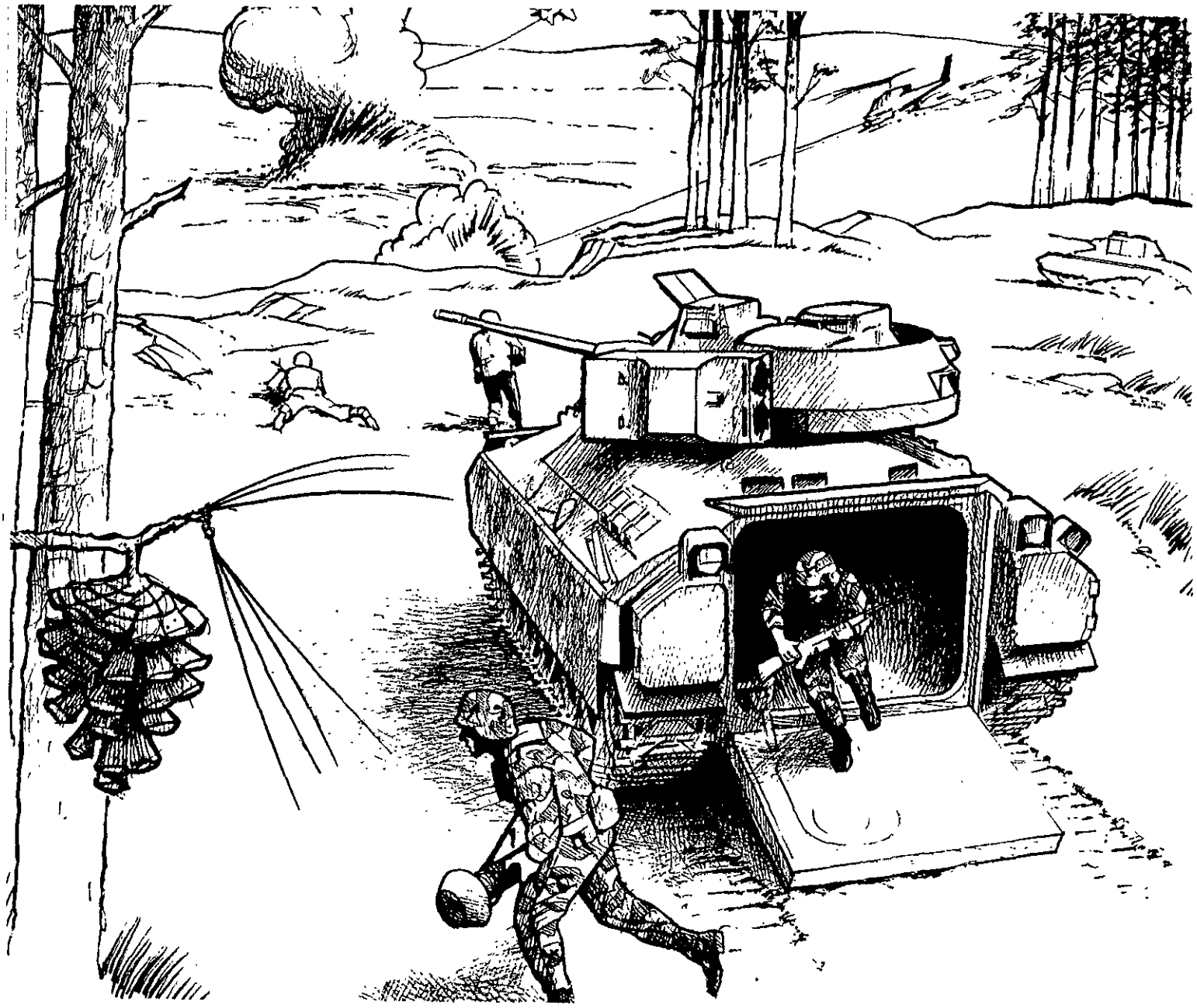

BRADLEY INFANTRY ON THE AIRLAND BATTLEFIELD

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These are exciting times for the infantry, for we are part of an Army that has recently made a commitment to change in three vital areas.

First, we have returned to a doctrine of maneuver warfare and have embodied this doctrine in a new FM 100-5, "Operations." As part of this new doctrinal orientation, we have returned to a study of the operational level of war, a concept we had neglected for many years. In addition, our AirLand Battle doctrine has reemphasized our need to work more closely with our sister services and our allies. There has also been a new emphasis on the lessons of military history as well as a new appreciation for many of the classical military writers, such as Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Du Picq.

Second, we have reorganized our fighting units under the Army of Excellence (AOE) plan. Our combat divisions and maneuver battalions are now more streamlined, with a higher tooth-to-tail ratio and with more flexibility and depth. We have also added combat forces to our Army, especially light divi-

...ions and Special Operations Forces (SOF).

Third, we have begun the greatest force modernization program in our history, a program that will take the Army into the 21st century outfitted with the best weapons and equipment in the world. The M1 tank, the M2 and M3 fighting vehicles, the Apache and Black Hawk helicopters, and the MLRS and Patriot weapon systems represent only a few of the many new systems we are now integrating into our Army.

Our heavy forces have been significantly affected by this combination of new doctrine, organization, and equipment. And while it will be many years before all of our tank and mechanized battalions have the new tanks and fighting vehicles, all of us must consider today how the combined arms team will operate on the AirLand battlefield.

From the infantryman's point of view, this means considering how mechanized infantry units equipped with the Bradley fighting vehicle will operate on that battlefield.

THE BRADLEY

The Bradley fighting vehicle (BFV) represents the most dramatic improvement in the infantry's combat capability since the introduction of the machinegun. For the first time in our history, the infantry has a true fighting vehicle. Its firepower, speed, and armor protection, when combined with its ability to carry infantrymen into battle, make it an extremely lethal fighting system. The BFV is not just an improved APC; it has caused a radical change in the way our mechanized infantry forces operate.

Despite its increased capabilities, the BFV has certain limitations that must be considered in its employment. It is not a light tank. Although it is quick and agile and has an impressive array of weapons, it does not have the armor protection that allows it to travel around the battlefield like a tank. Therefore, its crew must use covered and concealed routes when possible, and hull-down firing positions. The vehicle cannot be expected to move across open ground against an entrenched and prepared enemy if the enemy has good long-range antiarmor shots. The Bradley's survivability is provided by its proper employment to include careful positioning, clever use of the ground, and effective overwatch techniques. (See also "Fighting the IFV," by Captain Robert P. Sedar, INFANTRY, September-October 1981, pp. 34-37, and "Training Strategy for the IFV," by Lieutenant Colonel John D. Fuller, INFANTRY, September-October 1980, pp. 15-19.)

But it is the increase in vehicle capability and complexity that has led to fundamental changes in the way mechanized infantry does business. The BFV requires a fully trained three-man crew to properly fight the vehicle, yet at the same time it carries a rifle team whose primary role is to dismount and fight on the ground. The leadership of the Bradley squad must be balanced between the fighting vehicles and the dismounted rifle team.

Many of the old methods of command and control and the old roles of leaders must change to accommodate this new and powerful system. One of the major changes is that the basic level of tactics for Bradley infantry is the platoon. Below this level Bradley squads execute drills, which are like the set plays called in the huddle of a football game. They allow the Bradley squad to react quickly and efficiently to the kinds of situations it can expect to encounter often on the battlefield. (See "Drills," by Major Royal A. Brown III and Captain Mark E. Crooks, INFANTRY, July-August 1985, pp. 35-38.)

PLATOON TACTICS

The Bradley platoon provides both the structure and the organizational flexibility to execute modern maneuver warfare. The platoon is equipped with four M2 Bradley fighting vehicles and organized with a platoon headquarters and three Bradley squads. The platoon leader with his headquarters and attached personnel are mounted in one BFV and the squads are mounted in the other three.

Each Bradley squad has one vehicle and nine Bradley infantrymen (11M). It is divided into a vehicle crew and a rifle team. A squad's leadership consists of a squad leader and an assistant squad leader. During mounted operations, the squad leader normally is part of the vehicle crew and acts as the vehicle commander while the assistant squad leader takes charge of the rifle team.

For hasty situations, where there is no time to plan, the rifle team always dismounts and is led on the ground by the squad leader. The assistant squad leader remains with the BFV. For deliberate situations, when adequate planning time is available, the placement of the squad leaders varies with the situation.

When organized for combat, the platoon realigns its leaders to facilitate the command and control function and to accommodate the control of the dismounted infantrymen. The key leaders are positioned to ensure that the critical vehicle commander positions are always filled with experienced and trained personnel. For example, the platoon leader is mounted in BFV #1, the platoon sergeant in BFV #4. The platoon master gunner, a new position in Bradley infantry units, and the assistant squad leader from BFV #4 (3d squad) assume control of the platoon leader's vehicle when he dismounts.

(Both the BFVs and the tanks in a task force use the same standardized numbering system to simplify command and control when they work together.)

The platoon's Bradleys fight in relation to its dismounted infantry elements. Thus, they can overwatch the dismounted rifle teams at ranges out to 2,000 meters, which lets the platoon leader use his infantry in restrictive terrain while employing the BFVs in more open, high-speed terrain.

The platoon moves and fights mounted whenever possible. When all of the platoon remains mounted, it fights as a single force under the control of the platoon leader. Rifle team members aid the crew in reloading the vehicle's weapons, man the firing port weapons, provide security, and remain oriented by looking out through the vision blocks.

When the tactical situation requires the platoon leader to dismount his platoon, he must make sure there is a complete crew (three men) in each Bradley so they can provide a base of fire and fight on the move if they must. In most cases, the platoon

leader will be with the dismounted element, because the dismounted action will usually be the most critical. The platoon sergeant will remain with the base of fire element, which normally consists of the Bradleys, although the platoon leader will exercise overall control of both elements.

In deliberate situations, where the platoon leader has an opportunity to analyze the factors of METT-T and to assess the effects of reorganization, and enough time to inform all platoon members of a temporary change in command relationships, he may choose to deviate from the normal hasty dismount command relationships.

For example, in offensive operations:

- If a mounted maneuver using BFVs is planned in conjunction with a dismounted assault, the platoon leader may choose to stay with the vehicles while the platoon sergeant maneuvers or infiltrates the dismount element to a position of advantage where they can set up a base of fire to allow the BFVs to move against the enemy force.
- If during night dismounted operations a link-up with the BFVs is planned to occur during daylight or when support from the BFVs weapons will be limited, all of the principal leaders may dismount.
- If in other operations the company commander's intent dictates rapid mounted movement, the platoon leader may choose to dismount only small security teams under their own leaders and try to bypass any resistance, even though there may be some risk.

Generally, in the defense, a platoon leader will have more opportunities for deliberate action, and he can adjust his mounted or dismounted organization more often.

Since defensive operations involve dismount operations that are usually position oriented, though, the maneuver element in the defense is most likely to be the BFV element. When this is the case, the platoon leader may choose to be with the vehicles to control the vehicle fight, leaving the platoon sergeant to control the dismounted elements. In addition, selected BFVs may be given an additional crew member each to load the TOW launcher if a heavy vehicle fight or long-range antiarmor fires are planned.

Regardless of the organizational method he uses, a platoon leader retains overall control of his platoon. An exception to this rule is a case in which the dismounted elements from several platoons are placed under the direct control of either the company commander or the company executive officer.

COMPANY TACTICS

The platoons themselves will normally operate as part of a company or company team. In a company team organization, the mechanized infantry platoons in the offense will operate with one or more armor platoons, and the company team commander will specify the combination of tank and infantry units he wants to use during any particular operation. For example, in a deliberate attack, he may direct that the tanks lead across the line of departure. If the terrain becomes restrictive, he will dismount his infantry to clear the restricted area, and the tanks will follow. Once beyond the restricted area, the infantry will remount and the tanks will again lead to the next dismount point.

For an assault on an objective, the dismounted infantry will move forward along covered and concealed routes to support a tank assault with close overwatch fires. The BFVs, meanwhile, will support the assault from long overwatch positions.

The BFV, because of its turret weapons, offers a number of defensive employment options not previously available to a combined arms team. These weapons allow the vehicle to fight against the enemy on its own, while the dismounted infantry elements fight the enemy in restricted terrain.

In the defense, Bradley units have four basic employment options: BFVs and dismounted infantry elements can be on the same battle position covering the same avenue of approach; on the same position covering different avenues of approach; on different battle positions covering the same avenue of approach; or consolidated at company team level.

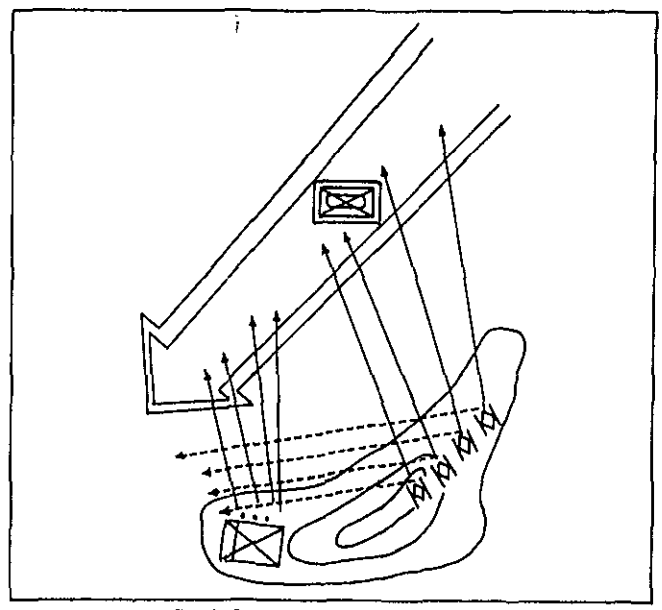


Figure 1. Same battle position, same avenue of approach.

The first of these options — same position, same avenue of approach — which is the usual one for M113 units, covers a wide range of tactical situations and provides the best security for the vehicles (Figure 1). If the battle position covers a mounted avenue of approach, the BFVs are positioned to cover the approach with fire. The dismounted infantry elements are placed so that they can cover any deadspace that might allow the enemy to infiltrate, or they are dug in around the vehicles for security.

If the battle position covers a dismounted avenue of approach, the infantry is positioned to cover that avenue and the BFVs are dug in (when possible) and used to supplement the defensive fires. This is not necessarily the ideal way to use a BFV, but it may be the only way if a unit is directed to defend a piece of restricted terrain.

In either case, the dismounted infantry elements are used to emplace obstacles and conduct reconnaissance and surveillance operations, including establishing observation posts, patrolling, and conducting counter-reconnaissance missions.

The second option — same battle position, different avenues

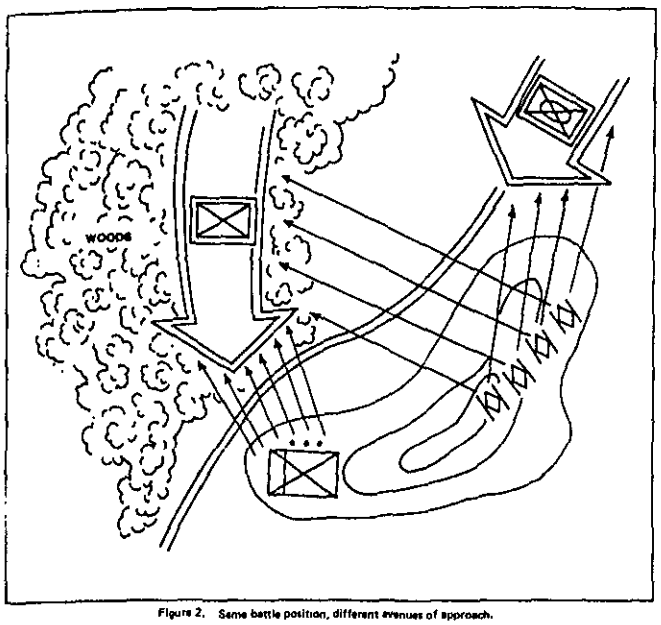


Figure 2. Same battle position, different avenues of approach.

of approach — is made possible by the two distinct elements into which Bradley-equipped infantry units can separate: dismounted elements and fighting vehicles (Figure 2).

In these situations, the dismounted elements occupy areas within the battle positions that offer the best cover and concealment and fields of fire to block the dismounted avenue of approach to the position. In the meantime, the BFVs cover a different, normally mounted avenue of approach, but they must be able to move rapidly to supplementary positions to provide supporting fires to the dismounted element.

In some defensive situations, a battle position will not have the type of terrain that allows the two elements an opportunity to use their distinct weapon systems to the fullest. However, the speed, agility, and long-range fires of the BFV allow the unit the third option — to cover the same avenue of approach as the dismounted elements but from a different location (Figure 3). Thus, a platoon leader may be directed to employ his BFVs on a battle position different from that of his dismounted infantry. This means that the dismounted infantry and BFVs fight separated but in relation to one another.

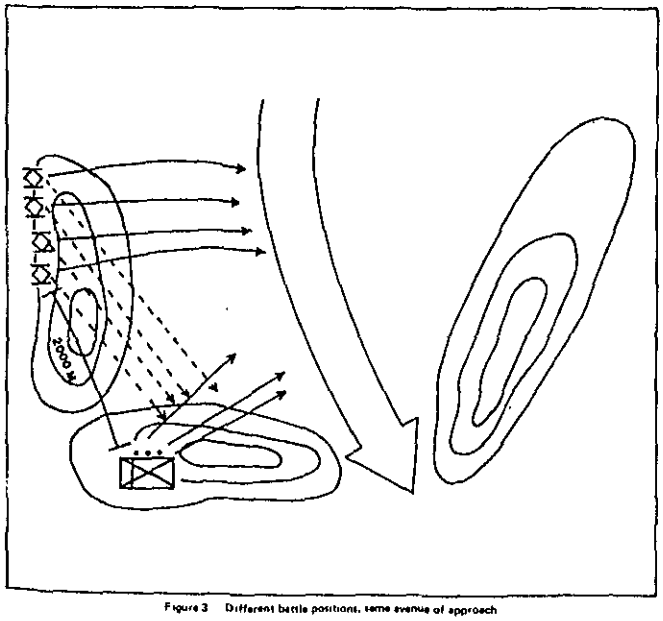


Figure 3 Different battle positions, same avenue of approach

Fighting in relation to one another simply means that the BFVs can give supporting fires to the dismounted elements from their primary or supplementary positions and that both elements are positioned to engage the enemy forces on the same avenue of approach but at different ranges. A maximum distance of separation of 2,000 meters allows the fires of the 25mm gun on the Bradley to reach and overlap the positions occupied by the dismounted teams.

A platoon leader may choose to locate with either element but will probably most often be with the BFVs. This will permit him to directly supervise their employment and to make sure they shift their fires to cover the dismounted infantry at the appropriate time.

As for the fourth option — consolidation at company team level — in certain situations, the vehicles and the dismounted elements may not be able to fight in relation to each other. Accordingly, the team commander may consolidate his dismounted elements in one location under the control of his executive officer, while he assumes control of the BFVs in a separate location. This could occur, for example, when a large number of dismounted troops are required to hold a position such as a strongpoint; or when the primary position for the dismounted elements does not give the BFVs adequate fields of fire; or when the dismounted elements have to occupy heavily wooded or rugged terrain that the BFVs cannot traverse; or when both a mounted and a dismounted avenue of approach have to be defended from the same battle position (Figure 4).

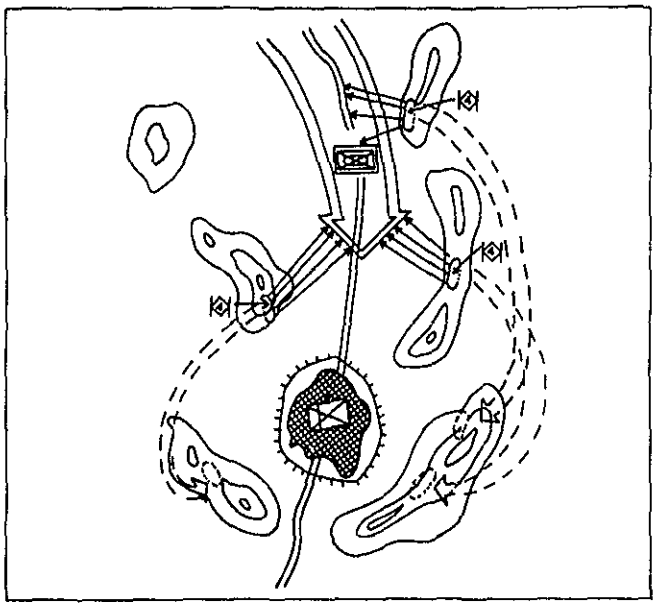
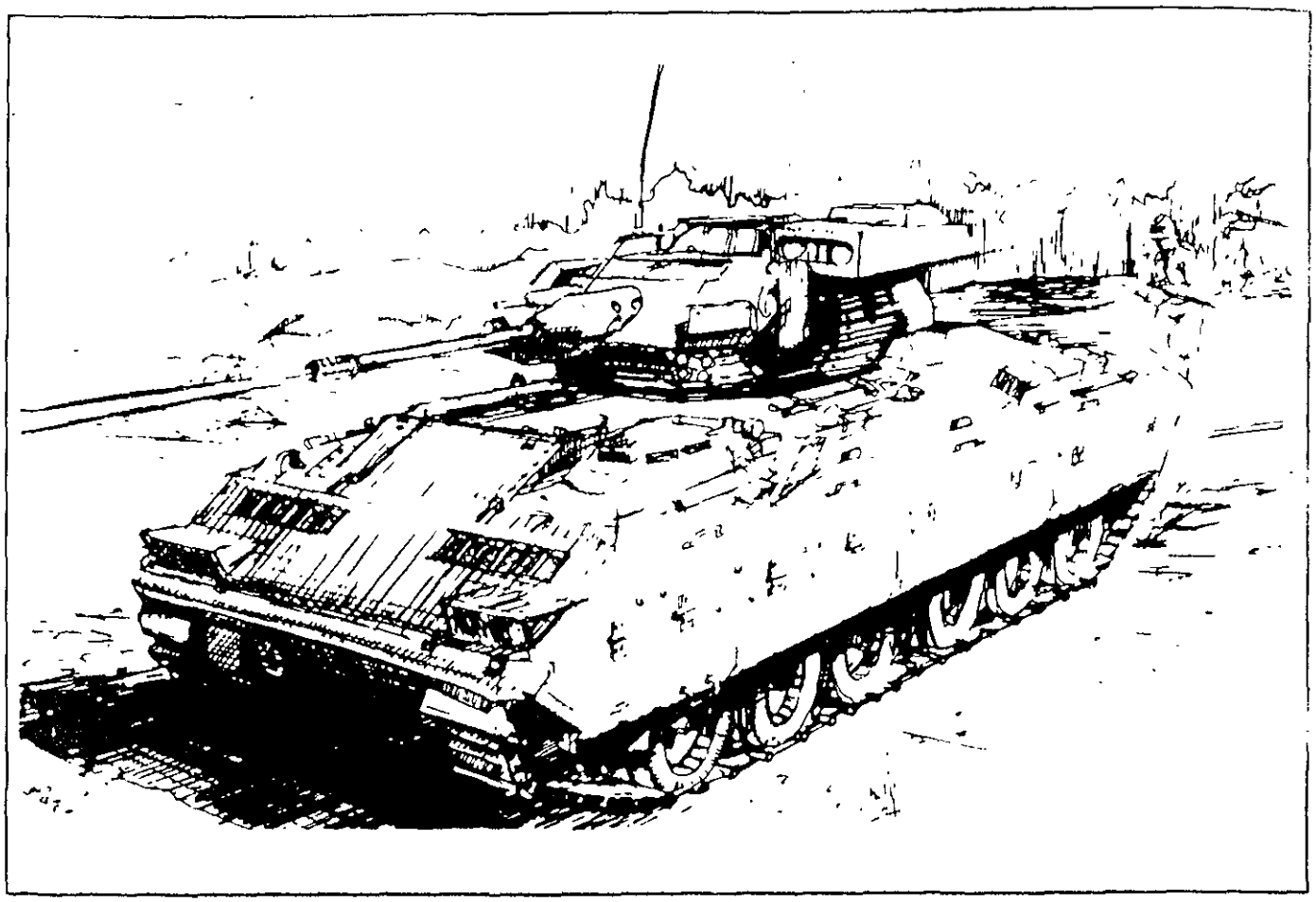


Figure 4. Company team defense option.

But even when a company's dismounted infantry elements are consolidated, the dismounted infantry and the BFVs may not be able to support each other initially. Plans should then be made to take advantage of the speed of the vehicles to reposition them as soon as possible to support the dismounted infantry.

In addition, during periods of limited visibility, a company team commander may modify his plans to provide additional



security for his fighting vehicle elements. He can do this by moving a rifle team to each fighting vehicle element's position or by consolidating the platoons on a single battle position.

SUMMARY

Modern maneuver warfare places a premium on quick-thinking leadership, aggressively executed tactics, and fast and powerful equipment. Equipment alone, however, will not bring us victory on the battlefield. Our soldiers must be well trained in tactics and gunnery; our officers and NCOs must be well trained in those leadership skills that allow an idea to be transformed into a plan and that plan to be professionally executed.

Above all, maneuver warfare for mechanized units means understanding how to operate with other elements of the combined arms team. In the end, it will be this combined team rather than its individual components that will win on the battlefield.

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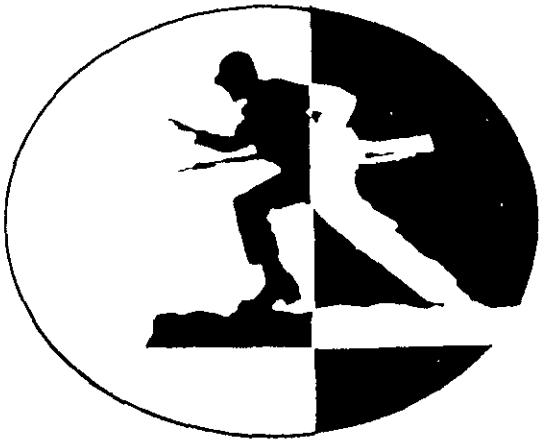
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