

Section 2



INTRODUCTION TO TACTICS I

Key Points

- 1 The Elements of a Fire Team
- 2 The Elements of a Rifle Squad



Soldiers with sharply honed skills form the building blocks of combat effective squads and platoons. They must maintain a high state of physical fitness. They must be experts in the use of their primary weapons. They must be proficient in infantry skills (land navigation, camouflage, individual movement techniques, survival techniques, and so forth). Finally, they must know and practice their roles as members of fire teams, squads, and platoons.

Introduction

The Army's smallest maneuver element controlled by a leader is the **fire team**. The fire team is the building block for all Army tactical operations. Fire teams make up **squads**; squads make up **platoons**. Army lieutenants lead platoons as part of an infantry rifle company.

This section explains the elements, weapons, roles, and responsibilities of the fire team and rifle squad. Success in tactical operations depends on Soldiers at all levels understanding their tactical mission and the steps necessary to accomplish it.

SGT Tommy Rieman led his rifle squad in a firefight in Iraq in 2003. These Soldiers faced enormous odds—and won.

fire team

an infantry element of four Soldiers: a fire team leader, an automatic rifleman, a grenadier, and a rifleman

squad

a nine-Soldier infantry unit made up of the squad leader and two fire teams

platoon

an infantry unit led by a lieutenant consisting of three rifle squads and a headquarters element

Beating 10:1 Odds, Soldier Earns Silver Star

August 26, 2004—In a fight, two against one is bad odds. Ten against one is a recipe for disaster. Yet those were the odds SGT Tommy Rieman and his squad faced and beat when they were ambushed by more than 50 anti-American insurgents in Iraq last December.

Rieman, 24, a team leader in Company B, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, was awarded the Purple Heart and the Silver Star for his heroic actions [that] December day during a ceremony at Devil Brigade Field August 6. He was also awarded the Army Commendation Medal with a "V" device for valor for a separate reconnaissance mission that took place in March 2003.

Rieman was in charge during the patrol that garnered him the Silver Star because he had scouted the area before and knew the terrain. His eight-man patrol was in three light-skinned Humvees with no doors when the first rocket-propelled grenade hit.

"The thing I remember most was the sound of the explosion. It was so loud," said Rieman.

They were hit by three RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and a barrage of small arms fire coming from 10 dug-in enemy fighting positions. Staying in the kill zone meant certain death, so the vehicles never stopped moving. Rieman knew he had to return fire. Bullets whizzed after them as the vehicles sped away from the ambush and the Soldiers found themselves caught in another ambush.

There were maybe 50 enemy attackers blasting away at him with small arms fire from a grove of palm trees nearby. Injuries to his men were beginning to pile up. Out of [Rieman's] squad, SGT Bruce Robinson had lost his right leg in the RPG attack and SPC Robert Macallister had been shot in the buttocks. Rieman himself had been shot in the right arm and chest, and had shrapnel wounds to his chest, stomach, and ear. Worst of all, they were almost out of ammo.

He began firing away with his M203 grenade launcher, raining round after round down on the attackers. After being battered by 15 of Rieman's 40mm grenades, the enemy's guns were silent.

The Elements of a Fire Team

SGT Rieman led an infantry rifle squad of eight other Soldiers. That nine-Soldier squad fought as two four-Soldier fire teams, plus the squad leader, SGT Rieman.

A squad's fire teams are referred to as the Alpha Team and Bravo Team. Each fire team has four Soldiers—a fire team leader, a rifleman, an automatic rifleman, and a grenadier. The team members' rank and experience will range from a private (E-1) straight out of Initial Entry Training (IET) and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) to a specialist (E-4) who may have anywhere from one to four years of experience. The team leader is generally a sergeant (E-5) with three to five years of experience.

The team members' positions (rifleman, automatic rifleman, and grenadier) are based on their assigned weapons (rifle, squad automatic weapon [SAW], and M203 grenade launcher). The platoon leader and platoon sergeant consider each Soldier's experience, skill with the weapon, and longevity in the unit before assigning the Soldier a position on the fire team. The rifleman, team leader, and squad leader carry rifles from the M16/M4 family of weapons, based on the table of organization and equipment (TO&E) for various units.

Rifleman

The *rifleman* carries an M16/M4 rifle, a night-vision device, and an infrared (IR) aiming device. Riflemen carry close-combat optic devices and reflexive fire optics. Their role is to engage targets within the range and capability of their weapon. They may also serve as pace man, compass man, near- or far-side security, en route recorder, or ammo bearer.

The M4 Carbine is the fourth generation of the Army's M16 rifle, which was introduced during the Vietnam War. It fires a 5.56 mm round. The M4 has been a part of the Army inventory since 1997. It uses a 30-round magazine and offers the rifleman two firing modes: semiautomatic (a single shot every time the rifleman pulls the trigger) and three-round burst (three shots every time the rifleman pulls the trigger). It has a shorter barrel than

If the platoon does not have enough sergeants to fill all the platoon's team leader positions, the most experienced specialist with the best leadership qualities will be promoted to the leadership rank of corporal and will lead a fire team. The corporal remains at the pay grade of a specialist (E-4), but has the additional leadership responsibilities of a sergeant. The corporal will remain the fire team leader until promotion to sergeant, or until the platoon receives a new sergeant.

Fire Team

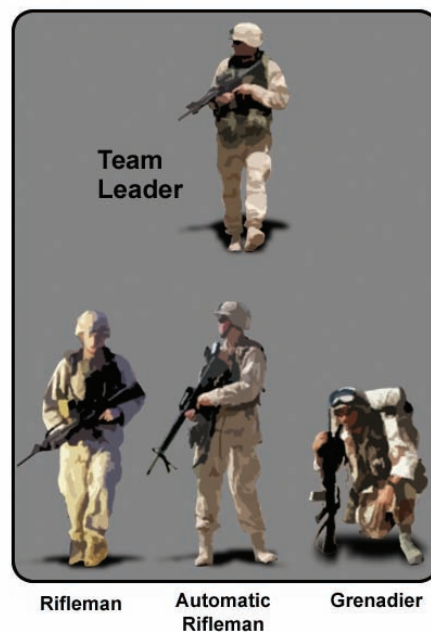


Figure 2.1 Fire Team



Figure 2.2 M4/M4A1 Carbine



Figure 2.3 M4 MWS Carbine



Figure 2.4 Mounting the M68 Close Combat Optic to the M16A1/A2/A3



Figure 2.5 M68 Close Combat Optic Mounted on M16A4/M4-Series Weapons

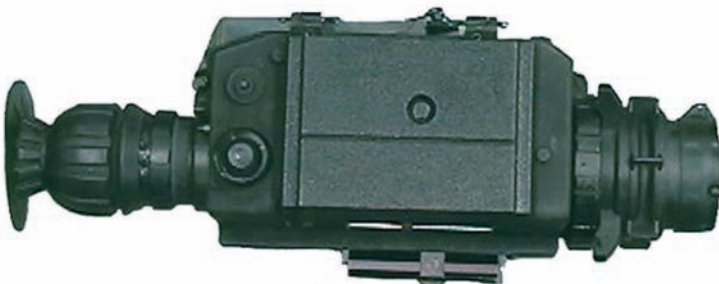


Figure 2.6 Thermal Weapons Sight for M16A1/A2/A3

the M16 and a collapsible stock, making it lighter and easier for Soldiers to use in close quarters, such as inside a building or in an urban area. Its enhanced upper rail allows Soldiers to mount various day and night sighting devices to improve their effectiveness.

The M4 weighs about seven and a half pounds. A bayonet can be attached for hand-to-hand fighting. It can reach out—accurately—to 600 meters—or more than a quarter-mile away.

Automatic Rifleman

The *automatic rifleman* carries an M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW), a night-vision device, and an IR aiming device. The automatic rifleman's role is to use his or her weapon to maximum effect.

The M249 Squad Automatic Weapon delivers accurate, lethal, and direct automatic fire. Like the M4, it fires a 5.56 mm round. It has been part of the Army inventory since 1987.

TABLE 2.1

Characteristics of the M16-/M4-Series Weapons

Characteristic	M16A1	M16A2/A3	M16A4	M4
WEIGHT (pounds):				
Without magazine and sling	6.35	7.78	9.08	6.49
With sling and loaded:				
20-round magazine	6.75	8.48	9.78	7.19
30-round magazine	7.06	8.79	10.09	7.50
Bayonet knife, M9	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Scabbard	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30
Sling, M1	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40
LENGTH (inches):				
Rifle w/bayonet knife	44.25	44.88	44.88	N/A
Overall rifle length	30.00	39.63	39.63	N/A
Butterstock closed	N/A	N/A	N/A	29.75
Butterstock open	N/A	N/A	N/A	33.0
Operational Characteristics:				
Barrel rifling-right hand 1 twist (inches)	12	7	7	7
Muzzle velocity (feet per second)	3,250	3,100	3,100	2,970
Cyclic rate of fire (rounds per minute)	700-800	700-900	800	700-900
Maximum Effective Rate of Fire:				
Semiautomatic (rounds per minute)	45-65	45	45	45
Burst (3-round bursts)(rounds per minute)	N/A	90	90	90
Automatic (rounds per minute)	150-200	150-200 A3	N/A	N/A
Sustained (rounds per minute)	12-15	12-15	12-15	12-15
RANGE (meters):				
Maximum range	2,653	3,600	3,600	3,600
Maximum effective range:				
Point target	460	550	550	500
Area target	N/A	800	600	600



Figure 2.7 M249 Squad Automatic Weapon

CS stands for 0-chloro-benzalmalononitrile, which is a white solid powder usually mixed with a dispersal agent, like methylene chloride, that carries the particles through the air.



Figure 2.8 M4 Carbine With M203A1 Grenade Launcher

The M249 SAW uses 30-round M4 magazines or 200-round preloaded plastic magazines. It weighs a little more than 16 pounds, or twice the weight of an M4. The M249 has a maximum effective range of 1,000 meters—a full kilometer or more than half a mile away.

Grenadier

The *grenadier* carries an M203A1 grenade launcher attached to an M4. It adds about 11 pounds to the weight of the M4. The grenadier carries the same equipment as the others in the squad.

The M203A1 grenade launcher fires out 40 mm grenade rounds. It can fire high-explosive (HE) rounds, tear gas (CN/CS/OC) rounds, smoke rounds, nonlethal projectiles, signal rounds, and practice rounds. The maximum effective range for the M203A1 is 350 meters—or three-and-a-half football fields.

Fire Team Leader

The fire team leader carries an M4 and leads by example. The leader moves the fire team and controls the rate and placement of its fire. Fire team leaders keep track of their teams and their teams' equipment. They make sure their teams meet unit standards and help their squad leaders as necessary.

Buddy Teams

Fire teams are divided into two-Soldier *buddy teams*. Buddy team members support and watch out for each other during combat or other operations. FM 7-8 states that the leader and the automatic rifleman form one buddy team and the grenadier and rifleman form the other, but this is not always the case. Based on unit standing operating procedures (SOPs) and depending on the mission, many units may place the grenadier with the team

TABLE 2.2

General Data for M249 Squad Automatic Weapon

Ammunition	5.56-mm ball and tracer (4:1 mix) ammunition is packaged in 200-round drums, each weighing 6.92 pounds; other types of ammunition available are ball, tracer, blank, and dummy.
Tracer burnout	900 meters (+)
Length of M249	40.87 inches
Weight of M249	16.41 pounds
Weight of tripod mount M122 with traversing and elevating mechanism and pintle	16 pounds
Maximum range	3,600 meters
Maximum effective range	1,000 meters with the tripod and T&E
Area: Tripod	1,000 meters
Bipod	800 meters
Point: Tripod	800 meters
Bipod	600 meters
Suppression	1,000 meters
Maximum extent of grazing fire obtainable over uniformly sloping terrain	600 meters
Height of M249 on tripod mount M122A1	16 inches
Rates of fire:	
Sustained	100 rounds per minute Fired in 6- to 9-round bursts with 4 to 5 seconds between bursts (change barrel every 2 minutes)
Rapid	200 rounds per minute Fired in 6- to 9-round bursts with 2 to 3 seconds between bursts (change barrel every 2 minutes)
Cyclic	650 to 850 rounds per minute Continuous burst (change barrel every minute)
Basic load, ammunition	1,000 rounds (in 200-round drums)
Elevation, tripod controlled	+200 mils
Elevation, tripod free	+445 mils
Depression, tripod controlled	-200 mils
Depression, tripod free	-445 mils
Traverse, controlled by traversing and elevating mechanism	100 mils
Normal sector or file (with tripod)	875 mils
Note: T&E=traverse and elevation mechanism	

TABLE 2.3

Technical Data for the M203/M203A1 Grenade Launcher

WEAPON**Length:**

Rifle and grenade launcher (overall)	99.0 cm (39 inches)
Barrel only	30.5 cm (12 inches)
Rifling	25.4 cm (10 inches)

Weight:

Launcher, unloaded	1.4 kg (3.0 pounds)
Launcher, loaded	1.6 kg (3.5 pounds)
Rifle and grenade launcher, both fully loaded	5.0 kg (11.0 pounds)

Number of lands:

6 right hand twists

AMMUNITION

Caliber	40 mm
Weight	About 227 grams (8 ounces)

OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Action	Single shot
Sights:	
Front	Leaf sight assembly
Rear	Quadrant sight
Chamber pressure	206,325 kilopascals (35,000 pounds per square inch)
Muzzle velocity	76 meters per second (250 feet per second)
Maximum range	About 400 meters (1,312 feet)
Maximum effective range:	
Fire-team sized area target	350 meters (1,148 feet)
Vehicle or weapon point target	150 meters (492 feet)
Minimum safe firing range (HE):	
Training	130 meters (426 feet)
Combat	31 meters (102 feet)
Minimum arming range	About 14 to 38 meters (46 to 125 feet)
Rate of fire	5 to 7 rounds per minute
Minimum combat load	36 high-explosive rounds

leader so that the team leader can direct the grenadier to mark targets. Because the M203 can mark targets, some units assign M203s to squad leaders so that they can mark targets for the squad.

Why These Weapons?

At this point, you may be wondering why rifle team members carry different weapons. Why not have everyone carry a grenade launcher, for example?

There are several reasons. The fire team must be able to engage and destroy the many different types of targets they are likely to meet on the battlefield. The different weapons the members carry give the team a balance of firepower, simplify the logistics of supplying ammunition, and vary the load each Soldier has to carry. The heavier the weapon, the less other gear or ammunition a Soldier can bear and the less he or she can maneuver.

Critical Thinking

Considering the characteristics, capabilities, and versatility of the fire team's weapons, what factors must the squad leader or fire team leader take into consideration when deciding which team member to assign to each weapon?

The team uses its M16/M4s to engage individual enemy fighters, especially at close quarters, while the M249 is used to engage a concentration of troops or targets covering a larger area with heavy, continuous fire.

Once you compare the maximum rates of fire, the sustained rates of fire, and the maximum range of the rifle and automatic rifle, you can easily understand the value of an automatic rifle on the fire team. The M249's rate of fire and range allow the gunner to cover fire team members when they are maneuvering on the offensive. It is also the backbone of the team's defense when attacked—leaders position the SAW to protect a unit's front, flanks, and rear. In the defense, leaders assign the M249 a *final protective line* to defeat the enemy's attempts to overrun their defensive position. The automatic rifleman has increased lethality (deadliness) and range over the rifleman, but because of the M249's high rate of fire, the automatic rifleman must also carry more ammunition than the rifleman does.

The M203 grenade launcher is the most versatile of the fire team's weapons. The primary advantage the M203 has over the rifle and automatic rifle is that it provides the fire team with indirect fire capabilities; that is, the grenadier can engage targets that he or she cannot see along a direct line of sight. Because the M203 round travels at a high trajectory, or arch, the rounds can reach enemy soldiers in "dead space" (gullies, ditches, trenches, or other fighting positions), or it can reach enemy fighters taking cover in bunkers or in buildings.

When shooting the high-explosive (HE) round, the grenadier is essentially sending out to 350 meters an exploding round with the lethality of a hand grenade—but at a distance far greater than any Soldier can throw a hand grenade. The dual purpose HE round can penetrate up to two inches of light armor, and therefore can destroy trucks and other lightly armored vehicles. During night operations, the grenadier can illuminate the enemy with the star parachute round, allowing other fire team members to see and engage the enemy. The grenadier can show the team members where the enemy is located by using the marking round. The marking round can also be used to indicate landing zones for helicopters or targets for close air support aircraft to attack. The grenadier can also use the star cluster

I love the infantry because they are the underdogs. They are the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they even learn to live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can't be won without.

Ernie Pyle, World War II correspondent

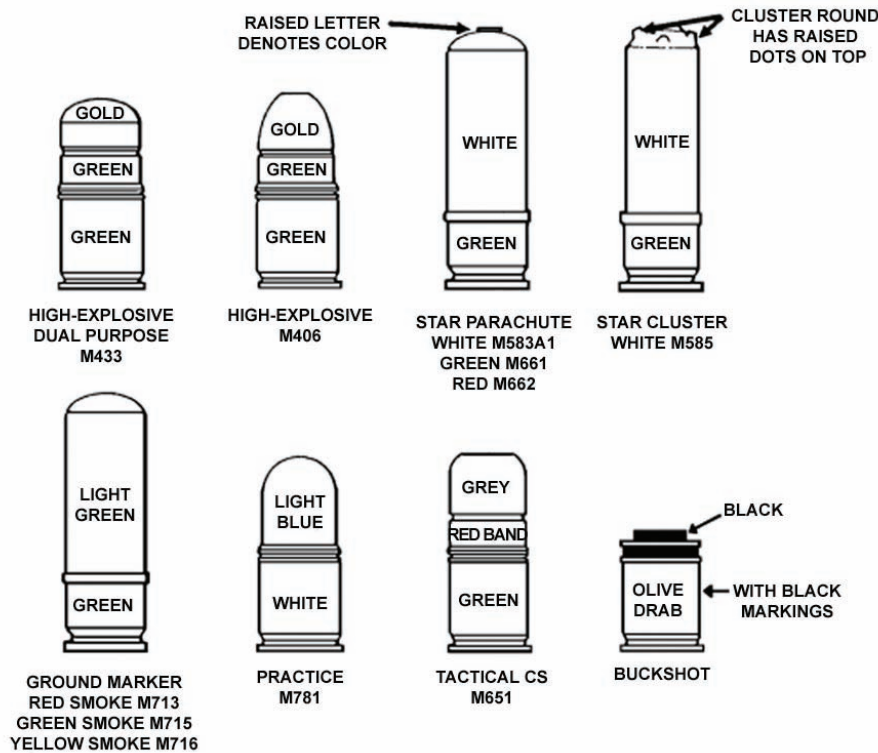


Figure 2.9 Cartridges for the M203 Grenade Launcher

as a prearranged signal to begin a certain tactical action. In urban environments, the grenadier can use tactical CS to flush the enemy out of hiding, or the grenadier can use the buckshot round when entering or clearing rooms or buildings.

As you can see, the various ammunition available for the M203 gives the small fire team a lot of varied firepower and capability that a rifle and an automatic rifle can't provide. The grenadier must also carry a heavier load, however, due to the weight of each round.

The Elements of a Rifle Squad

Two fire teams and a squad leader make up the squad. The rifle squad leader is generally a staff sergeant (E-6) with six to eight years of experience, who came up from the ranks and started as a fire-team rifleman. The squad leader is responsible for everything the squad does—or fails to do. He or she is a tactical leader and leads by example.

Among other things, the squad leader:

- Maneuvers the squad and controls the rate and distribution of its fire
- Trains the squad members in their individual and collective tasks
- Manages the squad's needs, requesting and issuing ammunition, water, rations, and equipment
- Keeps track of the squad's Soldiers and their equipment
- Inspects the squad's weapons, clothing, and equipment and directs their maintenance.

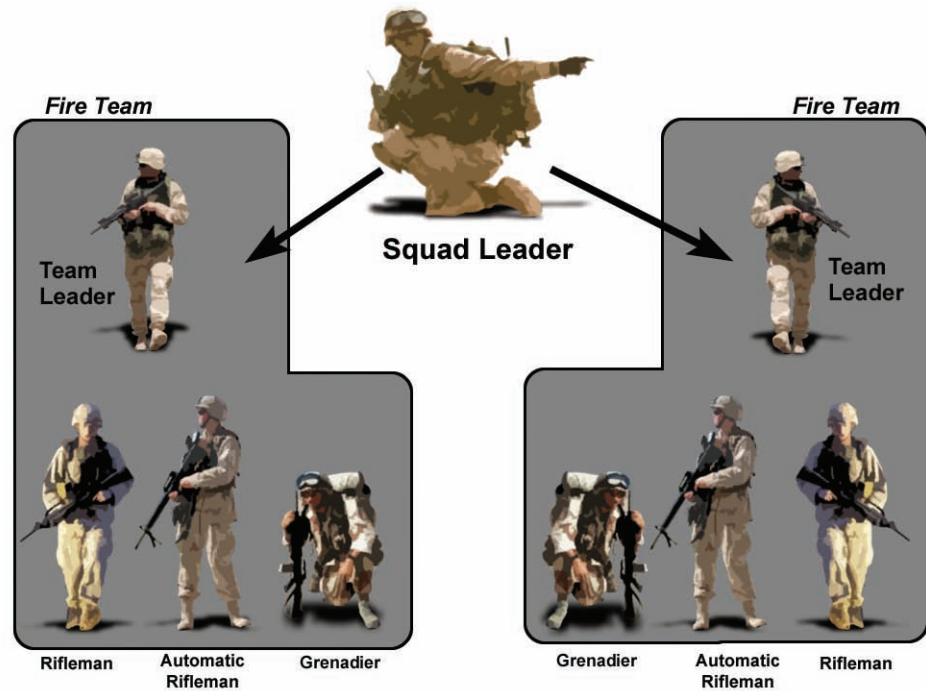


Figure 2.10 Squad

Most of the maneuver and firepower of a rifle platoon derives from the platoon's three rifle squads. Later you will learn more about the infantry rifle platoon and the composition, duties, and responsibilities of the platoon's headquarters element. Together, the rifle squads and headquarters element make up the rifle platoon an Army lieutenant leads. Soon you will study the many types of missions the infantry fire team and squad may be called upon to complete as part of the infantry rifle platoon.

Critical Thinking

How do experience and time in service enhance the rifle squad leader's leadership?

The noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps is called "the backbone of the Army." Why do you think that is?

What can a second lieutenant expect to learn from his or her NCOs?

Critical Thinking

Why do all commissioned officers, regardless of branch, need to know infantry tactics?



CONCLUSION

The infantry is often described as “the tip of the spear.” The four Soldiers in a fire team and the nine Soldiers in a rifle squad represent the sharpened tip of that spear. Success in a mission depends on all Soldiers in the fire team and squad understanding the unit’s mission—its task and purpose—and how each Soldier’s assigned weapon and each Soldier’s role and responsibility relate to mission success. Fire teams and squads led by the Army lieutenant form the Army’s basic maneuver element—the infantry rifle platoon—the foundation on which all tactical operations rest. Now that you understand the composition and leadership of the fire team and squad, in the next lesson you’ll learn how individuals and fire teams move on the battlefield.

Learning Assessment

1. Name the duty positions that make up a fire team.
2. Identify the weapons that each member of the fire team carries.
3. Name four responsibilities of the rifle squad leader.
4. Describe the primary purpose of each weapon in the fire team.

Key Words

fire team

squad

platoon

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