

Chapter 9

Cover and Concealment

Cover is anything that protects a Marine from enemy fire. Cover may be an existing hole, a hastily dug shelter, or a well-prepared fighting position with overhead protection. Concealment is anything that hides a Marine from enemy view, but it may not afford protection. Concealment can be obtained from buildings, trees, crops, and skillful use of ground contours.

In a combat environment, a Marine must be prepared to fire from any type of cover or concealment. A Marine can use any object or terrain feature that protects him from enemy fire, hides him from enemy view, allows him to observe the enemy, and provides support for a firing position. Proficiency in various field firing positions allows a Marine to adapt these positions to his surrounding cover.

9001. Considerations During Cover and Concealment

a. Adjusting the Shooting Position. The proper use of cover provides additional support for the position. A field firing position is adjusted to fit the situation and type of cover. A Marine's height in relation to the height of the cover aids in the selection of a field firing position. The position selected should minimize exposure to the enemy and allow observation of the area.

b. Clearing the Ejection Port. Ensure that the cover does not obstruct the ejection port. If the ejection port is blocked, the obstruction can interfere with the ejection of the spent cartridge case and cause a stoppage.

c. Keeping the Entire Body Behind Cover. A Marine must avoid exposure of any part of his body

to fire. Be especially aware of the top of the head, elbows, knees, or any other body part that may extend beyond the cover. To minimize exposure and maximize the cover's protection, a right-handed Marine should fire from the right side of cover and a left-handed Marine should fire from the left side if possible.

d. Maintaining Muzzle Awareness. A Marine must remain aware of the location of his muzzle. If the muzzle extends beyond the cover, it can give away a Marine's position because the enemy will see a muzzle flash and dust once the rifle fires. A Marine also must remember that the sights are higher than the barrel. Therefore, a Marine must maintain a position that ensures the muzzle is high enough to clear the cover (e.g., window sill, top of wall).

e. Moving to Another Location. A Marine must be constantly aware of his surroundings and the available cover. He should avoid obvious danger areas and move quickly through danger areas that cannot be avoided. When moving from cover to cover, a Marine should select his next cover location and plan his route before moving from his present position. Once a Marine begins to move, he should focus on moving until cover is achieved.

9002. Protection Material

A firing position should have frontal cover that provides protection from small arms fire and indirect fire fragments. Ideally, frontal cover should be thick enough to stop small arms fire (see table 9-1), high enough to provide protection from enemy fire, and wide enough to provide cover when firing to the left or right edge of a sector of fire. Ideally, cover offers—

- Overhead, flank, and rear protection from direct and indirect fire.
- Free use of personal weapons.
- Concealment from observation.
- A concealed route in and out.
- An unobstructed view of a wide and deep area of fire.

Any material that protects a Marine from small arms fire can be used for cover. Some common materials include sandbags, trees, logs, and cinder blocks.

Table 9-1. Minimum Thickness for Protection Against Small Arms.

Material	Minimum Thickness (in inches)
Concrete	7
Broken stone	20
Dry sand	24
Wet sand	35
Logs wired together (oak)	40
Earth (packed or tamped)	48
Undistributed compact earth	52
Earth (freshly turned)	56
Plastic clay	65

a. Sandbags. Cover can be improved and positions can be fortified by filling sandbags with dirt/sand and placing them around the position. Sandbags should be tightly packed because bullets can easily penetrate moist or loosely packed sandbags. Overlapping sandbags increase protection and decrease the bullet's ability to penetrate the sandbag. A minimum thickness of three sandbags is required to stop small arms fire.

b. Trees/Logs. Wood is a relatively dense material and offers good cover and protection. Bullets have a tendency to fragment when they penetrate wood. Live trees have a greater resistance to bullet penetration than dead trees. Wood that has been treated with creosote, such as telephone poles and railroad ties, offers better protection from projectiles than untreated wood, but it still does not ensure positive protection from small arms fire.

c. Cinder Blocks. Cinder blocks are not impenetrable cover. Although they are made of a dense material, the composition of a cinder block is so brittle that a bullet can shatter the block upon impact. This can cause injury to a Marine by secondary fragmentation.

9003. Types of Cover

Effective cover allows a Marine to engage enemy targets while protecting himself from enemy fire. Several types of cover provide support, protection, and concealment and do not interfere with target engagement. A Marine must adapt field firing positions to the type of cover available.

a. Fighting Hole. A Marine should use fighting holes if available. See figure 9-1. After a Marine enters the fighting hole, he adds or removes dirt, sandbags, or other supports to fit his height. To assume a firing position, a Marine performs the following steps:

- Place the right foot to the rear as a brace.
- Lean forward until the chest is against the forward wall of the fighting hole.
- Extend the left arm and elbow over the forward side of the fighting hole.
- Place the left forearm against the back of the parapet.
- Place the rifle butt into the pocket of the right shoulder and grasp the pistol grip with the right hand.

Figure 9-1. Fighting Hole Position.

- Place the right elbow on solid support using the elbow rest of the fighting hole or sandbags placed beside the fighting hole.
- b. Bunker.** If a Marine fires from a bunker, he uses the firing position used for a fighting hole.
- c. Rubble Pile.** If a Marine fires from behind a rubble pile, his position should provide the lowest silhouette possible and maximum support for the rifle. The rifle should be as close to the top of the rubble pile as possible without touching it. See figure 9-2.
- d. Log.** Ideally, a Marine should be in the prone position and fire from the end of the log. If a Marine must fire over the log, he should use the prone or kneeling position and rest the rifle on the forward hand that is supported by the log. This ensures maximum use of cover and provides optimum support for firing. See figure 9-3.
- e. Wall or Barricade.** A Marine should establish his position at the base of the wall or barricade, preferably firing from the prone position. This minimizes a Marine's exposure to enemy fire and presents a small silhouette. If observation of the

Figure 9-2. Rubble Pile Position.

Figure 9-3. Firing From Behind a Log.

enemy cannot be achieved from the prone position, a Marine should assume the kneeling position. If a Marine must fire over the top of a wall, he should present the lowest silhouette possible while still achieving sight picture. See figure 9-4.

f. Rooftop. If a Marine fires from a rooftop, he should expose as little of his body as possible. If possible, a Marine's entire body should be positioned behind the apex of the rooftop. If the body cannot be positioned behind the apex, place the left arm over the apex of the roof to hold the

weight of the body. Only expose as little of the head and shoulders as possible. See figure 9-5. The apex of the roof also can be used to support the rifle as long as the hand is placed between the rifle and the support. See figure 9-6.

g. Window. If a Marine fires from a window, he should position himself back from the opening of the window so that the muzzle does not protrude and interior shadows provide concealment so as not to provide a silhouette to the enemy. See figure 9-7.

Figure 9-4. Barricade Position.

Figure 9-5. Rooftop Position Supported by the Apex.

Figure 9-6. Rooftop Position Behind the Apex.

Figure 9-7. Window Position.