

CHAPTER 6

Platoon Drill

"If in training soldiers commands are habitually enforced, the army will be well-disciplined; if not, its discipline will be bad."

Sun Tsu, *On the Art of War*, trans. 1910

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Section I
FORMATIONS

6-1. General

- a. Individual drill movements and the manual of arms are executed (as previously described) while performing as a squad member during the conduct of platoon drill.
- b. For the most part, platoon drill merely provides the procedures for executing drill movements in conjunction with other squads formed in the same formation.
- c. The platoon has two prescribed formations--line and column (Figure 6-1). However, the platoon may be formed into a file or a column of twos from a column formation.

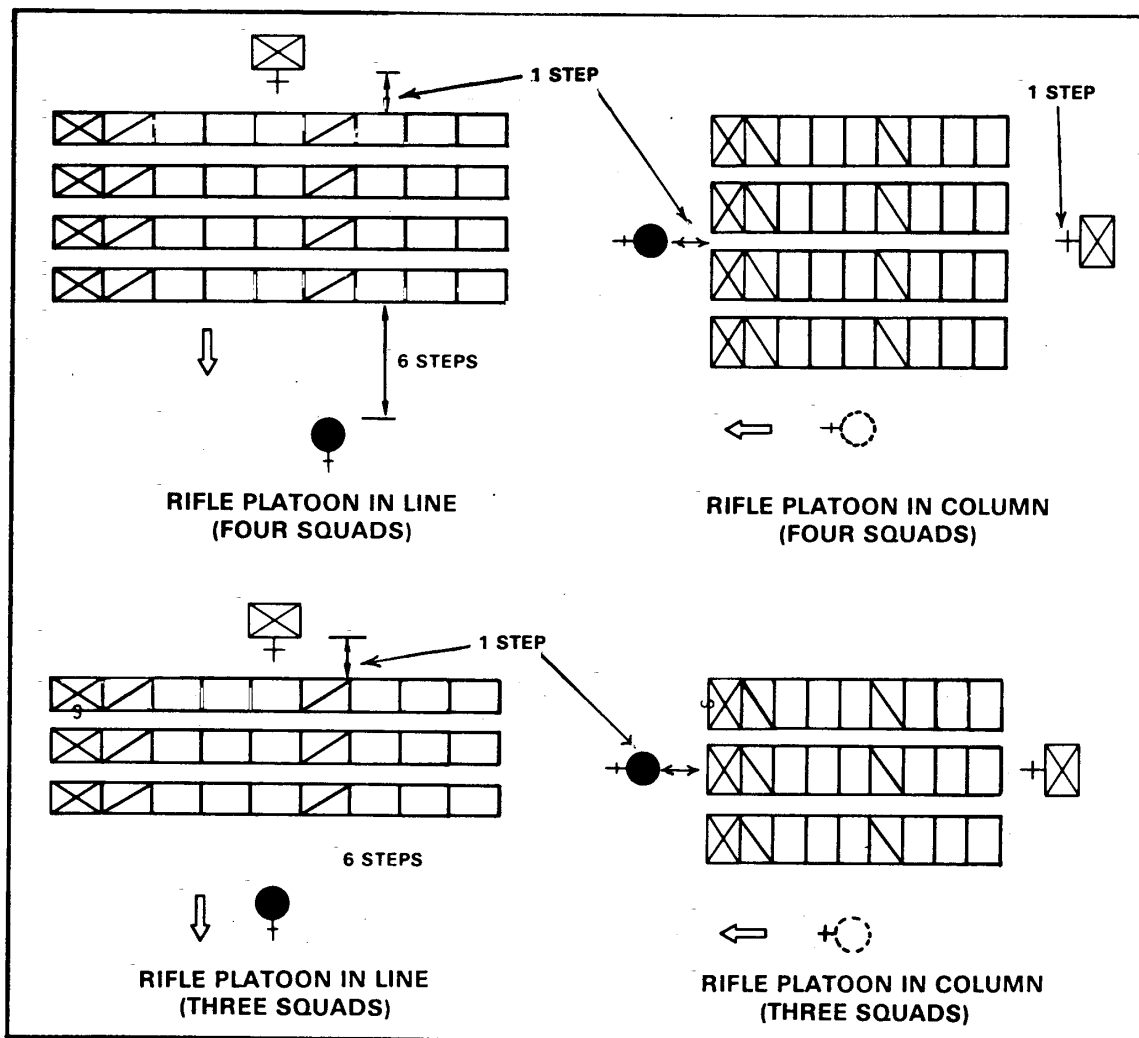


Figure 6-1. Platoon Formations

d. When in a line formation, the elements (squads) of a platoon are numbered from front to rear; in a column formation, from left to right.

e. During all drill and ceremonies, the platoon sergeant carries his rifle at *sling arms*. When the platoon drills as part of a larger unit, the platoon sergeant remains at *sling arms* during all manual of arms movements except when executing the *hand salute* while at *sling arms*.

f. When the platoon drills as a separate unit, in a line formation, the post for the platoon leader is six steps in front of and centered on the platoon; when in a column formation, the platoon leader is six steps on the left flank and centered on the platoon.

g. When the platoon leader commands ***Open ranks, Backward, Right (Left) step, Forward, MARCH*** or causes the platoon to *change interval*, he moves at the same time (with the appropriate step) so as to maintain proper position.

h. When the platoon drills as part of a larger unit, in a line formation, the post for the platoon leader is six steps in front of and centered on the platoon; in a column formation, the platoon leader is at correct distance (one arm's length plus 6 inches) in front of and centered between the second and third squad leaders. When assuming his post in column from a line formation, the platoon leader *faces to the right in marching* (on the command of execution **FACE**) and *marches* in the most direct route to his post, *halts*, and *faces* to the left. When assuming his post in line from a column formation, the platoon leader *faces to the left in marching* (on the command of execution **FACE**) and *marches* in the most direct route to his post, *halts* perpendicular to the formation, and *faces* to the right. When in column formation (company) and the command ***Column of twos from the right*** is given, the platoon leader *faces to the right in marching*, repositions himself in front of and centered between the squad leaders of the third and fourth squads, *halts*, and *faces* to the left. When the unit *re-forms* into a column of fours, he *faces to the left in marching* and resumes his original position in the column.

i. When the platoon drills as a separate unit, in a line formation, the post for the platoon sergeant is centered on the platoon at correct distance (one step) to the rear of the last rank. On the command ***Open ranks, MARCH; Backward, MARCH; Right (Left) step, MARCH; Forward, MARCH*** and on commands that cause the platoon to change interval in line, he moves at the same time (with the appropriate step) so as to maintain proper position. If a file or column of twos is formed, he remains in position until the last file has passed, *faces to the half left (half right) in marching*, and continues *marching*, positioning himself behind the last man in the file or in a column of twos, at the correct distance to the rear and centered between the two squads. When re-forming into a column of fours, the platoon sergeant follows the rear element and resumes his post in the column when the element has halted.

j. When the platoon drills as part of a larger formation, in a line formation, the platoon sergeant's post is one step to the rear and centered on the platoon; in a column formation, the platoon sergeant is one step behind and centered between the second and third squads. When assuming his post in column from a line formation, the platoon sergeant *faces to the left in marching* (on the command of execution **FACE**) and *marches* in the most direct route to his post. He then *halts* and *faces* to the right. When assuming his post in line from a column formation, he *faces to the right in marching* (on the command of execution **FACE**) and *marches* in the most direct route to his post, *halts* centered on the platoon, and *faces* to the left. When the platoon is in a column formation (company) and the command of ***Column of twos from the left*** is given, the platoon sergeant *faces to the right in marching*, repositions himself behind and centered between the third and fourth squads, *halts*, and *faces* to the left.

NOTE: When the files (columns) are uneven, the platoon sergeant normally directs the men in longer files to move to another file to balance the formation; or he may fill the vacancy himself as the last man in the right file.

k. The leader of the first squad serves as the base when the platoon is a line formation. The leader of the fourth squad serves as the base when the platoon is in a column formation.

6-2. Forming the Platoon

a. The platoon normally forms in a line formation; however, it may *re-form* in a column when each man can identify his exact position (equipment grounded) in the formation.

b. The platoon forms basically the same as a squad. The platoon sergeant assumes the position of *attention* and commands **FALL IN** (*At close interval*, **FALL IN** or *In column*, **FALL IN**). On the command **FALL IN** (*At close interval*, **FALL IN**), the squad leader and the first squad (when formed) is three steps in front of and centered on the platoon sergeant. Other squad leaders cover on the first squad leader at the correct distance, which is obtained by estimation. The members of the first squad *fall in* on their squad leader as prescribed for squad drill. Members of the other squads *fall in* on their squad leader, assume the position of *attention*, and turn their heads and eyes to the right. They obtain correct distance by taking short steps forward or backward and align themselves on the man to their right. They then sharply turn their heads and eyes to the front as in the position of attention and obtain proper interval by taking short steps left and right to *cover* on the man to their front. Members of all squads, other than the first squad, will not raise their left arms unless the man to their immediate left has no one to his front in the formation on which to cover.

c. When armed, members *fall in* at *order arms* or *sling arms*. For safety, the **commands** *Inspection*, **ARMS**; *Ready*, **Port**, **ARMS**; *Order* (*Sling*), **ARMS** are given at the initial formation of the day and just before the last command, **DISMISSED**.

d. When a report is appropriate, the platoon sergeant commands **REPORT**. The squad leaders, in succession from front to rear, turn their heads and eyes toward the platoon sergeant and *salute* (holding the *salute* until returned) and report. For example:

(1) **Situation 1.** When all squad members are in formation, the report is "*All present.*"

(2) **Situation 2.** When squad members are absent, the cadets and reasons for absence are reported:

Pvt Smith—CQ runner

Pvt Jones—sick call

Pvt Williams—AWOL

e. After receiving the report from the squad leaders, the platoon sergeant *faces about* and awaits the arrival of the platoon leader. When the platoon leader has *halted* at his post, the platoon sergeant *salutes* and reports, "*Sir, All present*"; or "*Sir, All accounted for*"; or "*Sir, (so many) men absent.*" The platoon leader returns the *salute*. After the *salute* has been returned, the platoon sergeant *faces to the right in marching*, *inclines around* the squad leaders, *halts* at his post, and *faces* to the right.

f. If the platoon leader is not present for the formation, the platoon sergeant steps forward three steps (after receiving the squad leader's report) and assumes the duties of the platoon leader.

g. When appropriate, the platoon may be formed by the platoon leader rather than by the platoon sergeant. The procedures are the same as previously described except that the first squad forms six steps in front of and centered on the platoon leader, and the platoon sergeant forms at his post to the rear of the platoon.

6-3. Breaking Ranks

a. When the situation requires one or more individuals to leave the formation or to receive specific instructions from the platoon leader, the platoon leader directs: "**Private Doe (pause), Front and center**"; or, "**The following personnel front and center--Private Doe (pause), Private Smith.**"

b. When the individual's name is called, he assumes the position of *attention* and replies, "**Here, Sir (Sergeant).**" He then takes one (15-inch) step backward, *halts, faces to the right (left) in marching*, and exits the formation by *marching* to the nearest flank. Once the individual has cleared the formation, he begins to *double time* and *halts* two steps from and centered on the platoon leader.

NOTE: When a group of individuals are called from the formation, the group forms centered on the platoon leader. The platoon leader should direct (point) the first man into position so that the rank will be centered when the last man has joined the group.

6-4. Counting Off

a. The platoon counts off in the same manner as the squad.

b. When in a line formation, the squads count in unison from right to left each squad leader sounds off, "**ONE.**"

c. When in a column formation, the men abreast of each other count in unison from front to rear each squad leader sounds off, "**ONE.**"

6-5. Changing Interval

a. The platoon changes interval in a line formation in the same manner as the squad.

b. To change interval when the platoon is in a column at the *halt*, the right file *stands fast* and serves as the base. All other members (abreast of *each other*) *execute the movement as previously described*. To obtain *close interval* from *normal interval*, the third squad takes one *right step*, the second squad takes two *right steps*, and the first squad takes three *right steps*. To obtain *normal interval*, the procedures are the same except that the squads execute the same number of *left steps*.

c. To change interval when the platoon is *marching* in a column, the preparatory command **Close interval** is given as the right foot strikes the marching surface, and the command of execution **MARCH** is given the next time the right foot strikes the marching surface. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the base squad (right file) takes one more 30-inch step and then executes the *half step*. All other men take one more step, simultaneously execute a *column half right*, and *march* until *close interval* is obtained. They execute a *column half left* and assume the *half step* when abreast of the corresponding man of the base squad. On the command **Forward, MARCH**, all men resume marching with a 30-inch step. The commands **Mark time, MARCH** and **Platoon, HALT** may also be given.

d. To resume marching at *normal interval*, the preparatory command **Normal Interval** is given as the left foot strikes the marching surface, and the command of execution **MARCH** is given the next time the left foot strikes the marching surface. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the platoon members obtain *normal interval* in the same manner prescribed for *close interval* except that they each execute *column half left* and then *column half right*.

e. To obtain *double interval* from *normal interval*, the procedures are the same as from *close interval* to *normal interval*.

f. To obtain *normal interval* from *double interval* (closing the formation in column from *open ranks*), the procedures are the same as obtaining *close interval* from *normal interval*.

6-6. Aligning the Platoon

a. The platoon is aligned similar to the squad.

b. On the command of execution **DRESS**, the first squad leader *stands fast* and serves as the base. Other squad leaders obtain correct distance by estimation. The members of the first squad execute in the same manner as in squad drill to obtain exact interval. All other squads execute as the first squad, except that each squad member raises the left arm only for uniformity, actually covering (glancing out the corner of the left eye) on the man to the front.

c. If the platoon leader wants exact alignment, he faces to the *half left (half right) in marching* and *marches* (on the command of execution **DRESS**) by the most direct route to a position on line with the first squad, *halts* one step from the squad leader or left flank man, and *faces* down the line. From this position, he verifies the alignment of the first squad, directing the men to move forward or backward, as necessary, calling them by name or number: "**Private Jones, Forward two inches; Number eight, Backward four inches.**" The platoon leader remains at *attention*, taking short steps to the right or left as necessary, to see down the squad. Having aligned the first squad, the platoon leader, after centering himself on the first squad, *faces to the left (right) in marching*, taking two (three if at open ranks) short steps to the next squad, *halts, faces* down the line, and aligns the squad in the same manner. After the last squad is aligned, the platoon leader centers himself on the squad leader by taking short steps left or right, *faces to the right (left) in marching*, returns to his position (centered on the platoon), *halts* perpendicular to the formation, *faces* to the left (right), and commands **Ready, FRONT**.

NOTE: When the platoon dresses as part of a larger formation, all squad leaders glance to their right and align themselves on the unit to their right. The platoon leader aligns the platoon from the left flank rather than from the right flank when his platoon is not formed as the right flank platoon.

d. To align the platoon in column, the commands are **COVER** and **RECOVER**. On the command **COVER**, the fourth squad leader *stands fast* and serves as base. The squad leaders with the exception of the left flank squad leader, raise their arms laterally and turn their heads and eyes to the right. The members of the fourth squad raise their left arms horizontally (as in squad drill) to the front and cover the man to their front at correct distance. Squad members of the third, second, and first squads raise their left arms horizontally to the front (for uniformity only), cover on the man to their front, and, at the same time, glance out of the corner of their right eyes aligning on the man to their right. To resume the position of *attention*, the command is **RECOVER**. On this command, each man sharply returns to the position of *attention*.

NOTE: When the platoon is aligned in column as part of a larger unit but is not the lead platoon, the squad leaders do not raise their arms or turn their heads and eyes but cover on the squad to their front. The platoon leader must wait until the platoon leader of the platoon to his front has commanded **RECOVER** before he *faces* about and gives the command **COVER**.

6-7. Opening and Closing Ranks

a. **Open ranks, MARCH** is executed from a line formation while at the *halt*. It may be executed while at any of the prescribed intervals. The commands for these movements are **Open ranks, MARCH** and **Close ranks, MARCH**.

b. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the front rank takes two steps forward, the second rank takes one step forward, the third rank *stands fast*, and the fourth rank takes two steps backward. If additional ranks are present, the fifth rank takes four steps backward, and the sixth rank takes six steps backward.

NOTE: After taking the prescribed steps, the men do not raise their arms. If the platoon leader wants exact interval or alignment, he commands **At close Interval (At double Interval)**,

Dress right, DRESS.

c. To *close ranks*, the command is **Close ranks, MARCH**. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the first rank takes four steps backward, the second rank takes two steps backward, the third rank *stands fast*, and the fourth rank takes one step forward.

d. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant take the appropriate number of steps to maintain their posts.

6-8. Resting the Platoon

The platoon *rests* in the same manner prescribed for the squad.

6-9. Dismissing the Platoon

a. The procedures for *dismissing* the platoon are basically the same as prescribed for the squad.

b. The platoon leader commands **PLATOON SERGEANT**. The platoon sergeant *faces to the right in marching* and *inclines* around the squad leaders, *halts* three steps in front of and centered on the platoon, and *faces* to the right. The platoon leader then commands **TAKE CHARGE OF THE PLATOON**, and *salutes* are exchanged. The platoon leader is no longer part of the formation. The platoon sergeant takes three steps forward, *halts, faces about*, and carries out the platoon leader's instructions.

c. If the platoon sergeant so desires, the squads may be released to the control of the squad leaders. The platoon sergeant commands **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR SQUADS**, and *salutes* are exchanged. The platoon sergeant is no longer part of the formation.

NOTE: Without leaving their positions, the squad leaders then command **FALL OUT**, move to a position in the immediate area, and command **FALL IN**. Then, they carry out the previous instructions and/or give any instructions for actions before the next duty formation.

Section II

MOVEMENTS

6-10. General

a. The platoon *marches* in the same manner prescribed for the squad.

b. When the platoon is *marching* in a line, the first squad leader serves as the guide, and when the platoon is marching in a column, the fourth squad leader serves as the guide.

c. When *marching* in line, each member of each squad (glancing out of the corner of his right eye) maintains alignment on the man to his right. When *marching* in column, each member of the first, second, and third squads maintains alignment on the man to his right.

6-11. Eyes Right

a. The platoon renders courtesy during ceremonies or when *marching* past the Colors by executing *eyes right*. The commands for this movement are **Eyes, RIGHT** and **Ready, FRONT**.

b. At the *halt*, all men (on the command of execution, **RIGHT**), while keeping their shoulders parallel to the front, turn their heads and eyes to the right at a 45-degree angle. They focus on and follow the person passing to the front until they are again looking forward, at which time their heads and eyes remain fixed to the front. Only the platoon leader renders the *hand salute*.

c. When marching, the preparatory command **Eyes** is given as the right foot strikes the marching surface and the command of execution **RIGHT** is given the next time the right foot strikes the marching surface. On the command of execution **RIGHT**, all men, except the right file, turn their heads and eyes to the right and align themselves on the right file while continuing to *march*. Men in the right file do not turn their heads and eyes but continue looking straight to the front and maintain correct distance. Only the platoon leader *salutes*. To terminate the courtesy, the preparatory command **Ready** is given as the left foot strikes the marching surface, and the command of execution **FRONT** is given the next time the left foot strikes the marching surface. On the command of execution, the men turn their heads and eyes sharply to the front and the platoon leader terminates the *hand salute*.

6-12. Changing the Direction of a Column

a. The platoon changes the direction of *marching* basically the same as the squad.

b. During a column movement, the base element is the squad on the flank in the direction of the turn.

c. To change the direction 90 degrees, the command is **Column right (left), MARCH**. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the base squad executes the movement as in squad drill except that the squad leader takes one 30-inch step and then takes up the *half step*. The squad leader continues *marching* with the half step until the other squad leaders come abreast. The other squad leaders, while maintaining correct (offset) interval, execute a 45-degree pivot and continue *marching* in an arc. As they come on line (abreast) with the base squad leader, they take up the *half step*. When all squad leaders are abreast, they step off with a 30-inch step without command. All other platoon members march forward on the command of execution and execute the column movement at approximately the same location as their squad leaders and in the same manner.

NOTE: When the platoon leader and platoon sergeant are *marching* at their post in column as part of a larger formation, they execute a *column half right (left)* rather than a 90-degree column movement. After executing the *column half right (left)*, they continue *marching* in an arc, *incline* as necessary, and resume their correct positions. After sensing that the squad leaders are abreast of each other, the platoon leader resumes the 30-inch step. At times, the platoon leader may find it necessary to shorten or lengthen his step in order to maintain correct distance from the unit to his front.

d. To change the direction 45 degrees, the command is **Column half right (left), MARCH**. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the platoon executes the movement in the same manner as a 90-degree turn except that the base squad leader as well as the other squad leaders execute a *column half right (left)*.

NOTE: When executing a column movement at *double time*, elements adjust the length of their steps so that interval and distance are maintained through and beyond the pivot point.

e. The platoon *marches* in the opposite direction (**Rear, MARCH**) in the same manner as the squad.

f. The platoon *inclines* in the same manner as the squad. The squad nearest the direction of the turn serves as the base. To avoid an obstacle in the path of the *march*, the platoon leader directs **INCLINE AROUND LEFT (RIGHT)**.

g. When space is limited and the platoon leader wants to *march* his unit in the opposite direction (reverse), with the squad leaders at the head of their squads, he commands **Counter column, MARCH**. On the command of execution **MARCH** (at the *halt*), the first squad *marches* forward three steps,

4th SQUAD

2 STEPS

3d SQUAD

1 STEP

EXECUTE TWO SHORT COLUMN LEFTS

2d SQUAD

1 STEP

1st SQUAD

3 STEPS

NOTE: ADD ONE STEP WHEN EXECUTING THIS MOVEMENT WHILE MARCHING.

h. As the third squad leader *marches* past the last man in the third squad, he and his squad begin to march at the *half step*. After *marching* past the last man in each file, all other squads *incline* to the right and left as necessary, obtain *normal interval* on the third squad, and begin to *march* with the *half step*. When all squads are abreast of each other, they begin *marching* with a 30-inch step without command.

j. When *marching*, the preparatory command **Counter column** is given as the left foot strikes the marching surface and the command of execution **MARCH** is given the next time the left foot strikes the marching surface. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the platoon executes the movement basically the same as from the *halt*, except that the squad takes one additional step to ensure that the pivot foot is in the correct position to execute the movement.

NOTE: When the platoon leader and platoon sergeant are *marching* at their posts as part of a larger formation, the platoon leader takes three steps forward and executes a *column right, marches* across the front of the platoon, executes another *column right* (just beyond fourth squad), *marches* to his post in the most direct manner, takes up the *half step*, and then steps off with a 30-inch step when the squad leaders come on line. The platoon sergeant *inclines* to the right, follows the third squad until the movement is completed, and then resumes his post.

6-13. Marching to the Flanks

The platoon marches to the flank in the same manner as the squad.

6-14. Forming a File and Re-forming

a. The platoon forms a single file, from the right, left, or as designated, only when in column and at the *halt*. The commands are ***File from the left (right)***, **MARCH** or ***File in sequence three-two-four-one***, **MARCH**.

b. On the preparatory command, the squad leader of the designated squad gives the supplementary command ***Forward***. The other squad leaders command **STAND FAST**. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the lead squad *marches* forward. The squad leader next to the lead element (or as designated) looks over the shoulder nearest the moving element and commands ***Column half left (right)*** when the second from the last man is on line with him. The squad leader gives the command of execution **MARCH** as the right foot of the last man strikes the marching surface when abreast of him. On the command of execution, the squad leader executes the *column half left (right)*, then *inclines* without command to the right (left), and follows the last man of the preceding squad at correct distance. Other members of the squad march forward and execute the same movements as the squad leader. The remaining squads form the file in the same manner as the squad immediately behind the lead element.

c. The platoon may form a file and execute a column movement simultaneously from a column formation. The command for this movement is ***File from the left (right)***, ***Column left (right)***, **MARCH**. Following the platoon leader's preparatory command, the squad leader of the lead element commands ***Column left (right)***, instead of *forward*. The other squad leaders command **STAND FAST**. On the platoon leader's command of execution **MARCH**, the lead squad executes the *column left (right)*. The other squad leaders command ***Column left (right)*** at the appropriate time as stated in subparagraph b. They give the command of execution **MARCH** as the right foot of the last man strikes the marching surface at the pivot (column left), or the first time the last man's right foot strikes the marching surface after the pivot (*column right*).

d. The platoon re-forms to the original column formation only from the *halt*. The command is ***Column of fours to the right (left)***, **MARCH**.

NOTE: To *re-form* the platoon to its original column formation when the file was formed on the command ***In sequence***, _____**MARCH**, the commands **FALL OUT** and **FALL IN** must be given.

On the preparatory command, the squad leader of the base squad commands **STAND FAST**. All other squad leaders command ***Column half right (left)***. On the platoon leader's command of execution **MARCH**, the base squad stands fast all other squads execute the *column half right (left)* simultaneously. As each of the moving squad leaders reach a point (line) that ensures correct interval on the element to their left (right), they automatically *incline* to the left (right) and command ***Mark time***, **MARCH** and ***Squad***, **HALT** so that their squad is abreast of the base (other) squad when *halted*.

6-15. Forming a Column of Twos and Re-forming

a. The platoon forms a column of twos from the right or left when in a column of fours at the *halt*. The command is ***Column of twos from the left (right)***, **MARCH**.

b. On the preparatory command, the squad leaders of the two lead squads command ***Forward***. The other two squad leaders command **STAND FAST**. On the platoon leader's command of execution **MARCH**, the two lead squads *march* forward. The squad leader (second or third) next to the lead element gives the command to start both of the remaining squads in motion. Looking over the shoulder nearest the moving elements, the squad leader gives the preparatory command ***Column half left (right)*** (when the second from the last man is abreast of him) and then gives the command of execution **MARCH** as the

right foot of the last man strikes the marching surface abreast of him. On the platoon leader's command of execution, both squad leaders execute the *column half left (right)*, *incline* to the right (left) without command, and follow the last men of the preceding squads. at correct distance (do not close the space if the files of the two leading squads are not even). Other members of the remaining squads *march* forward and execute the same movements as their squad leaders.

c. The platoon may form a column of twos and execute a column movement simultaneously from a column formation. The command for this movement is ***Column of twos from the left (right)***, ***Column left (right)***, **MARCH**. The squad leaders of the lead squads command ***Column left (right)*** instead of *forward*. The squad leader of the second (third) squad gives the command ***Column left (right)***; however, he executes *column half left (right)*. The remaining two squad leaders command **STAND FAST**. On the platoon leader's command of execution **MARCH**, the lead squads execute the *column left (right)*. The squad leader (second or third) next to the lead elements gives the command to start both squads in motion. Looking over the shoulder nearest the moving elements, the squad leader gives the preparatory command ***Column left (right)*** when the second from the last man is abreast of him; then he gives the command of execution **MARCH** as the right foot of the last man strikes the marching surface at the pivot (*column left*) or the first time the last man's right foot strikes the marching surface after the pivot (*column right*). Although the command is *Column left (right)*, the outside squads (fourth or first) execute *column half left (right)*.

d. The platoon *re-forms* to the original column formation only from the *halt*. The command is ***Column of fours to the right (left)***, **MARCH**. On the preparatory command, the squad leaders of the base squads command **STAND FAST**. The trailing squad leaders command ***Column half right (left)***. On the platoon leader's command of execution **MARCH**, the base squads stand fast. The trailing squad leaders execute slightly more than *the column half right (left)* simultaneously. As the trailing squad leaders reach a point (line) that will ensure correct interval on the element to their left (right), they automatically *incline* to the left (right). The squad leader nearest the stationary squads (second or third) commands ***Mark time***, **MARCH** and ***Squads***, **HALT**.