Chapter 5: Battle Drills

This page is a section of TC 7-100.2 Opposing Force Tactics.

The OPFOR derives great flexibility from battle drills. Unlike the U.S. view that battle drill, especially at higher levels, reduces flexibility, the OPFOR uses minor, simple, and clear modifications to thoroughly understood and practiced battle drills to adapt to ever-shifting conditions. It does not write standard procedures into its combat orders and does not write new orders when a simple shift from current formations and organization will do.

Purpose of Battle Drills

The purpose of battle drills is to achieve advantage in controlling the tempo of combat. They allow OPFOR units to perform basic combat functions without hesitation or need for further coordination, assistance, or delay. Battle drills are intended to be the baseline of tactical competence for the OPFOR. Once able to execute all battle drills, units can be directed to act with concise and rapidly formulated combat orders.

The OPFOR uses battle drills to make the execution of basic tactical tasks that are standard throughout the OPFOR. Battle drills are not designed for a specific unit type, but rather represent a common methodology for executing common, recurring tasks at the tactical level. They are conducted in both offensive and defensive operations.

Battle drills are detachment-level tactical tasks carried out by functionally organized elements performing various subtasks. The composition of such elements will vary depending on the type of force and the operational environment. However, the subtask(s) each element performs in a given battle drill will be the same for any tactical unit. Most battle drills focus on enabling functions that facilitate the primary action of a larger tactical mission.

Note. Any battalion or company receiving additional assets from a higher command becomes a battalion-size detachment (BDET) or company-size detachment (CDET). Therefore, references to a detachment throughout this chapter may also apply to battalion or company, unless specifically stated otherwise.

Actions on Contact

When an OPFOR detachment makes contact with the enemy, either expected or unexpected, it executes the actions on contact battle drill. This battle drill is designed to ensure OPFOR units retain the initiative and fight under circumstances of their choosing.

Forms of Contact

The OPFOR recognizes seven forms of contact:

- Direct fire.
- Indirect fire.
- Obstacle.
- Air.
- Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN).
- Electronic warfare (EW).
- Sensor.

The actions on contact battle drill is primarily for use by a force making sensor and/or direct fire contact with an enemy force. When making undesired contact (indirect fire, air, CBRN, EW, or ground contact made by a noncombat unit), the break contact battle drill is employed instead. When making contact with an isolated obstacle, the situational breach battle drill may be

selected.

Conditions

The commander will take action after determining the type of contact made, which may beâ

- Expected contact in his course of action.
- Unexpected contact regarding time.
- Unexpected contact regarding location.
- Unexpected contact regarding the enemy.
- Unexpected contact regarding the any combination of the above.

The OPFOR considers it highly unlikely that contact will be made in the expected location at the expected time with the expected enemy force. Battle drill actions on contact are designed to provide the commander with the flexibility to either continue with the planned course of action or rapidly adopt a new course of action more suited to the new circumstances.

This flexibility is achieved byâ

- Ensuring that contact is made with one or more security elements before the remainder of the force becomes engaged.
- Employing one or more security elements to shape the engagement area by either fixing or isolating the enemy to avoid additionally committing the action element.
- Providing the commander with the ability to make his own decisions if communication with higher authority is impractical.
- Using cover camouflage, concealment, cover, and deception (C3D) to prevent unwanted engagements.

Execution

Execution of actions on contact varies depending on the situation and the commanderâ s battle plan. The actions on contact battle drill is accomplished by performing one or a combination of the five subtasks below. Figure 5-1 shows an example of actions on contact involving some of these subtasks.

Fix

The security element making contact fixes the enemy. This security element is then known as the fixing element. It continues to provide early warning of approaching enemy forces and prevents them from gaining further information on the rest of the OPFOR force. Fixing elements often make use of terrain choke points, obstacles, ambushes, and other techniques to fix a larger force.

Note. When an element that is not a security element makes contact with the enemy, the commander will designate that element as the fixing element.

Assess and Report

Based on reports he receives from element(s) in contact, the detachment commander must make an assessment of the tactical situation that determines whether or not making contact in this manner and with this enemy constitutes a change in his course of action. This determination is the most vital step in successful execution of actions on contact because if it is performed incorrectly, the unit will subsequently be executing a course of action inappropriate to the mission and situation. Concurrent with his assessment, the commander reports to the chain of command what contact has been made with the enemy force, critical details of its composition, and his assessment.

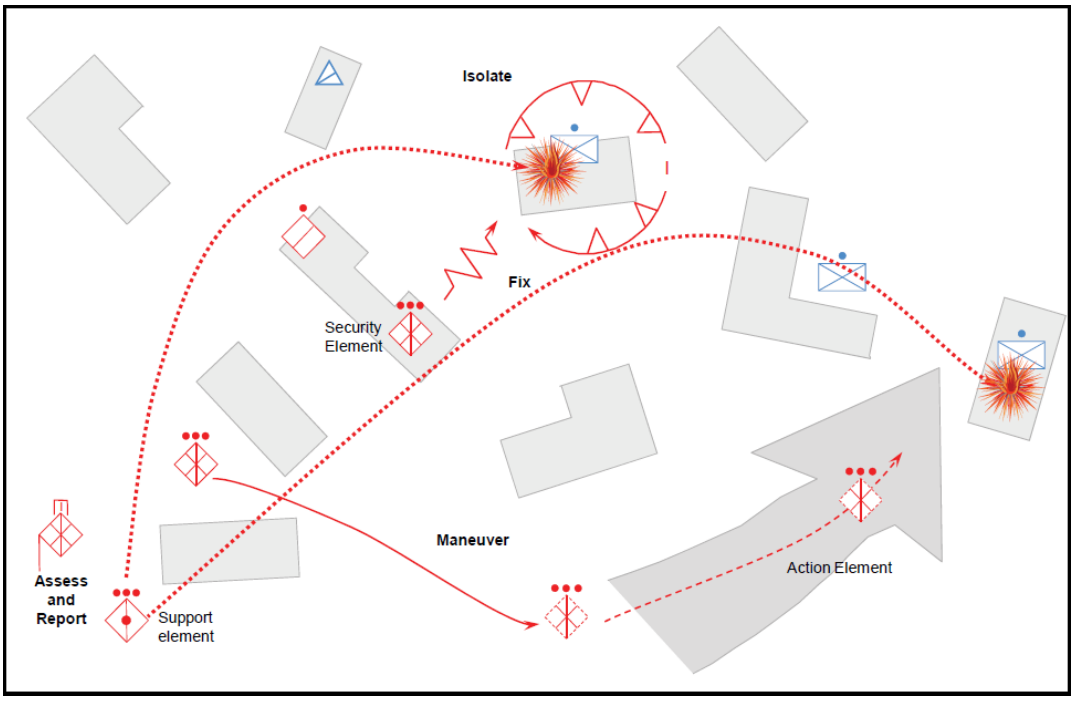

Figure 5-1. Actions on contact (example)

Isolate

The detachment making contact maneuvers and deploys security elements to ensure additional enemy forces do not join the battle unexpectedly. Indirect fire and close air support can be used either individually or combined with other means to achieve the same effect.

Maintain Freedom to Maneuver

The commander of the contacting unit ensures he makes contact with the minimum part of his force necessary to fix the enemy. He makes use of C3D and the break contact battle drill to prevent his force from becoming decisively engaged. Security elements determine safe maneuver avenues for him to employ. Freedom to maneuver is also maintained byâ

- Dominating avenues of approach into the engagement area.
- Determining location of enemy flanks or exposed areas of weakness.

Execute Course of Action

The contacting unit either continues with its original course of action if deemed appropriate or executes a new one that suits the situation. A new course of action could be one given to the unit based on the assessment it provide to its higher command or one chosen by the commander in absence of time or guidance. The unit making contact ensures follow-on units are aware of the contact and deconflict positioning, typically through the use of a standard marking system.

Breaking Contact

The primary objective in breaking contact is to remove the enemyâ sbility to place destructive or suppressive fires on the greater portion of the OPFOR force. This is accomplished by fixing the enemy; regaining freedom to maneuver; and employing fires, C3D, and countermobility. The OPFOR will routinely break contact in order to maneuver into predesignated defensive positions or to draw the enemy force into an ambush. In other cases, the OPFOR breaks contact when faced with no other tactical option.

Conditions

The commander will break contact under the following conditions:

- Included in the battle plan. The OPFOR may include breaking contact with the enemy as part of the scheme of maneuver for its battle plan.
- Loss of time is especially critical. If the OPFOR expects to engage the enemy for an overly extended period, it will break contact in order to exploit an alternative avenue of approach.
- Loss of terrain is not critical. If the location in which the OPFOR engages the enemy is not suited to its posture or force structure, it will break contact in order to either bypass the enemy or to engage him at a more favorable location.
- Enemy is too strong to engage with the force on hand. If the enemy force is overwhelming and or the OPFOR has sustained excessive damage to its force, the OPFOR will break contact in order to recover from the engagement.

Execution

Execution of the breaking contact battle drill varies depending on the situation and the commanderâ s battle plan. The breaking contact battle drill is accomplished by performing the following subtasks. In most cases, all subtasks are part of the breaking contact battle drill. However, the first three subtasks may be executed in a variety of ways. Figure 5-2 shows an example of breaking contact.

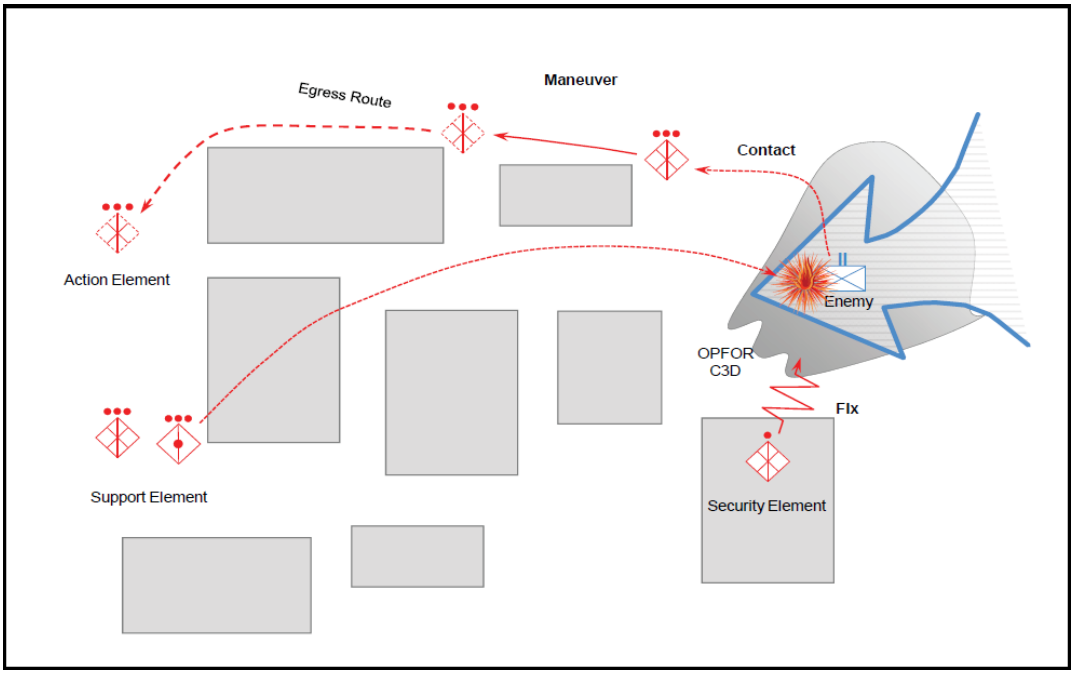

Figure 5-2. Breaking contact (example)

Protect

The detachment commander takes immediate steps, using a variety of means, to protect his force while it maneuvers to a position out of contact. The security element fixes the enemy. It prevents the enemy force from maneuvering in order to remain in contact with the rest of the OPFOR force. It may employ INFOWAR to appear to be larger than it is or even to appear to be the entire OPFOR detachment.

The detachment commander employs fires as part of the break contact battle drill to suppress the enemy and prevent him from returning fire effectively and to fix him and restrict his maneuver. If available, he may use indirect fires, close air support, EW, and/or CBRN means to fix the enemy. C3D is employed to limit or remove the enemyâ s ability to maintain situational awareness of the OPFOR force. This may be as simple as placing obscuring smoke between the enemy and the detachment or as complex as a sophisticated deception plan making use of decoys and mock-ups. Another way to protect the force is to use alternate positions or assembly

areas. Countermobility actions, such as the emplacement of dynamic obstacles or the destruction of man-made structures can also restrict the enemyâ s ability to maneuver and maintain contact with the detachment.

Retain Freedom to Maneuver

The commander reduces his elements in contact to only security element(s). For any other element(s) that originally made contact, he identifies egress routes. He selects one or more routes from his current location that enable his detachment to remain out of contact while permitting him to maneuver in support of his mission.

Once the rest of the force has maneuvered out of contact, the security element(s) that performed a fixing function can rejoin the rest of the force. Separating these fixing elements from the enemy may require further use of C3D, fires, and countermobility measures.

Assess and Report

The commander receives reports from the subordinate element(s) that first made contact and/or the fixing element(s) that remain in contact. Based on those reports, he must make an assessment of the tactical situation. Concurrent with his assessment, the commander reports to the chain of command what form of contact has been made with the enemy force, critical details of the enemy forceâ s composition, and his assessment of the situation.

Continue or Change Course of Action

Once freedom to maneuver has been retained or regained, the OPFOR force executes the basic course of action. The course of action is usually the primary action of the unitâ s original tactical mission. However, the detachment commander makes an assessment of the tactical situation to determine whether or not making contact in this manner and with this enemy force dictates a change in the course of action.

Situational Breach

A situational breach is the reduction of and passage through an obstacle encountered in the due course of executing another tactical task. The unit conducting a situational breach may have expected an obstacle or not, but in either case conducts a situational breach with the resources at hand and does not wait for specialized equipment and other support. This allows the unit to maintain momentum rather than being stopped or impeded by the obstacle. The decision to attempt the situational breach is based on the OPFOR commanderâ s knowledge of the enemy forces in the area and the expected tactical advantage in terms of key terrain and time.

Conditions

The commander will order a situational breach under the following conditions:

- Included in the battle plan. The OPFOR expects to breach enemy obstacles.
- Time constraints. The OPFOR commander assesses that by breaching an obstacle he will save more time than if he bypasses it.
- Terrain is crucial. The OPFOR commander decides that key terrain can be seized by breaching the obstacle.
- Exposes enemy weaknesses. The OPFOR commander decides that by doing so he can engage the enemy decisively and he has a clear advantage

Execution

In order to execute the situational breach effectively, the OPFOR must be prepared to provide the necessary security to allow movement through the obstacle. This is accomplished by isolating

the potential enemy avenues of approach while reducing the obstacle for the rest of the unit to pass through. See figure 5-3 for an example of a situational breach.

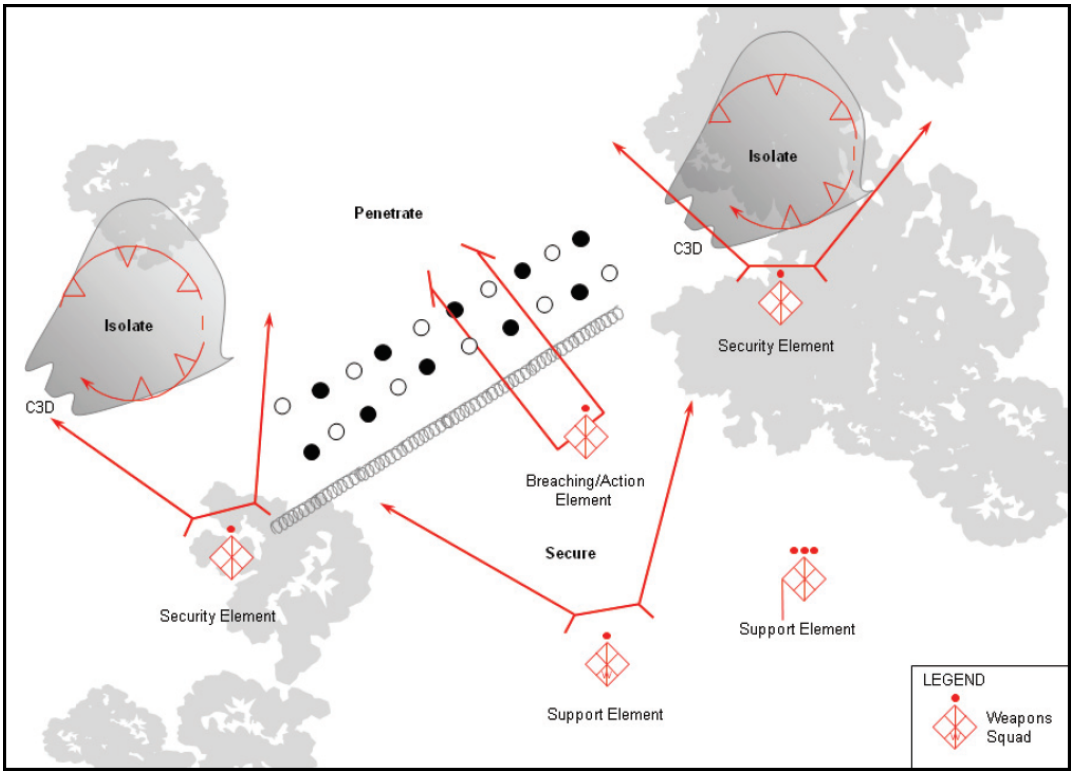

Figure 5-3. Situational breach (example)

Isolate

The security element takes action to ensure enemy elements cannot reinforce those defending the obstacle. It might accomplish this through C3D measures, countermobility tasks, direct or indirect fire engagements, or a variety of other means.

Secure

A support element establishes a support-by-fire position and takes action to ensure enemy elements defending the obstacle are neutralized. It also supports movement through the obstacle.

Penetrate

The breaching element reduces the obstacle such that it can complete its mission (as the action element) and/or enable a follow-on force to do so. All OPFOR organizations carry sufficient equipment, whether field expedient or constituent, to penetrate basic enemy obstacle systems and urban construction and debris. Precise descriptions of OPFOR obstacle reduction techniques can be found in chapter 12.

Execute Course of Action

Once the obstacle has been penetrated and the lanes isolated and secured, the action element and/or a follow on force continues the mission, if that is deemed appropriate. However, based on the commanderâ assessment of the situation and/or guidance from a higher command, the unit may adopt a new course of action.

Fire and Manuever

Fire and maneuver is the way in which OPFOR units move while in contact with the enemy. When required to move under such conditions, the OPFOR commander selects part of his force to be the firing element and part to be the moving element. The firing element fires from a position of concealment or cover in order to support the moving element. This is the most basic of all OPFOR battle drills.

Conditions

The commander will employ fire and maneuver under the following conditions:

- Included in the battle plan. The OPFOR plans for a movement to contact and expects to fire and maneuver on its way to the objective.
- Time constraints. Time is not a critical factor, since the fire and maneuver battle drill will slow progress along the OPFOR avenues of approach.
- Exposes enemy weaknesses. If the OPFOR realizes a clear advantage by maintaining contact with the enemy, it may use fire and maneuver to lure him into an ambush or attrit his forces to the point where he has to withdrawal from the engagement.

Execution

The critical aspect of executing fire and maneuver is the commanderâ sselection of the right amount of combat power and resources to assign to each of the elements of his force. If the firing element does not have the ability to significantly reduce the effectiveness of the enemy, the moving element will be destroyed. If the moving element does not have the combat power to take the objective or assume its new role as firing element, the mission will fail.

The part of the force initially designated as the firing element directs suppressing fire against any enemy that has the ability to influence the movement of the moving element. The moving element then moves to the next firing line. Once the moving element reaches that new position, it becomes the new firing element, and the former firing element becomes the new moving element. This continues until a moving element reaches the objective. See figure 5-4 on page 5-8 for an example of fire and maneuver.

Make Contact

Normally, a security element makes first contact with the enemy. It observes the enemy force and reports on its activity. Security element(s) continue to provide early warning of approaching enemy forces and prevent them from gaining further information on the rest of the OPFOR unit. If the enemy force attempts to move in a direction that could influence the movement of the OPFOR unit, the security element becomes a fixing element.

Fix

The security element making contact fixes the enemy. Once the firing element moves into a suitable position, it can also fix the enemy, often by delivering suppressing fires against an enemy force that has the ability to influence the movement of the moving element. (While performing this function, the firing element could be called a fixing element.)

Isolate

Security elements ensure additional enemy forces do not join the battle unexpectedly. Indirect fire and close air support can be used either individually or combined with other means to achieve the same effect.

Maneuver

The moving element maneuvers to a new position of advantage with respect to the enemy. On

order, the moving element assumes the role of the new firing element. If further maneuver is required, the moving and firing elements continue alternation of fixing the enemy and maneuvering against the enemy.

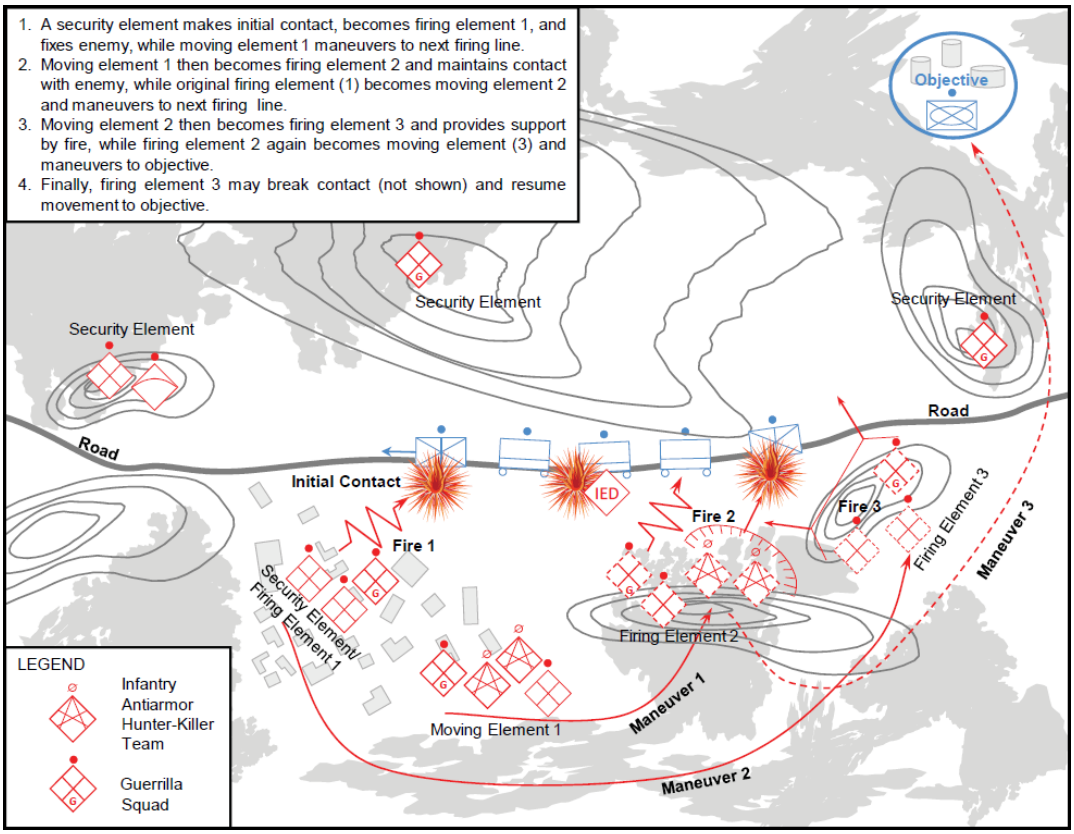

Figure 5-4. Fire and maneuver (example)

Fixing

Fixing is a tactical task intended to prevent the enemy from moving any part of his force from a specific location for a period of time. It is one of the most critical battle drills OPFOR units execute, and it is often a subtask in other battle drills. The ability to fix the enemy at crucial points is the fundamental way by which units maintain the freedom to maneuver and retain the initiative. An enemy becomes fixed in one of three basic ways:

- He cannot physically move.
- He does not want to move.
- He does not think he can move.

An enemy that cannot physically move is constrained in some real way. Fixing an enemy by physically preventing him from moving is the most difficult and resource-intensive method. An enemy does not want to move when he feels that in doing so he takes great risk to life and material. Suppressive fires are the primary method by which an enemy is fixed in this way. Suppressive fires are simple to employ and are the least difficult and resource intensive means. However, they are also the means that places the OPFOR at the greatest riskâ the soldiers and systems providing the suppressive fires are vulnerable to detection and return fire. The use of snipers who target individual soldiers and materiel and/or the deployment of scatterable mines can fix the enemy by halting their movement and disrupting their operations for medical evacuation and repairs. Information warfare (INFOWAR) actions such as deception can also achieve the effects of physically fixing the enemy when feasible.

Conditions

The OPFOR will employ fixing under the following conditions:

- Included in the battle plan. The OPFOR expects to have the enemy fixed at a designated time and location as part of its battle plan.
- Time is required for follow-on forces. Fixing can allow an action element or other follow-on force to maneuver into place or allow reconnaissance elements to help assess the situation.
- Enemy is located on a preplanned target. The OPFOR fixes the enemy in a predesignated kill zone in order to mass fires.
- INFOWAR assets achieve desired effects. The OPFOR fixes the enemy through the use of INFOWAR. Because of lack of training of the enemy forces in countering INFOWAR effects, the enemy is removed from the fight without committing other OPFOR maneuver forces.

Execution

The OPFOR will fix the enemy using the method most likely to achieve the results with the minimum risk to its forces. (See figure 5-5 on page 5-10 for an example of fixing.) The following are the primary methods.

Fires

Fires fix the enemy by killing enemy soldiers or wounding them enough to prevent relocation (destructive fires) or by making it too dangerous for them to reposition (suppressive fires). Indirect fires and/or close air support are also employed to fix the enemy in situations where distance and terrain make it difficult to achieve the effect through direct fire alone. Fires are the main method for decisively engaging the enemy.

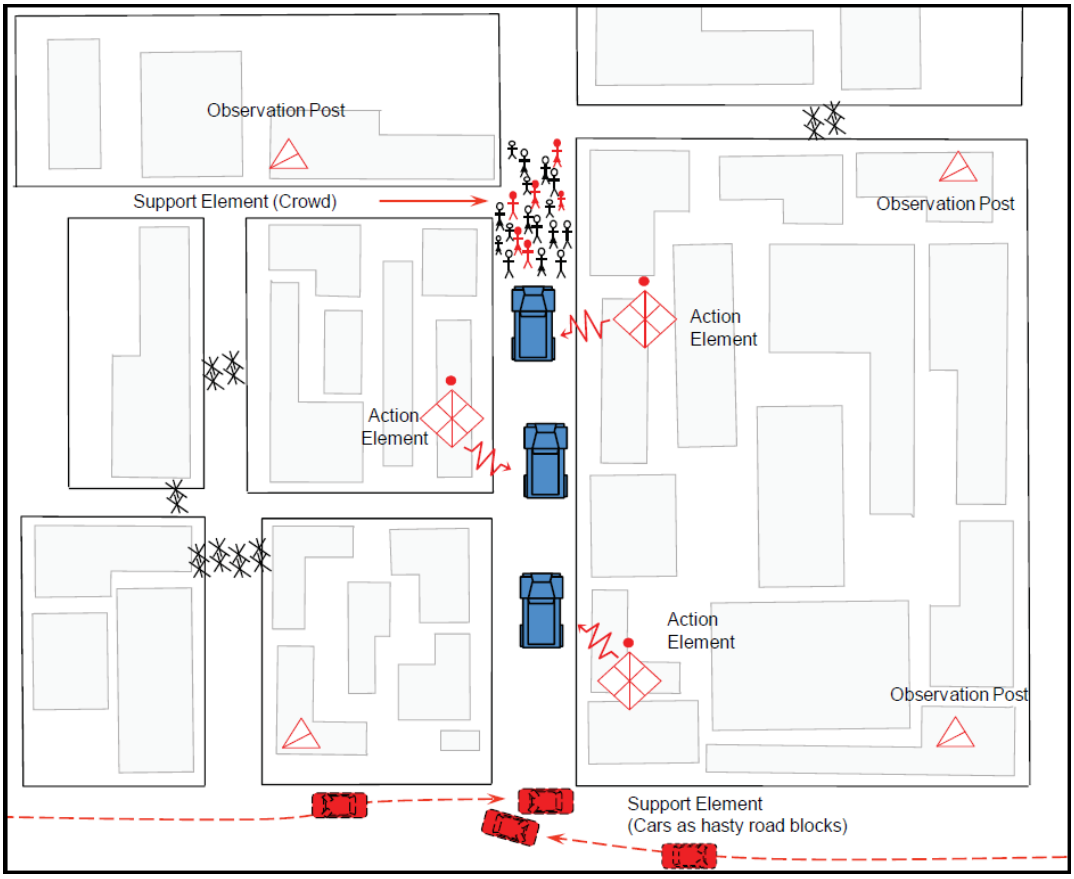

Figure 5-5. Fixing (example)

INFOWAR

INFOWAR fixes the enemy by convincing the enemy he does not want to move or by making him think he cannot move. Some examples of INFOWAR used to fix the enemy areâ

- Propaganda claiming the enemy will be destroyed if he moves in the open. Effectively

employing snipers in the area will reinforce this claim and cause trepidation among the enemy troops.
- Deception that simulates the enemy higher commander ordering the enemy unit to remain in place.
- Information attack on enemy sensors to register that the fixing element is stronger than it is, or at least capable of destroying the enemy force if it relocates.

Countermobility

Countermobility actions fix the enemy primarily by physically restraining his movement. In actuality, there is no obstacle that cannot be breached with effort. This fact typically makes countermobility actions time-sensitive. The more time spent and resources gathered by the enemy, the less effective countermobility actions would be in fixing him.