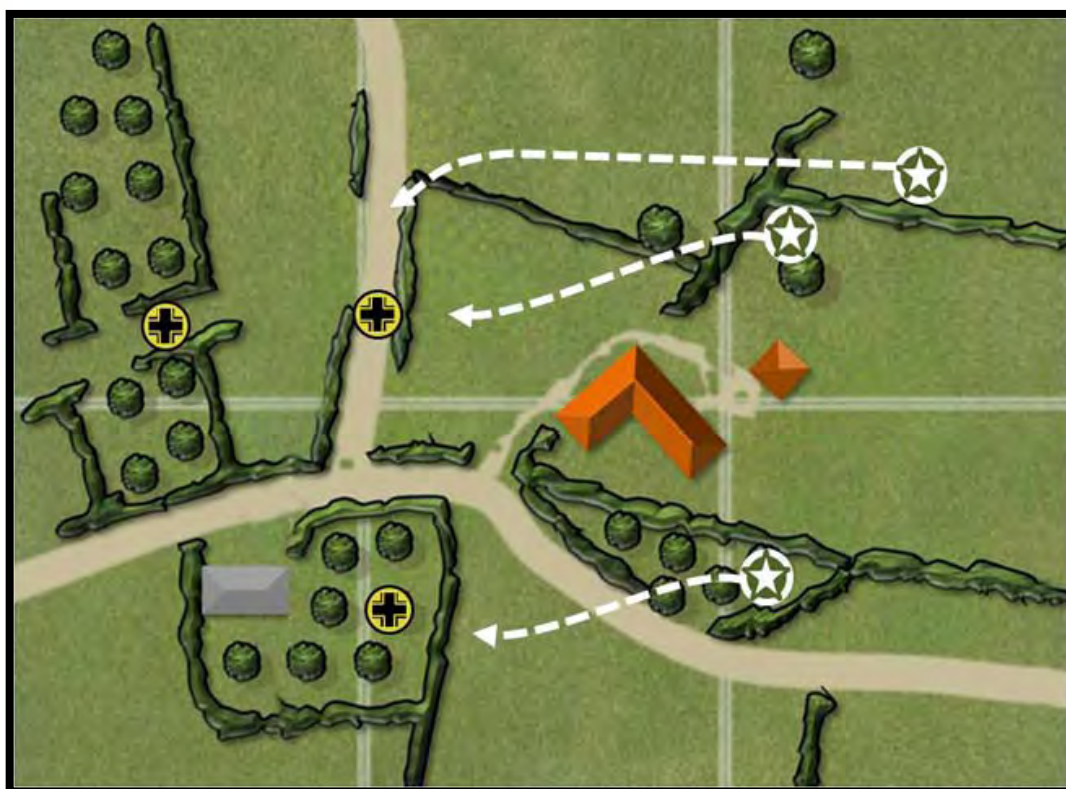
Below we can see that with Squad A having completed its tactical bound, we could bring forward a jump-off point (using a Chain of Command dice), with that being used to then deploy Squad C and advance that the next tactical bound into the far orchards. Similarly we can bring up Squad B in the centre.



However, if Squad A's advance was met with a violent reaction from the enemy, Squad B could be rapidly move up to support. This then leaves the uncommitted Squad C to exploit the situation by driving in areas of undefended perimeter and moving to flank the German defenders.



The example here uses full squad (or section) sized units. If smaller scouting teams are deployed the opportunity to ascertain the enemy's positions whilst still retaining an even greater part of your force off the table multiplies the effectiveness of this approach. If the Allied player sent out two man scouting teams towards the Germans' most exposed Jump-off Points he will oblige his opponent to either deploy two units or lose the positions. With two thirds of his opponent's core force deployed he may then decide where to attack with the bulk of his force.



THE LESSON

By retaining a reserve and not simply deploying our force onto the table, we allow ourselves a greater degree of tactical flexibility and the opportunity to strike at the enemy's weak spots once we have ascertained his full deployment.

PART FOUR – DEPLOYMENT: THE DEFENDER

"Concealment.-An outstanding lesson of the present war is that, if their positions are accurately located, defending troops at the point of attack will be neutralized by an overwhelming air, artillery, or mortar bombardment...."

Concealment must be obtained by the careful sighting and design of individual posts. Defended localities will be chosen primarily for their facilities of concealment, rather than for their field of fire. Concealment must not be jeopardized in order to obtain the "perfect" fire plan."

Deploying as a defender in Chain of Command presents slightly different challenges to those of the attacker. Sometimes the role of attacker and defender is determined by the scenario; sometimes it will be the choice of one player to assume a stance which is initially defensive, allowing the enemy to make the initial advance, before then assuming the offensive. The following comments apply to the early stages of either scenario.

INITIAL DEPLOYMENT

In Part Two of this manual we looked at ideal deployment points for both the attacker and defender. In both cases we sought to maximise the deployment options, specifically with regards getting troops into the firing line. However, as the defender this is not always the primary importance. As we have seen above, the 1944 British Army manual stresses concealment above the perfect fire plan. So, let us look at how we can amend the original Jump-Off marker placement in order to maximise concealment.

In the following diagram we can see the two foremost Jump-Off points have been dropped back slightly by around 4". In both cases this reduces the area where troops can deploy along the hedgerow facing the enemy's line of approach. However, it still is sufficient to allow a whole squad to deploy in either forward position, as we see indicated below by the solid white arrows.



By withdrawing the Jump-Off Points slightly we also find that the ability to deploy laterally, to move to the left or right is increased. What is more, these key points are better protected from a coup de main by the enemy who, with the initiative in his favour, may be inclined to rush forward to deny the defender their use. To do that now would involve significantly more movement and include the negotiation of obstacles. In this way, we have sacrificed slightly, but not significantly, our ability to deploy to the ideal firing position, but we have significantly improved our concealment as a result.

In Part Three of this manual we considered the attacker's imperative to determine the defender's position so that he could then best deploy his troops in order to achieve local superiority. We will look more at the importance of fire and movement to achieve this result in the next part of the series. For now, suffice to say that the defender should do all he can to retain as much of his force off-table, in reserve, until the attacker has shown his hand and committed his forces to the attack. By retaining a flexible reserve he may then direct these troops to the most advantageous point in order to block that move.

Let us look at what is possibly the defender's worst scenario; facing an enemy deploying aggressive scouts probing towards the jump-off points. Here we see that with the map amended to show our better concealed Jump-Off Points:



By deploying small scouting units the attacker is placing the defender in a position where he eventually must deploy troops, or he will lose one or more Jump-Off points. By altering our deployment, the defender has made it much less likely that a lucky dash forward can shut down the Jump-Off Point, but that does not remove the threat entirely. In this situation there are several key tactical rules which the defender should observe:

1. If you have a sniper with your force, deploy him as soon as possible to fire against the scouts. Scouts are particularly susceptible to sniper attacks. With no Leader present they cannot go onto

Overwatch and, as a result cannot spot the sniper. With double Shock being inflicted and the enhanced ability to kill the sniper is the perfect weapon for use against scouts.

2. When deploying against Scouts, attempt to counter two enemy thrusts with a single parry of your own. In the above example, the two most northerly enemy Scouts teams could be dealt with by deploying just one squad to face them.

3. NEVER deploy troops to fire on Scouts at a range over 18". If you are obliged to deploy, do so at the last practical moment when you are almost guaranteed to eliminate the threat, thereby damaging your opponent's Force Morale. By delaying the deployment of your troops for as long as possible, you are inviting your opponent to deploy his own force too quickly, giving you the upper hand.

4. Never over-react by deploying your best support weapons against Scouts. They are very dangerous opponents, but their teams are very small and very brittle. Deploying mortars or a tripod mounted machine gun against them is both unnecessary and unwise.

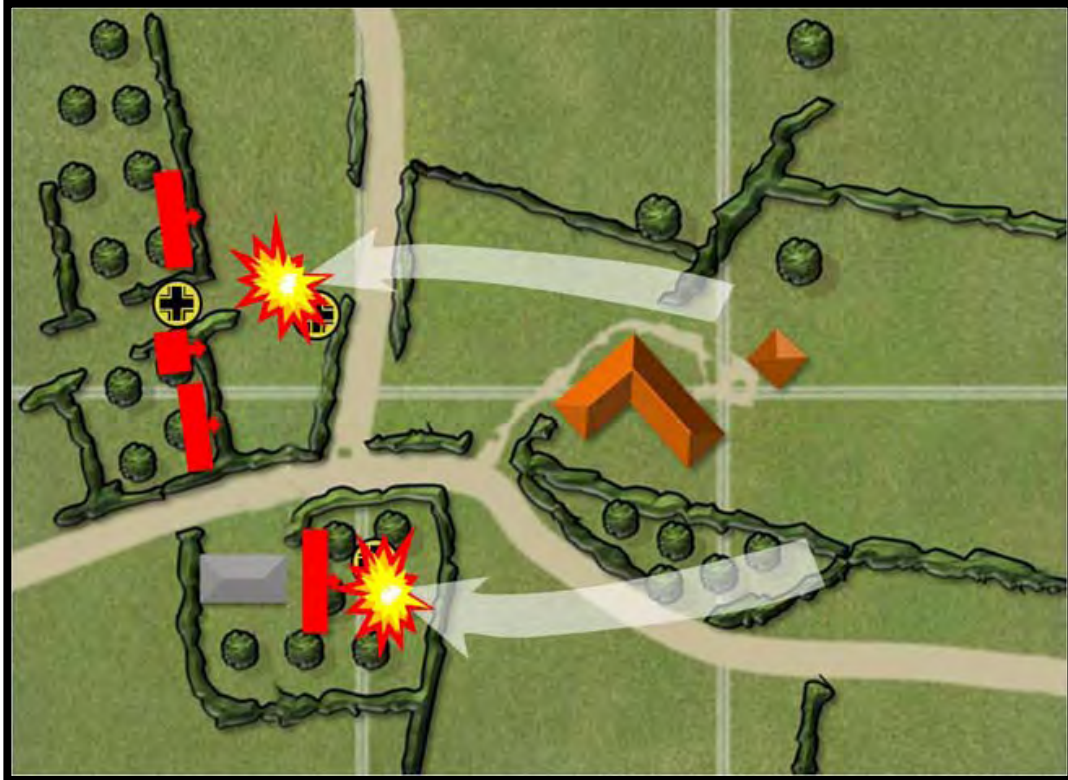
Of course not all enemy forces will deploy Scouts; some nations are more likely to do so than others due to their tactical doctrine. Where no Scouts are deployed the attacker should still consider all of the points outlined above. Again, NEVER deploy troops to fire at a range over 18". Allow the enemy to come as close to your positions as will allow you the best possible shot. In many cases, delaying will not only reduce the range, but will likely see your enemy further from friendly cover, and, therefore, less able to retreat to safety. If you open fire as soon as he crosses a hedge he will simply move back across it to regain cover. Allow him to move into an exposed position with no nearby cover before committing your hand. As we will see in the next part of Talking Tactics, firefights are very dangerous situations for both sides, so stack the odds in your favour as far as is possible.

Most important of all, never deploy units onto the table until the moment you require them to act decisively. Defending troops deploying onto the table should only do so at the moment when they open fire or when they are committed to a close combat counter-attack immediately adjacent to a Jump-Off point.

DEEP DEFENCE

In situations where an enemy has the advantage of firepower, be that mortars or tanks, the defender should avoid defending a perimeter which presents the enemy with an easy target. The best way to achieve that is to deploy as far as possible to your rear. The longer troops are in action, the less well-co-ordinated they become; the longer they advance without encountering an enemy, the more daring, or even reckless, they become. If we elect to deploy deeply, as shown on the following image, we are obliging them to advance almost the entire length of the table before we meet them with a co-ordinated response from close quarters.

As the enemy advance it is highly likely their cohesion will be reduced and they will not be able to respond with all of their firepower. We can see how, with short range firepower, the defenders are likely to cause maximum damage on the attacker. What is more, the selected deployment area means that at no point will enemy tanks have a direct line of sight to the defenders, and the attacking forces are too close to the defenders to call for supporting mortar fire, that is presuming that the Forward Observer is in a position to see the target, unlikely when they tend not to lead the advance!



It is vital to remember here that to defeat a force we are not seeking to kill every last man. As we saw in Part One:

"It is not necessary to kill or wound a man to defeat him. You can beat him equally well by destroying his morale, by removing his desire to go on fighting, by making him think he has been beaten."

If the defender can amass sufficient firepower to hit the attacker's morale hard, deploying deep can allow him to win whilst minimise his own casualties.

Of course the above doctrine does assume that, in most terrain, tanks are likely to allow the infantry to lead the way. However, if that is not the case then tanks are easy meat for infantry anti-tank weapons and their loss is a very effective way to lower your opponent's Force Morale without damaging his core platoon. Either way, deploying in this manner does allow a weaker force to concentrate their resources whilst negating their opponent's apparent superiority.

THE LESSON

Concealment is the defender's greatest weapon, especially when combined with well-sited defences and the ability to delay engaging the enemy until the most advantageous moment. Retention of reserves is, ultimately, key to holding the initiative at key moments in a battle which inherently favours your opponent in that respect. Remember:

"A highly trained enemy who can resist the temptation to blaze away whenever he sees a target, however, attractive, will be difficult to locate...careful control of fire in defence is vital"

PART FIVE – FIRE & MOVEMENT

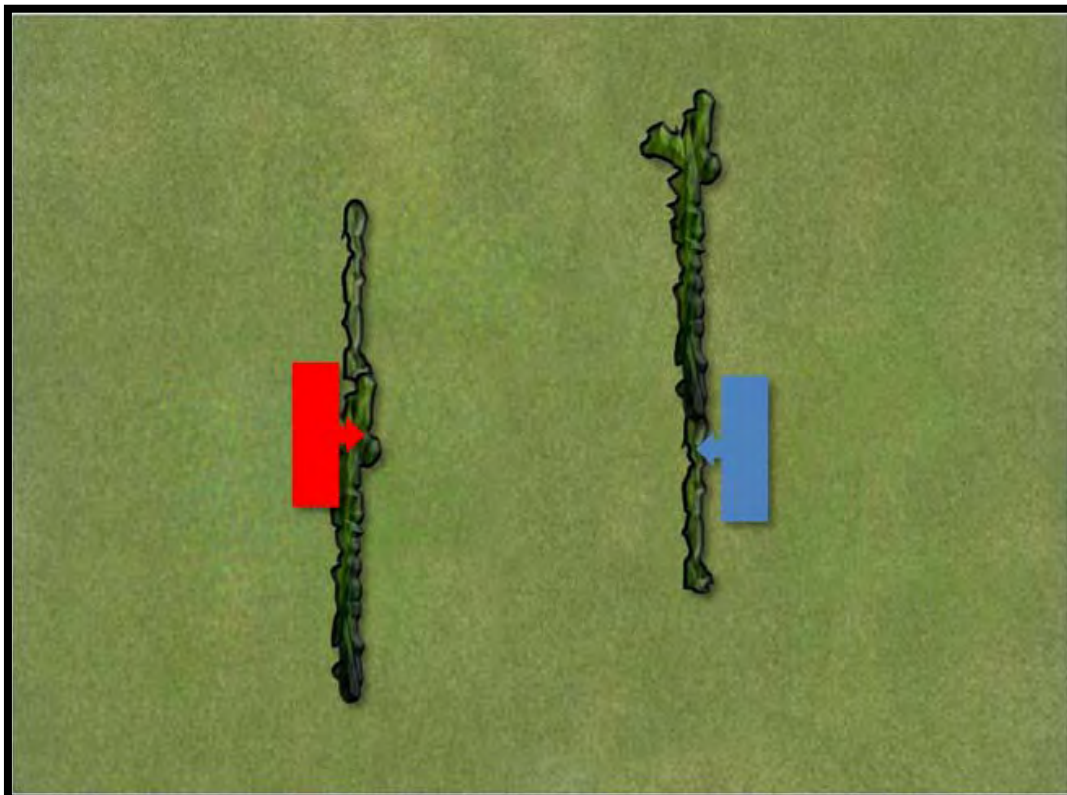
The concept of fire and movement was, essentially, a product of the introduction of magazine fed rifles. At that point the firepower of the individual infantryman increased to the point where, if he was allowed time to fire unimpeded, he could dominate ground so effectively with fire that no enemy movement would be possible. In the Boer War this was proven empirically, as the well-trenched Boers swept the open veldt before them.

The British answer was to use massed rifle fire by stationary troops to cover short rushes forward by small parties, thereby allowing the battalion to advance by small increments towards their objective. It was primitive, but it worked and the tactics of fire and movement at small unit level were much enhanced during the Great War by the introduction of man-portable machine guns and rifle grenades at platoon level.

By the time of the Second World War, most militaries were equipping their units to operate using the principles of fire and movement at platoon level. How this was achieved varied slightly from nation to nation. Here we can only take a view of the essential principles of fire and movement and look at why and how it was achieved.

THE LOTTERY OF THE FIREFIGHT

The primary reason for combining fire and movement is the fact that the protracted firefight on even terms is a complete lottery. In the following situation, with two squads facing each other from light cover at close range the result of the exchange will always be a matter of chance.



The unit which opens fire first has a slight advantage, but that is so minimal as to be entirely within the margin of error which we must assume chance will play in any imprecise calculation (and warfare is entirely imprecise in such detail). What is almost guaranteed is the result of that firefight if it is

allowed to continue to its ultimate conclusion; the loser will be obliged to withdraw with losses of over 50%, its morale broken. However, the winner will also have suffered typical casualties of around 50% losses and will no longer have any real offensive capability. In other words, the outcome will be left almost entirely to chance and, even then, both units will burn themselves out with any victory being largely dissipated by an unacceptable level of losses.

The more effective alternative for a platoon commander is to use manoeuvre to create a situation where by he achieves local superiority over his opponent in one area of the battlefield. But how is this achieved?

There are various terms used to describe the means to this desired result. Probably the best is the "Four F's" when the US forces used in WWII. Find, Fix, Flank, Finish. In detail this means to find your opponent, to fix him in place with firepower, to flank him and then, finally, to close to finish him off. The British Army uses Pin, Pivot, Punch, Pursue at Operational level, and one can see that Fix and Pin, Flank and Pivot, Finish and Punch are all doing the same job. Let us look in detail at the "Four F's" and how they relate to Chain of Command.

FIND

We have stressed in Part Three of this series how critical it is to identify the enemy's precise location before launching an attack. The Patrol Phase of the game gives the attacker an indication as to where his patrols identified the enemy as being prior to the game beginning. Whether they are still there, and in what numbers they are present is as yet unknown to him. It is absolutely critical that he identifies where the defender's actual positions are before he launches his attack. We looked at this in Part Three and Part Four, so suffice to say here that through use of scouts or a leading section you should oblige the enemy to reveal himself before you launch the main blow. Here we will look at how an advance against an unidentified enemy position should be conducted using Fire and Movement tactics.

Think carefully about the best routes of advance and provide the spearhead unit in your force with covering fire to allow it to probe the enemy position as safely as possible. The 1944 platoon leader's manual states:

"Covering fire is essential to any advance. Without it, forward movement will often be impossible. The nearer the section gets to the enemy position, the greater the need for covering fire."

In Chain of Command we are well placed to follow this mantra. The rules allow for Covering Fire to be provided for an advancing unit, something which will reduce the effectiveness of fire from any unit appearing in the targeted area. What is more, the rules also allow for the moving troops to move "tactically", taking maximum advantage of the terrain. This also reduces the effect of any fire against them. As a result they may not be 100% safe, but they are as well-protected as they can possibly be. In the following diagram we see the rifle team from Section A advancing tactically along the hedgerow whilst the light machine gun team provides covering fire against one section of hedgerow to their left. Section B is putting covering fire into the hedgerow ahead.



This manoeuvre, if conducted well, presents the German player with a real tactical problem. Wherever he deploys troops to fire on A, they will be treated as a target in hard cover due to the covering fire and tactical movement. The next step for the Allied player is to consolidate their advance with Section A, providing more covering fire to keep German heads down while Section B moves up to assume the next position from where it can cover the advance. Clearly, at some point the German defender must intervene, but by using fire and movement tactics the Allies are

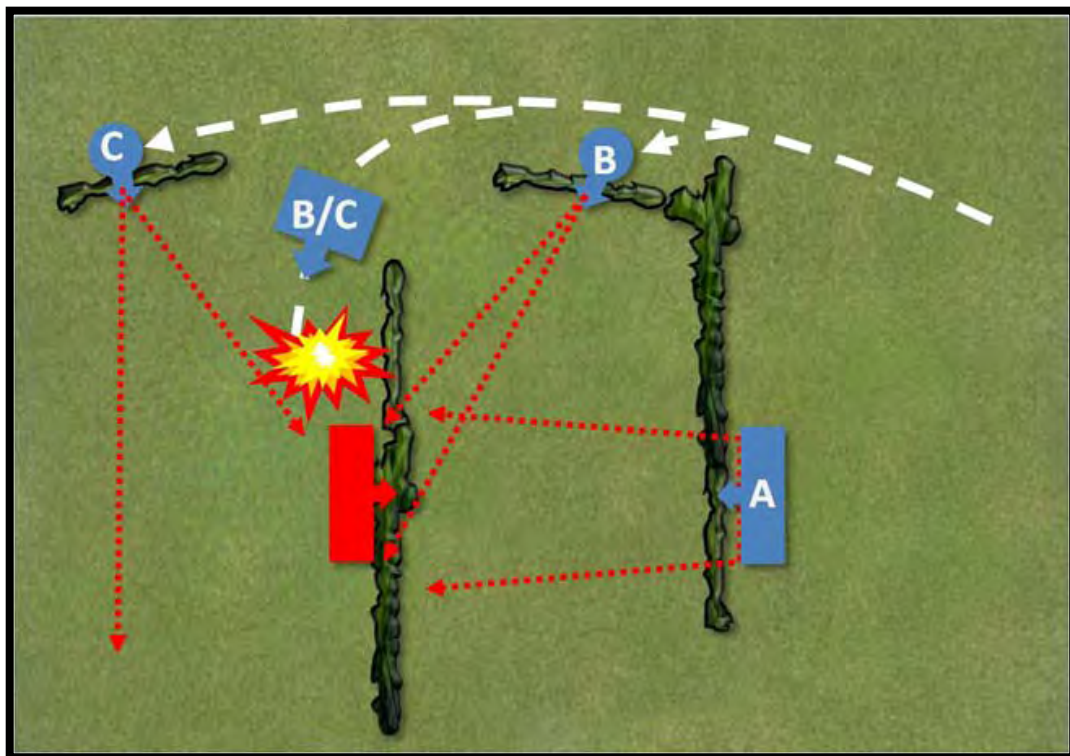


attempting to ensure that the effect of any defender's fire will be reduced by the covering fire. In other words, the advantage of surprise, which a defender should enjoy, is dissipated by good tactics.

Once the German defenders deploy, the Allies will need to decide whether to press home their attack in this area, or whether to withdraw here and shift the axis of their advance elsewhere. If the latter is preferred, leaving one Section to threaten in this area, whilst shifting the second Section to a more central position will then serve to tie down German troops to this area whilst allowing the Allies to make the final decision where their main attack will be launched.

FIX, FLANK & FINISH

The principle of fixing and enemy with firepower is constant through the doctrines of the various forces. However, how that is applied differs. Some forces had specific base of fire squads as part of the platoon to achieve that; some used attached support weapons to provide the required firepower. The example we will look at here is from the British manual but could equally apply to US or German infantry. For other troops with a base of fire element, such as US Armored Infantry or Airborne forces, Section A would simply be replaced by that firepower element.



As can be seen, Section A is engaging a German force. This presents all of the problems we covered about the uncertainty of a firefight, so it is critical that once a plan of attack is decided up on the fix, flank, finish phases are implemented as quickly as possible. The manual tells us that:

"There must be no interval between the cessation of covering fire and the beginning of the assault. If there should be such an interval the enemy will begin shooting again. Remember, if the enemy is dug in, covering fire seldom kills him; it merely makes him keep his head down so that he is unable to shoot back."

To begin the flank phase, the light machine gun team from Section B can rapidly take up a position on the right and add its fire. We are now firing for effect as it is key that we oblige the Germans to get their heads down and, in Chain of Command, that is represented by pinning them. Close assaults

are always dangerous against an unpinned enemy, as they should be, so look to win the firefight first. Part of this is done by the LMG team from Section C moving to a deep position to fire into the flank of the enemy position, but also to cut off the avenue of retreat for the German forces.

Finally, with the enemy fixed in position, the rifle teams from Sections B and C have combined to assault and finish off the enemy. Moving forward tactically they can hurl grenades before then launching an all out assault against what, by now, should be an enemy who lacks much will to resist.

Throughout this whole process the attacker has always kept one unit constantly firing against the enemy position. If this process was combined with the advance using fire and manoeuvre then it is key that, at any point, one unit is stationary and providing a base of fire, whether that is covering fire, or firing for effect. Equally, the position of the LMGs is noteworthy. At no time until the moment of assault is their line of fire blocked by the assaulting team. In this way the maximum firepower is maintained right up to the moment of assault.

THEORY & PRACTICE

One of the most important and pertinent quotes from our 1944 manual tells us the following:

“Battle drills do not give you the answer to every problem; they do not absolve the commander from thinking, but they do help him think along the right lines.”

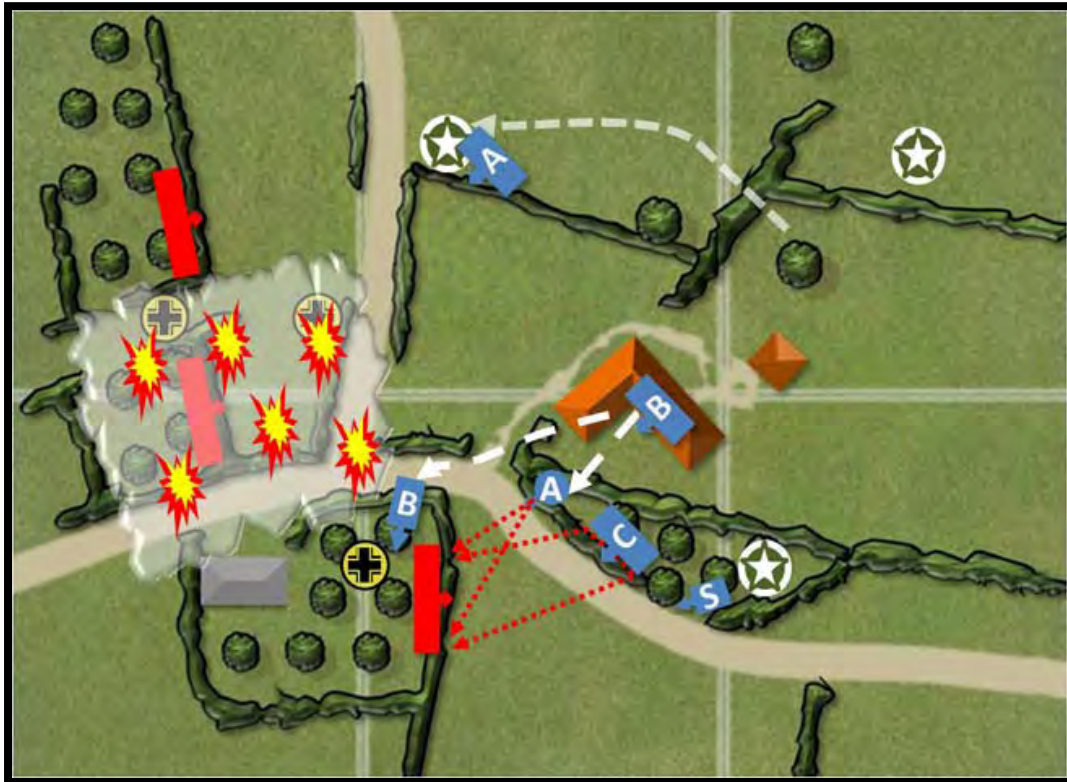
It is a pragmatic and practical comment which should be borne in mind. The illustration above showing the ideal find, fix, flank, finish attack has the disadvantage that it shows one German squad facing odds of three to one. This rather assumes that the rest of the German platoon in a game of Chain of Command is standing idly by and allowing this to occur. In reality it may be that such odds are not achievable. However, by finding our enemy before we launch our attack, and by retaining one or more units in reserve, we can at least allow ourselves the flexibility to stack the odds in our favour at one point.

The ability to use our Chain of Command points to bring forward a jump-off point, and then to immediately utilise that to launch an attack, or to simply threaten one, is a powerful tool. The use of support weapons to neutralise other identified enemy positions, either by engaging them with fire, or by simply placing them in a position where they dominate ground and can be put on Overwatch can stop the enemy redeploying his forces freely. Where smoke is available, or mortar bombardments, these can be used to isolate part of the table and allow number to be brought to bear against an inferior opponent. Let's look at an example using the scenario we have followed thus far.

We saw Sections A and B advance on their right using some textbook fire and movement techniques. They identified that the Germans held the rear orchards in strength, but fortunately they were able to withdraw due to the covering fire they had been putting down; however, not before they advanced one Jump-Off Point forward 18", suggesting that this would be the flank where the main attack would be launched. Shifting Section B to a central position also keeps the German in the orchard in place with an implied threat in the centre.

Deploying Section C, the Allied player sent out two scouts to move against the third German Jump-Off Point. The Scouts were killed, but as the attacker in this scenario the Allied player has more support than the Germans and can deploy that, marked S, along with the rest of Section C to engage the Germans in a firefight. A mortar barrage is begun. In this situation it actually pins down part of the German force in the orchard, but even if nobody was under the barrage it would serve to isolate

the southernmost German unit. Now Section B can add its LMG team to the base of fire and send its rifle team around the flank to assault.



Whilst this does not perfectly match the blueprint above, it does retain most of the principal elements. Ultimately, it doesn't matter what the support unit is, it simply adds to the firepower and helps win the firefight. With that done the assaulting team can again go in with grenades before finishing off the enemy. If the German defenders are suitably pinned, Section C could even advance to overwhelm them and cause them to surrender.

THE LESSON

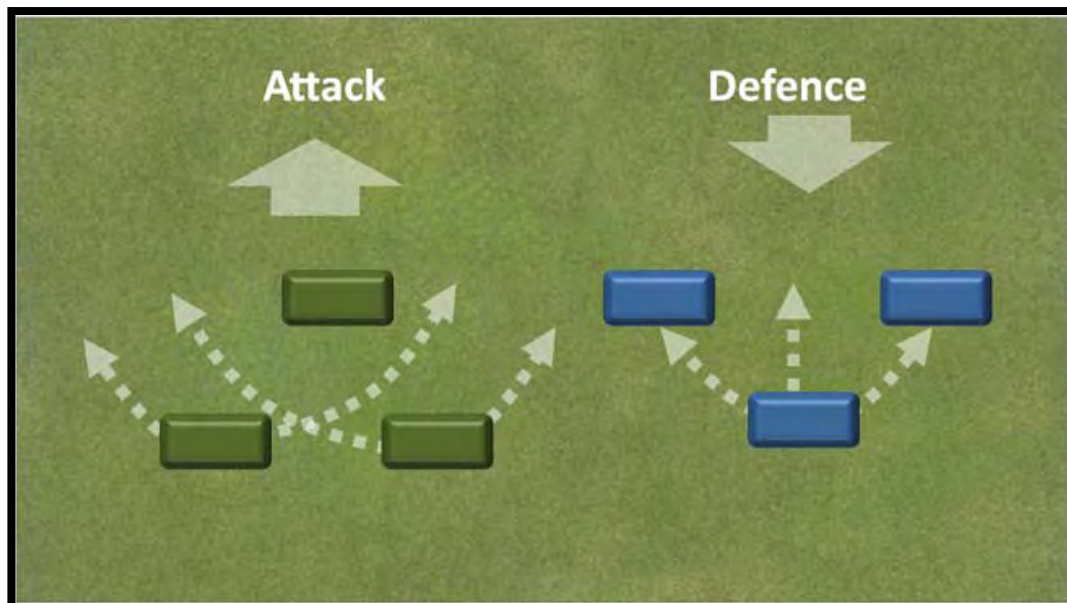
Chain of Command is all about combining Fire & Movement in order to maximise enemy casualties and minimise your own. Use Covering fire and Tactical movement to protect advancing troops wherever possible. Use Covering fire against apparently unmanned positions which may in fact contain enemy force (i.e favourable points to which your enemy can deploy). For an attacker to enter a stand-up firefight without simultaneously manoeuvring to a position of advantage is to surrender the initiative and accept losses which will swiftly reduce the fighting capability of your force.

PART SIX – RESOURCE PLACEMENT

Resource placement is a broad title to cover a broad range of issues, all of which contribute to a better understanding of how to allocate your resources on the battlefield, from general unit placement to the specific deployment of men within a squad or section. It is the responsibility of any platoon commander to plan and then allocate assets accordingly, in the same way that a Section commander would be responsible for ensuring that his men were best placed to face any enemy encountered.

TRIANGULAR TACTICS

An elementary lesson in infantry tactics is to consider the way units were structured and why. By the end of WWII most forces have moved to a "triangular" system based on the number 3. Three platoons in a company, three companies in a battalion, three battalions in a Regiment and so on. The reason the triangular system was so popular was that it was the most flexible structure for combat. As can be seen below, the advancing platoon places one squad or section in the lead with two slightly behind it. When the lead unit makes contact with the enemy, the two rear units can be deployed to the left, right, or either side to face that enemy.



What is more, if the enemy approaches from a flank, the triangular formation is well equipped for all-round defence, with one unit facing the enemy off and allowing the other two to manoeuvre in support.

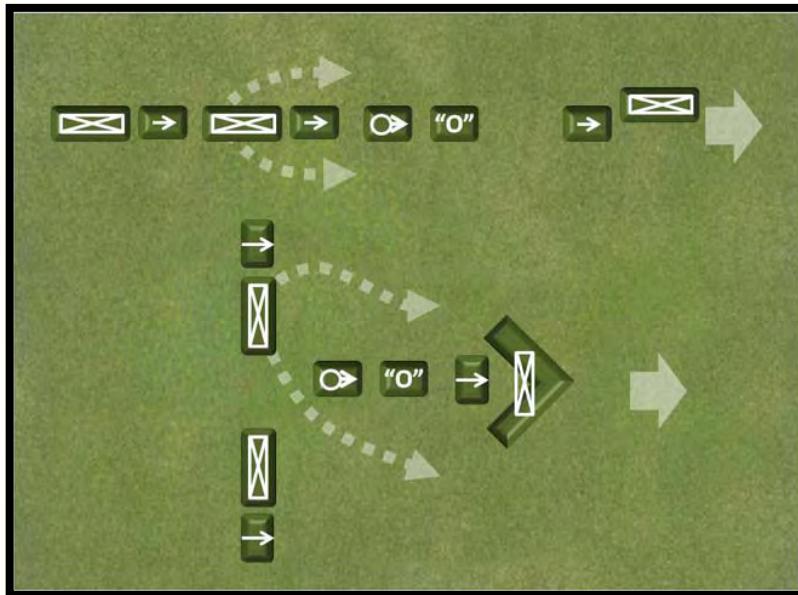
In defence, the commander places two units forward with one in reserve. This allows maximum firepower to meet the enemy advance, but also retains a mobile reserve which can be committed as best suits circumstances as the battle develops. In Chain of Command, this third unit represents the section or squad held off table to be deployed at the key point at the decisive moment. It is not necessary for the player to stick rigidly to the triangular formation, but it is worthwhile using the principles of one up, two back in attack and two up and one back in defence.

SQUAD & SECTION DEPLOYMENT

In a real infantry unit every soldier would have his job and know how to do it. Whether the unit was in a file, extended line or arrow-head formation, the man would know his place. In a platoon level

game we do not need to track every single man, but the placement of the LMG should be the primary concern as it is this which provides the most efficient firepower. The following diagram shows a British platoon advancing. As the top it is in single file, a formation which is easy to control and ideal for moving along a linear terrain feature such as a hedge. The lead section is deployed with its rifle team to the fore and the Bren team slightly to the rear and offset to allow covering fire if required.

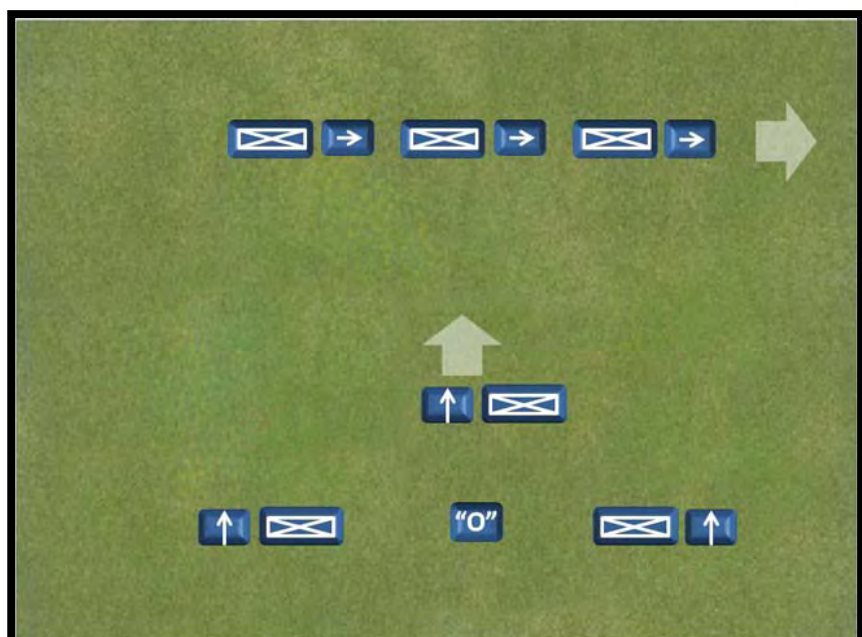
Behind the lead section is the 'O' Group with the platoon commander, then the 2" mortar with the Platoon Sergeant, then are the other two rifle sections. Unlike the lead section, both of these deploy with the Bren at their head, ready to deploy into action as quickly as possible.



The platoon in the lower part of the image is advancing with one up and two back. Again the lead section has its rifle team forward, this time in an arrow-head formation, with the Bren team to their rear ready to give fire support. The platoon commander is at the centre of the formation, ready to give orders, with the 2" mortar and the Platoon Sergeant ready to give fire support. To the rear the two sections are deployed with their Bren teams outermost,

positioned to fire covering any forward advance, but also ready to engage any enemy appearing on the flank.

The next diagram shows the German platoon undertaking a similar advance. All of their squads have the LMG at their head, even the leading squad in file. Other than that the deployment, with the LMGs best placed to give all-round fire support, is the same as the British. The US and Soviet deployment tends to mirror this as well, but the larger US squads will have a scout team deployed ahead of the whole formation.



As stated, in Chain of Command we do not need to be over fussy about the placement of individual men, but at the same time soldiers do not run around in chaotic bunches. Ensure that your squad or section LMG team

is well placed to face any threat and that will suffice.

ALLOCATION OF SUPPORT UNITS

The application of maximum force at the decisive point is a standard military doctrine in all armies, but is possibly best illustrated by the German concept of a Schwerpunkt.

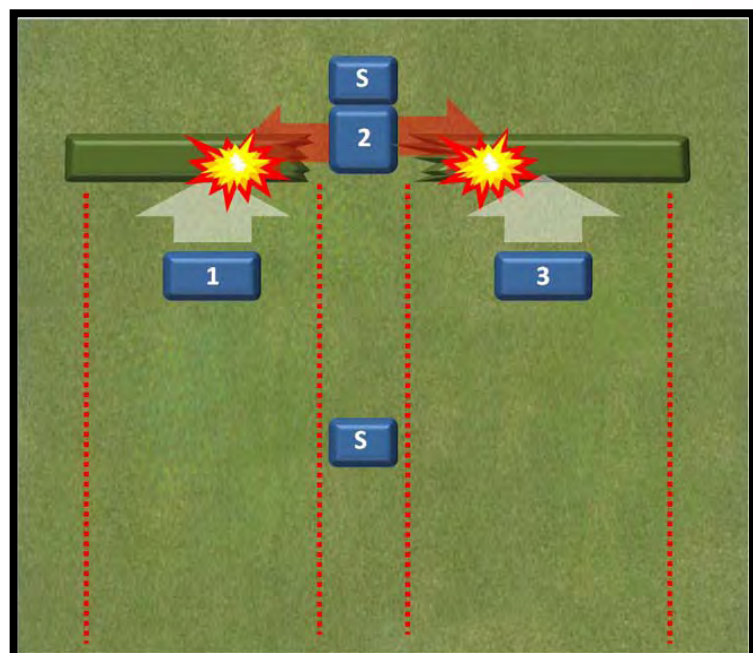
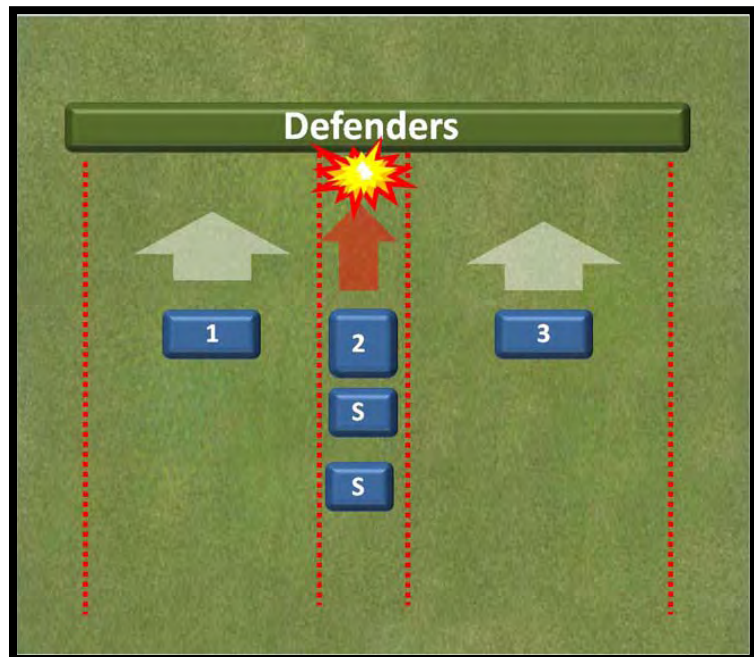
To achieve the desired application of force, the Germans would break the battlefield down into operational "corridors", each assigned to a specific unit. The narrowest corridor would be the focus of the main effort, allowing even an outnumbered force to achieve numerical superiority at the key point. Below we see two platoons, to the left and right, operating in relatively broad corridors. Here they

apply sufficient pressure to pin the enemy to their positions, stopping them moving to support their neighbours. Meanwhile the second platoon, in the centre, attacks down a narrow corridor with all of the key support units firing to support their attack. Note: It is not necessary for all units focussing their effort on the schwerpunkt to be deployed at that point. Support weapons in particular may be deployed across the battlefield, but must be able to focus their effect at the key point.

At that point the defender cannot resist such an attack, the line fractures and the attackers, plus any mobile support units, move through to roll up the rest of the positions from the flank and rear, this time with the two flanking units pushing home their attacks. We can see this below:

THE LESSON

Ultimately, careful deployment and positioning of resources will contribute to overall success using the principles of fore and movement which we looked at in the previous part of this series. A focus on deploying key assets to the decisive point, a point determined by careful location of the enemy's own assets in the manner seen in this series, will allow the gamer to apply irresistible force at the weakest point in his opponent's line whilst harbouring resources elsewhere by simply pinning rather than attacking at all points. This not only wins battles, it also save soldiers' lives.



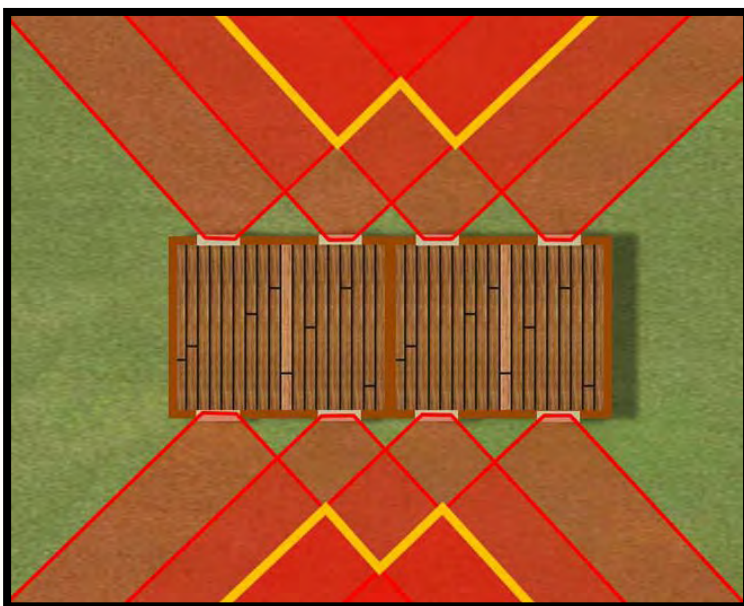
PART SEVEN – COMBAT IN BUILDINGS

MOUT, FIBUA, OU, OBUA, all contemporary acronyms referring to the conducting of operations in an urban environment. But whilst “Military Operation in Urban Terrain”, “Fighting in Built Up Area” and so on do the job, nobody has yet to find a better term than the British Army’s colloquialism “Fish & Chips”; Fighting in Someone’s House and Causing Havoc in People’s Streets. If nothing else it proves that it isn’t just TooFatLardies who can apply somewhat quirky titles, it’s a British disease prevalent at all levels!

In this series we have looked at the standard military axioms of “Find, Fix, Flank, Finish” and “Pin, Pivot, Punch”. These apply just as much to small unit tactics when clearing buildings and strongpoints, but clearly these types of operations require certain specific tactics to develop the general principle to suit the task in hand. As the manual states:

"Fieldcraft does not apply to the open country alone. It must also be used in villages and towns... The clearance of buildings may be a costly undertaking and it will end in disaster unless every man knows what he is doing and how to do it. A drill is therefore essential."

Buildings can readily be adopted as strongpoints offering, as they do, relatively solid cover. However, as well as providing some aspects of strength, buildings also have inherent weaknesses, as the following diagram shows.

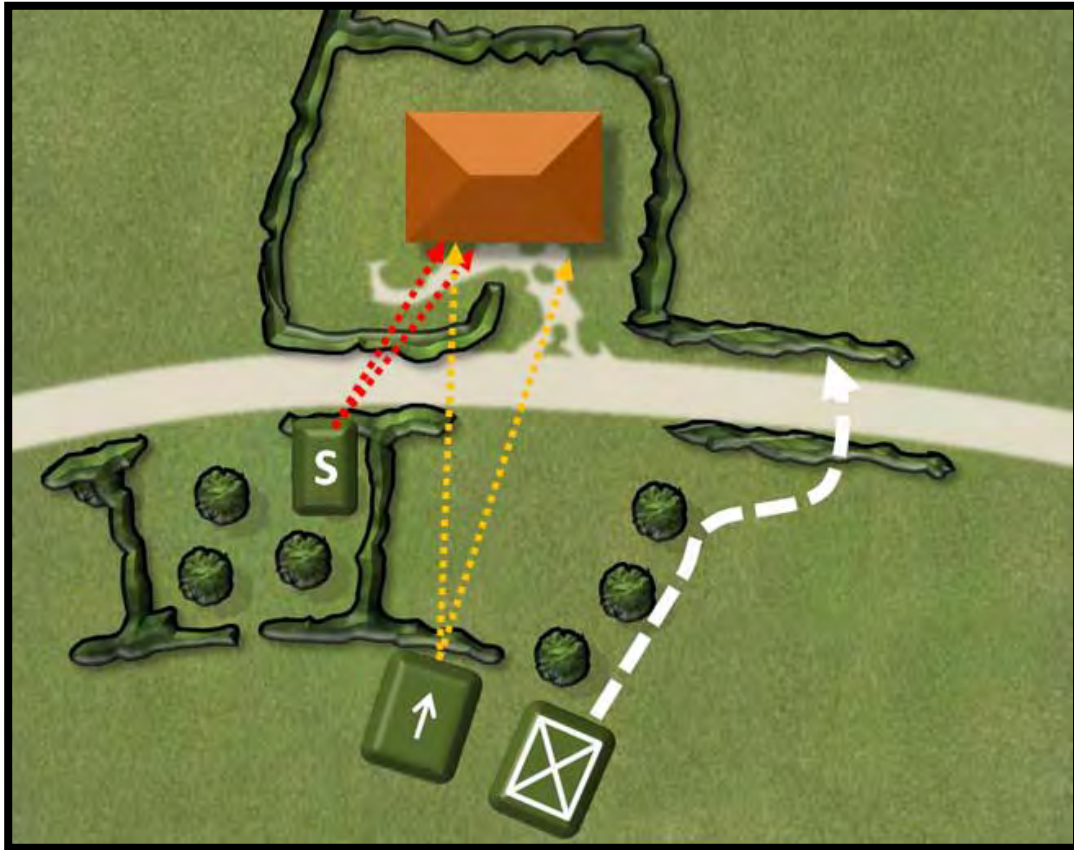


Troops within the building are limited to how many men can fire from each point. What is more, their field of fire is limited if they are to remain inside the building as opposed to leaning out and exposing themselves to danger. Assuming an eight man section or squad is manning each of the two houses shown, for on each side, only targets within the yellow area can be fire on by all eight defenders, and if one looks to the corners of the buildings it is clear that a man could move up from the side and post grenades through the windows there with almost no risk to himself.

It is this weakness which determines the mode of building clearance, whether it is a single isolated house or a street in a town or village.

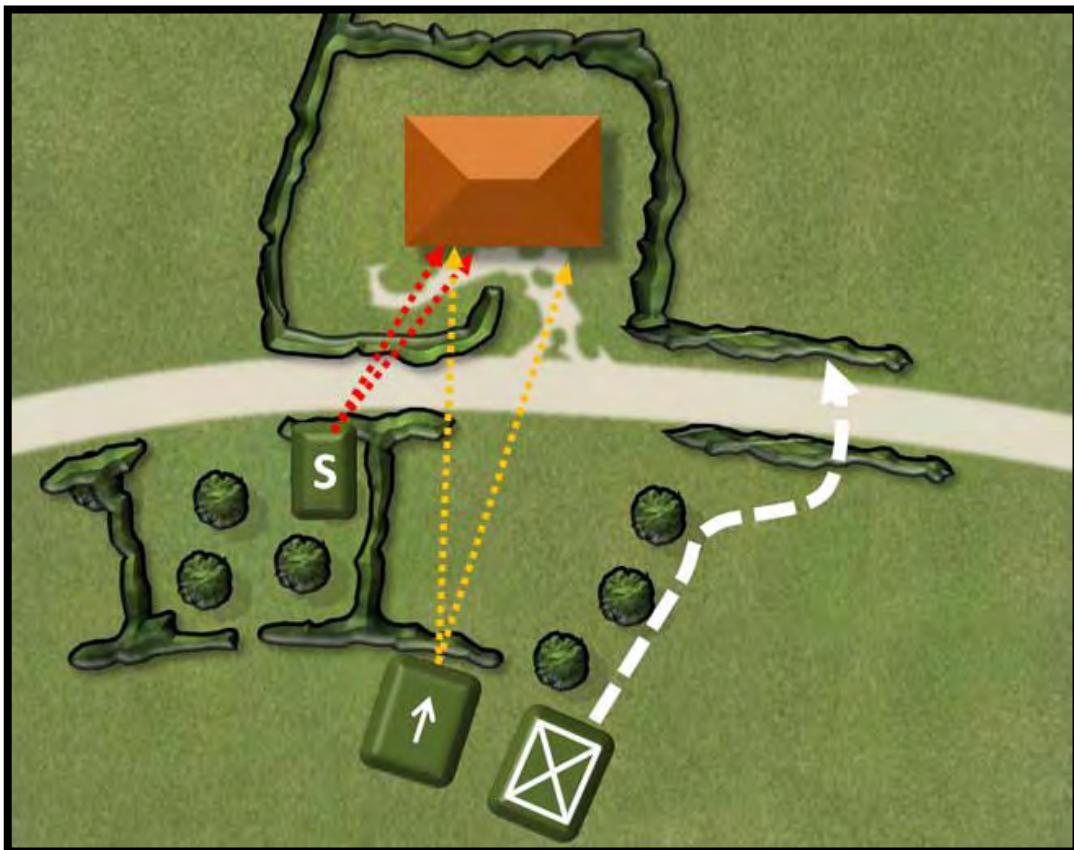
FIGHTING IN SOMEONE’S HOUSE

Clearing a house is a task for a single section or squad. To do the job as efficiently as possible the most covered route of approach should be selected and one which falls outside the arc of the defender’s defensive fire. In the image below, we can see that the section has deployed in two teams; the LMG team and the Rifle team. They have been joined by a sniper as these troops are the perfect support for such an operation.



As can be seen, the LMG team and the sniper are firing on the front elevation of the house, covering the advance of the Rifle Team as it manoeuvres to a flanking position.

In the next image, we see that the Rifle team are now safely through the danger zone and the Bren has now begun firing for effect alongside the Sniper. The Rifle team manoeuvres to the rear of the house and attacks it with grenades before moving in to clear the building.



In Chain of Command these tactics are replicated perfectly. The LMG team should deploy outside 18" as it is critical that they keep their casualties to a minimum. As the rifle team advances tactically through the danger zone, they can fire Covering Fire from their position, whilst the sniper team can fire for effect. The great thing about deploying a sniper team in this situation is that the defenders of the house are unlikely to want to waste time scanning for a sniper when there are two other dangerous targets in the area. That allows the sniper to fire without risk. Sniper fire can also be targeted specifically at one team, so the LMG team in the house will bear the full brunt of its fire. The covering fire will, obviously, protect the Rifle team while there is risk, but the LMG can then fire for effect once the Rifle team is safe.

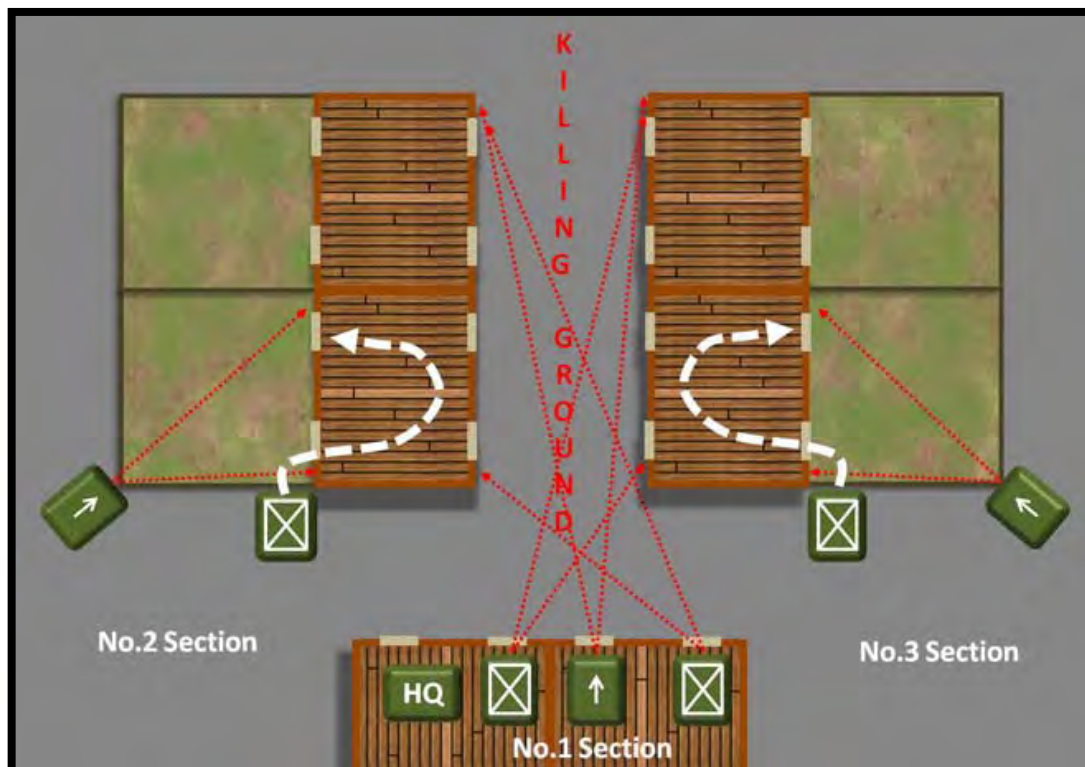
Finally, the grenade is the perfect weapon against troops in a building where, in confined spaces, its effects are multiplied. A couple of well placed grenades can knock the stuffing out of any position, but from their position of relative safety, the Rifle team can always choose the best moment to launch their final attack.

CAUSING HAVOC IN PEROPLE'S STREET

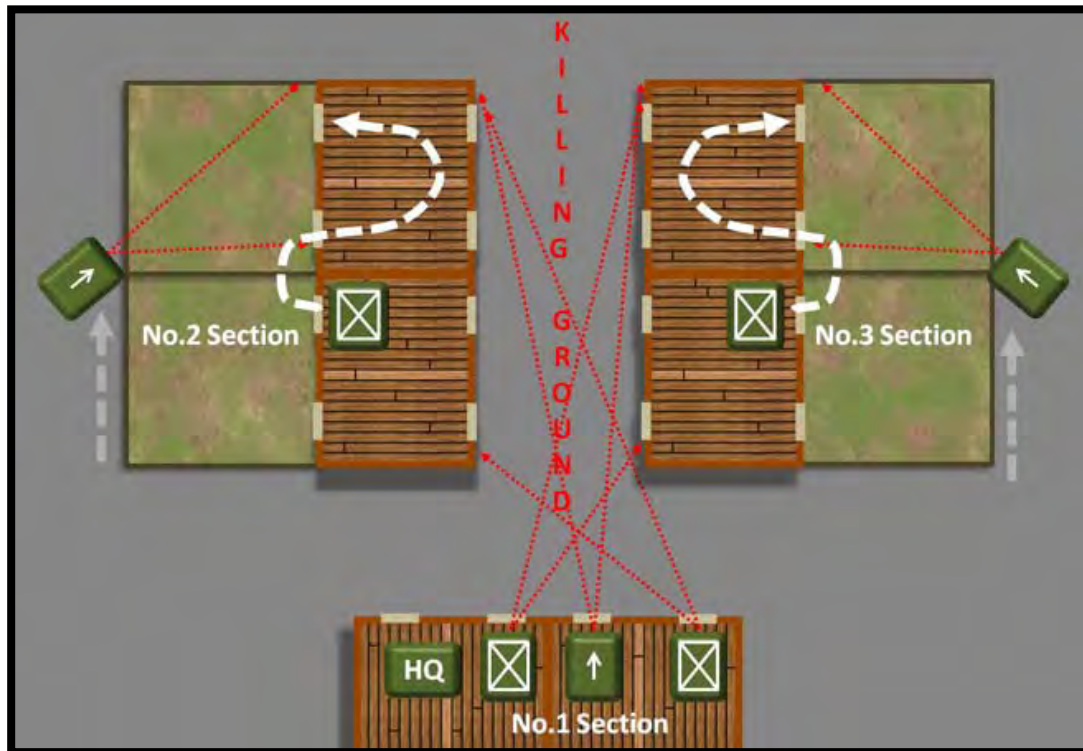
"Buildings will always, if possible, be cleared from the back gardens and yards, because these provide the best covered lines of approach"

Extending this up a level, we can apply basically the same tactics to clearing a whole street; however, this should be a platoon task. In the image below we can see that No.1 Section has established itself in a position from which to cover the main street and the frontages of the houses. If any enemy attempt to leave the buildings they will immediately be in a killing ground. In Chain of Command this section can be placed on Overwatch to dominate the street.

With No.1 Section in position, No.2 and No.3 sections being their house clearing drill. The LMG teams move to positions of cover from which they can cover the rear elevation of the house to be cleared. With them in position, the Rifle team can assault the building with grenades.



With the first house on each side cleared, the LMG team moves up to cover the next house, allowing the Rifle Team to repeat the process. This continues until the street is cleared. Again, we can see that the grenade is the key weapon to be used with the Bren either providing covering fire when required or firing for effect when able.



By placing No.1 Section to cover the front of the houses the enemy are fixed in place. The LMG team at the rear of the buildings stops any retreat in that area and the grenades overwhelm the defenders.

THE LESSON

The principles of fire and movement are used in every tactical situation. To become bogged down in a firefight with men in a house by tackling them head-on is dangerous and unnecessary. There should always be safe lines of approach which negate the strength of any fixed position, use covering fire to protect your attacking party in order to allow them to close safely. The grenade, followed up with the bayonet against a shaken enemy, is the key to unlock even the strongest position.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Rules for WWII Combat at Platoon Level

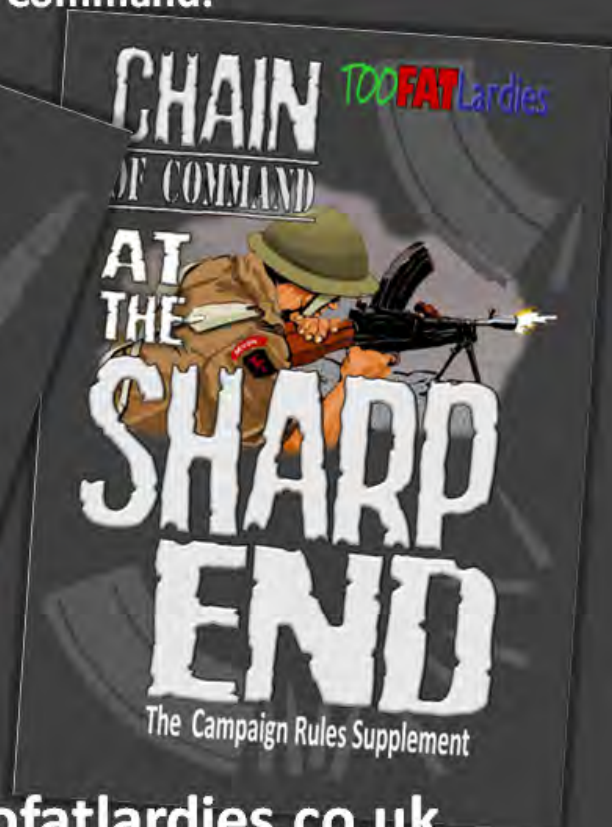


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