

Appendix D

Fighting Positions

A critical defensive task in combat in built-up areas is the selection and preparation of fighting positions.

1. Considerations. Leaders should consider the following factors when establishing fighting positions:

a. Protection. Leaders should select buildings that provide protection from direct and indirect fires. Reinforced concrete buildings with three or more floors provide suitable protection, while buildings constructed of wood, paneling, or other light materials require reinforcement to gain sufficient protection. One- to two-story buildings without strongly constructed cellars are vulnerable to indirect fires and require construction of overhead protection for each firing position.

b. Dispersion. Normally, a position should not be established in a single building when it is possible to occupy two or more buildings that permit mutually supporting fires. A position in one building without mutual support is vulnerable to bypass, isolation, and subsequent destruction from any direction.

c. Concealment. The fighting position should be concealed. Buildings that are obvious defensive positions should not be selected. The occupation of exposed buildings may be necessary because of requirements for security and fields of fire. Therefore, reinforcement of the structure must be accomplished to provide suitable protection within the building.

d. Fields of Fire. Positions should be mutually supporting and have interlocking fields of fire in all directions. Clearing fields of fire may require the destruction of adjacent buildings by using explosives, engineer equipment, and field expedients. Care should be taken to avoid highlighting the building as a defensive position.

e. Covered Routes. Defensive positions should have at least one covered route that permits resupply, MEDEVAC, reinforcement, or withdrawal from the building. The route can be established by one of the following means:

- Through walls to adjacent buildings
- Through underground systems
- Through communications trenches
- Behind protective buildings.

f. Observation. The building should permit observation of enemy avenues of approach and adjacent defensive sectors.

g. Fire Hazard. Avoid selecting positions in buildings that are a fire hazard. If flammable structures must be occupied, the danger of fire can be reduced by wetting the structure, laying an inch of sand on the floors, and providing fire extinguishers and firefighting equipment. Routes of escape should also be prepared in case of fire.

h. Time. The time available to prepare the defense could be the most critical factor. If enough time is insufficient, buildings that require extensive preparation should not be used. Conversely, buildings located in less desirable areas that require little improvement may be a better choice for a defensive position.

2. Preparation. Preparation of fighting positions depends on proper selection and construction.

a. Selecting Positions. Each weapon should be assigned a primary sector of fire to cover enemy approaches. Alternate positions that overwatch the primary sector should also be selected. These positions are usually located in an adjacent room on the same floor (Figures D-1A, D-1B, and D-1C). Each weapon must be assigned a supplementary position (to engage attacks from other directions) and an FPL.

b. Building Positions. There are many ways to establish a fighting position in a building.

(1) Window Position. Marines should kneel or stand on either side of a window. To fire downward from upper floors, tables or similar objects can be placed against the wall to provide additional elevation, but they must be positioned to prevent the weapon from protruding through the window (Figure D-2). Leaders should inspect positions to determine the width of sector that each position can engage.

(2) Loopholes. To avoid establishing a pattern of always firing from windows, loopholes should be prepared in walls. Marines should avoid firing directly through loopholes to enhance individual protection.

(a) Several loopholes are usually required for each weapon (primary, alternate, and supplementary positions). The number of loopholes should be carefully considered because they can weaken walls and reduce protection. Engineers should be consulted before numerous loopholes are made. Loopholes should be made by punching or drilling holes in walls and should be placed where they are concealed. Blasting loopholes can result in a large hole that can easily be seen by the enemy.

(b) Loopholes should be cone-shaped to obtain a wide arc of fire, to facilitate engagement of high and low targets, and to reduce the size of the exterior aperture (Figure D-3). The edges of a loophole splinter when hit by bullets; therefore, protective linings such as an empty sandbag held in place by wire mesh will reduce

spalling effects. When not in use, loopholes should be covered with sandbags to prevent the enemy from firing into or observing through them.

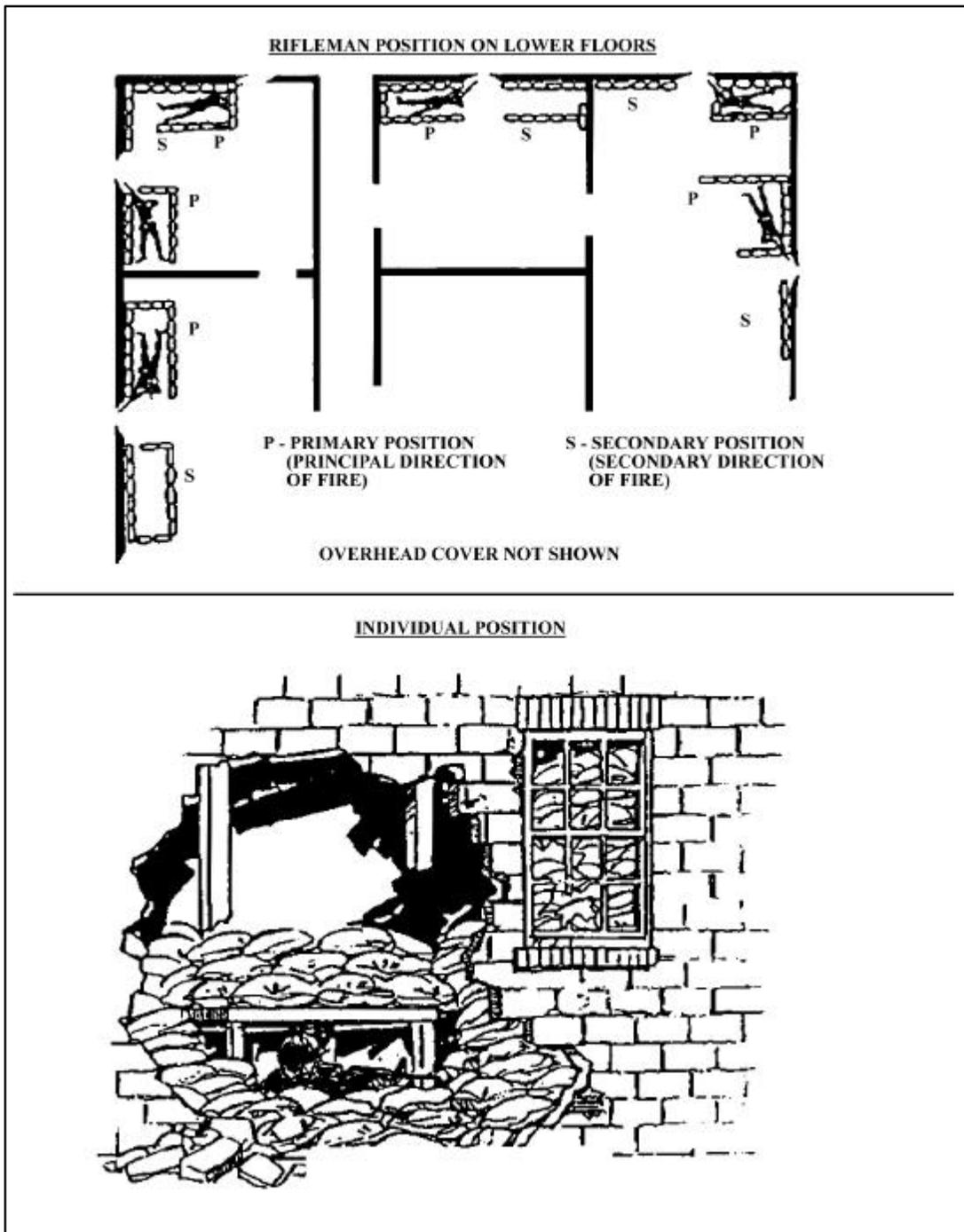


Figure D-1A. Weapon Positions

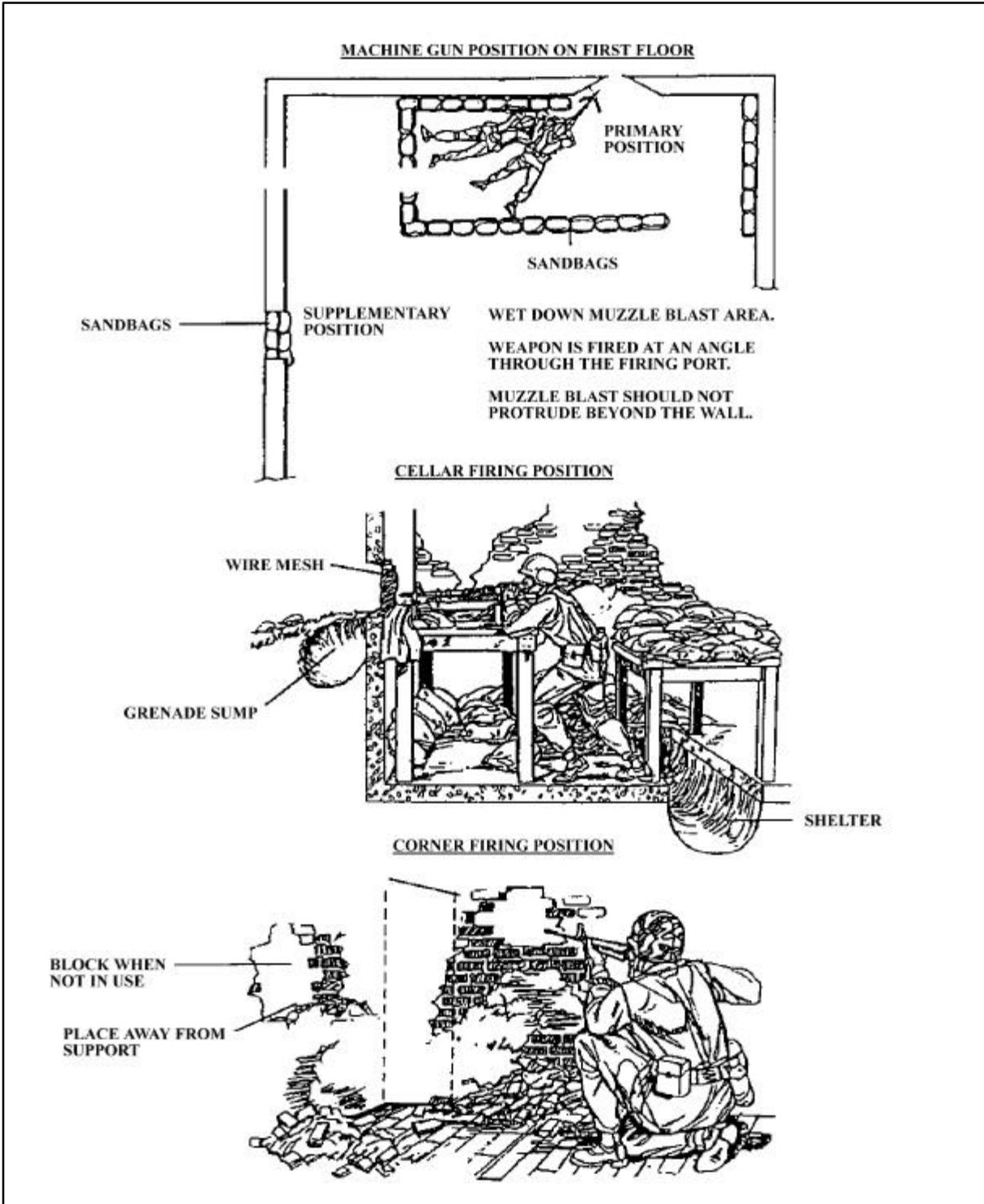


Figure D-1B. Weapon Positions (Continued)

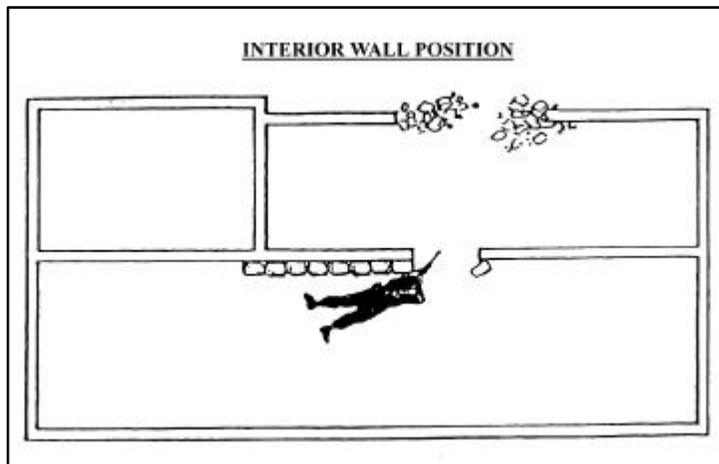


Figure D-1C. Interior Wall Position

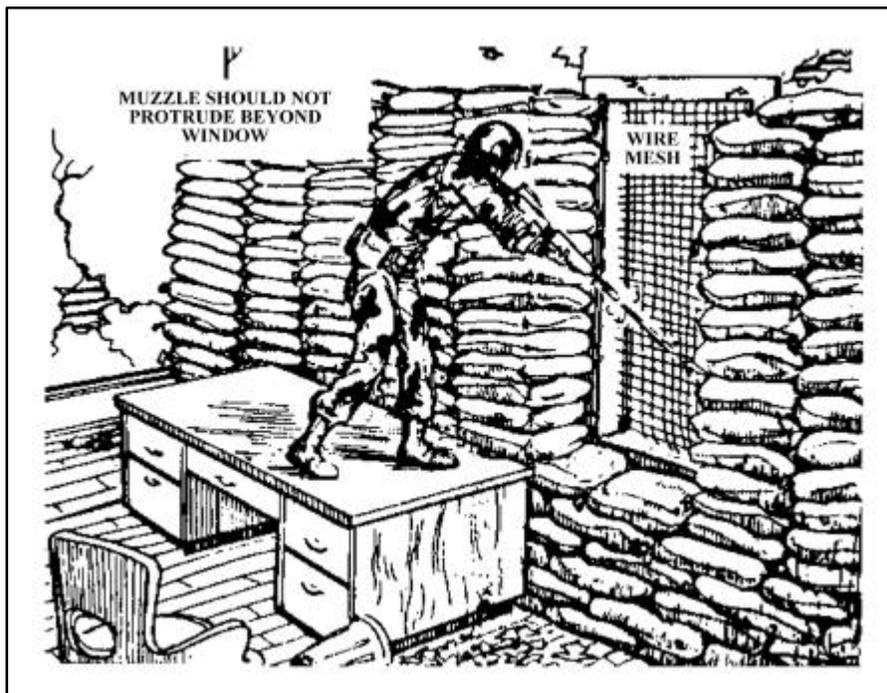


Figure D-2. Window Position

(c) Loopholes should also be prepared in interior walls and ceilings of buildings to permit fighting within the position. Interior loopholes should enable overwatch of stairs, halls, and unoccupied rooms and be concealed by pictures, drapes, or furniture. Loopholes in floors permit the defender to engage enemy personnel on lower floors with small-arms fire and grenades.

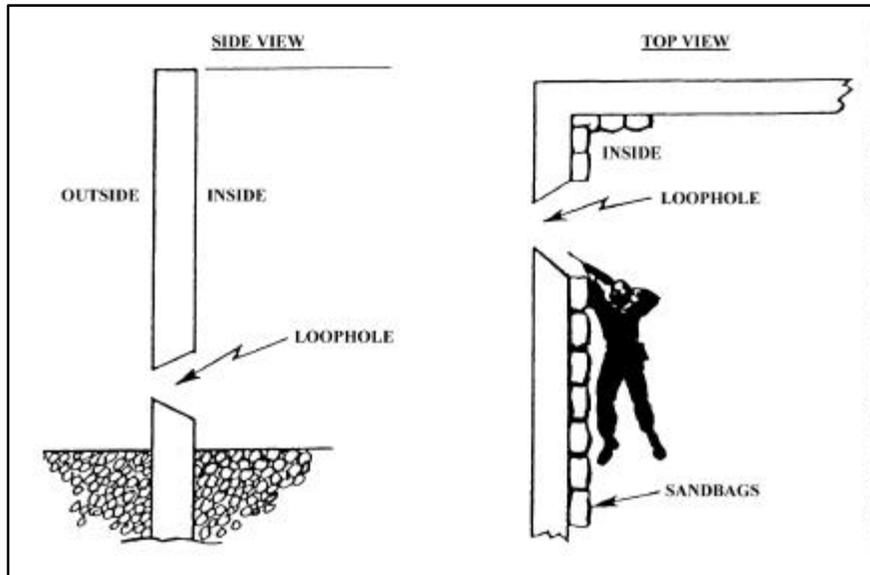


Figure D-3. Cone-Shaped Loopholes

(d) Although walls provide some frontal protection, they should be reinforced with sandbags, furniture filled with dirt, or other expedients. Each position should have overhead and all-around protection (Figure D-4).

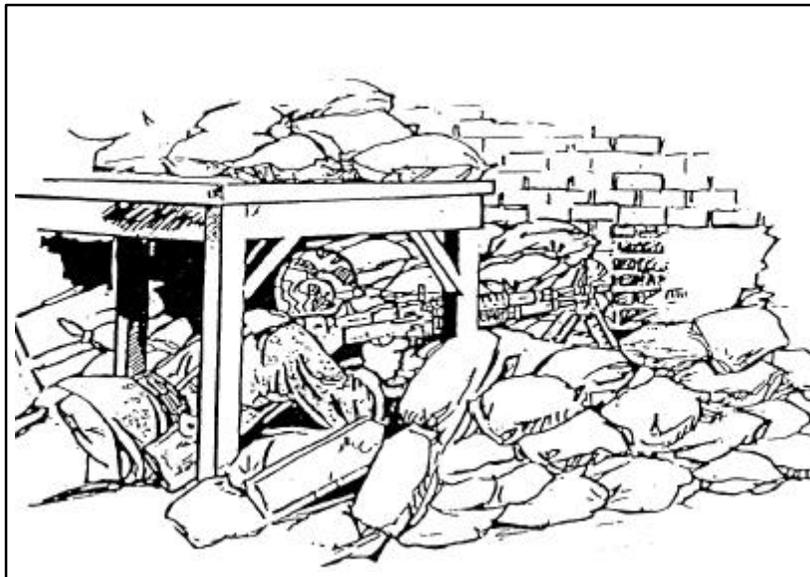


Figure D-4. Position With Overhead and All-Around Protection

c. **Other Construction Tasks.** Other construction tasks may need to be performed. These include work on:

(1) **Basements and Ground Floors.** Basements require preparation similar to that of the ground floor. Any underground system that is not used by the defender but that could provide enemy access to the position must be blocked.

(a) **Doors.** Unused doors should be locked, nailed shut, blocked, and reinforced with furniture, sandbags, or other field expedients. Outside doors can be boobytrapped by engineers or other personnel.

(b) **Hallways.** If not required for the defender's movement, hallways should be blocked with furniture and tactical wire (Figure D-5). If authorized, boobytraps should be employed to impede enemy movement.

(c) **Stairs.** Defenders should block stairs not used by the defense with furniture and tactical wire (Figure D-5) or remove them. If possible, all stairs should be blocked, and ladders should be used to move from floor to floor and then removed when not being used. Boobytraps should also be employed on stairs.

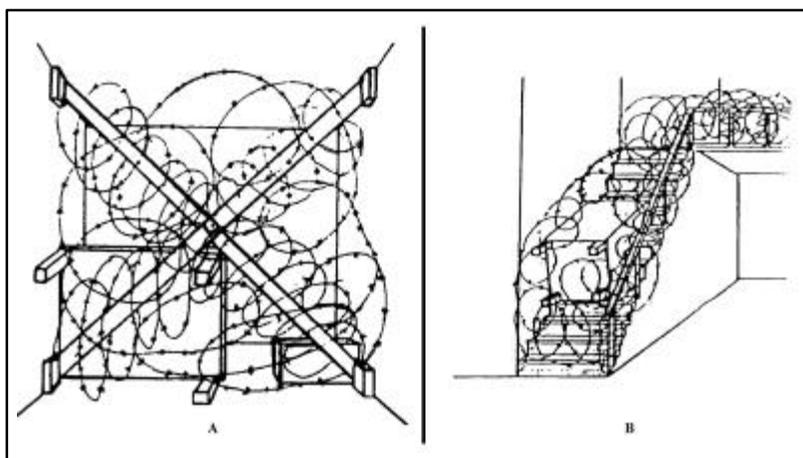


Figure D-5. Blocking Hallways and Stairs

(d) **Windows.** All glass should be removed. Windows not being used should be blocked with boards or sandbags.

(e) **Floors.** Fighting positions should be constructed on the ground or basement floors. If there is no basement, fighting positions on the first floor must be constructed to provide additional protection from heavy direct-fire weapons.

(f) **Ceilings.** Supports that can withstand the weight of rubble from upper floors should be placed under ceilings to provide overhead cover (Figure D-6).