

Section VI

Firing Positions

Whether a unit is attacking, defending, or conducting retrograde operations, its success or failure depends on the ability of the individual Marine to place accurate fire on the enemy while providing the least exposure to return fire. Consequently, Marines should immediately seek and properly use firing positions.

26. Hasty Firing Position. A hasty firing position is one that is normally occupied in the attack or the early stages of the defense. It is a position from which a Marine can place fire on the enemy while using available cover for protection from return fire. The Marine may occupy this position voluntarily, or he may be forced to occupy it because of enemy fire. In either case, the position lacks preparation before occupation. Some of the more common hasty firing positions in a built-up area involve firing around corners of buildings, firing from behind walls, firing from windows, firing from unprepared loopholes, and firing from the peak of a roof.

a. Corners of Buildings. The corner of a building provides cover for a hasty firing position if used properly.

(1) The shooter should be capable of both right-handed and left-handed firing of his weapon (using the “short stocking” technique) to be effective around corners. Short stocking the weapon will prevent the muzzle from protruding and keep the weapon ready to fire the instant visual contact with the enemy is made. Furthermore, it reduces the Marine’s exposure as a target. (Figure A-51)

(2) A common mistake made when firing around corners is firing from the standing position. The shooter exposes himself at the height the enemy would expect a target to appear and risks exposing the entire length of his body as a target for the enemy.

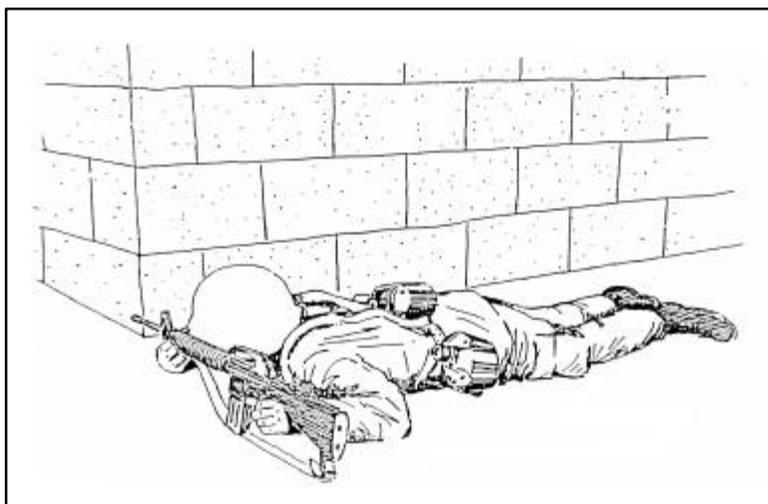


Figure A-51. Firing, Using Either Hand, Around the Corner of a Building

b. Walls. When firing from behind walls, a Marine should fire around cover not over it (Figure A-52). Marines in this situation should be able to fire from the right or left shoulder. When firing from behind cover, a Marine should remain far enough back from that cover so that the weapon does not extend beyond it. This aids in weapon retention by ensuring that no enemy on the other side of the wall can get control of the barrel.



Figure A-52. Firing Around Cover

c. Windows. In a built-up area, windows provide convenient firing ports. A Marine should avoid firing from the standing position because it exposes most of his body to return fire from the enemy and could silhouette him against a light-colored interior beyond the window. This is an obvious indicator of the firer's position, especially at night when the muzzle flash can easily be observed. When using the proper method of firing from a window (Figure A-53), the Marine is well back into the room to prevent the muzzle flash from being seen, and he is kneeling to limit exposure and avoid silhouetting himself.



Figure A-53. Firing From a Window

d. Loopholes. A Marine may fire through a hole torn in the wall and avoid windows (Figure A-54). He stays well back from the loophole so the muzzle of the weapon does not protrude beyond the wall and the muzzle flash is concealed.

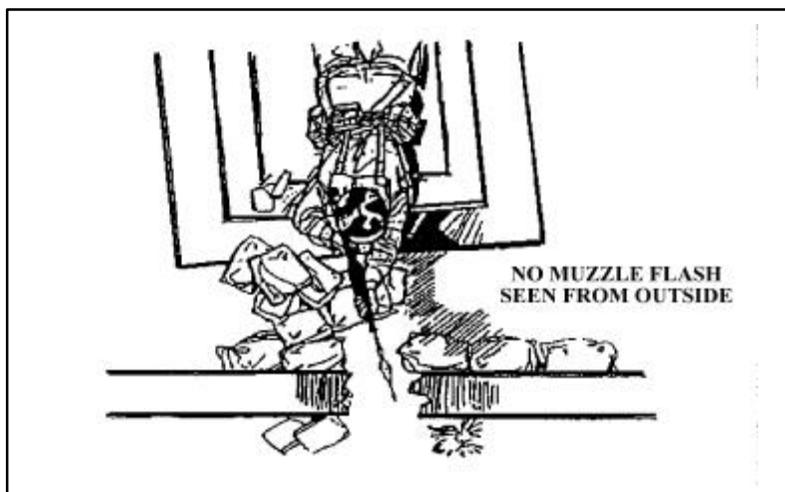


Figure A-54. Firing From a Loophole

e. Roof. The peak of a roof provides a vantage point for snipers that increases their field of vision and the ranges at which they can engage targets (Figure A-55). A chimney, a smokestack, or any other object protruding from the roof of a building can reduce the size of the exposed target and should be used.

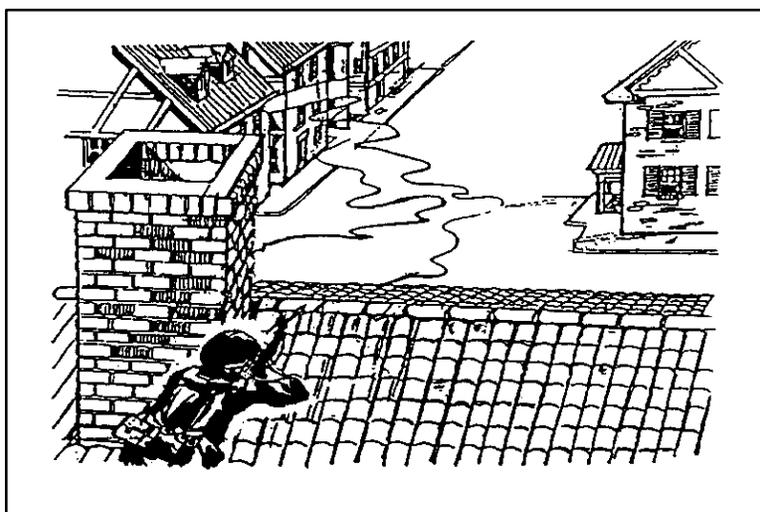


Figure A-55. Firing From the Peak of a Roof

f. No Position Available. When a Marine is subjected to enemy fire and none of the positions mentioned are available, he should try to expose as little of himself as possible. When a Marine is in an open area between buildings (a street or alley) with no cover available and he is fired upon by an enemy from one of the buildings to his front, he should lie prone as

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close as possible to a building on the same side of the open area as the enemy. To engage the Marine, the enemy must then lean out of the window and expose himself to return fire.

g. No Cover Available. When no cover is available, target exposure can be reduced by firing from the prone position, by firing from shadows, and by presenting no silhouette against buildings.

27. Prepared Firing Position. A prepared firing position is one built or improved to allow the shooter to engage a particular area, avenue of approach, or enemy position, while reducing his exposure to return fire. Examples of prepared positions include: barricaded windows, fortified loopholes, sniper positions, antiarmor positions, and machine gun positions.

a. The natural firing port provided by windows can be improved by barricading the window and leaving a small hole for the firer's use (Figure A-56). The barricading may be accomplished by using materials torn from the interior walls of the building or any other available material. When barricading windows, a Marine should avoid:

(1) Barricading only the windows that will be used as firing ports. The enemy will soon determine that the barricaded windows are firing positions.

(2) Neat square or rectangular holes that are easily identified by the enemy. A barricaded window should not have a neat, regular firing port. The window should keep its original shape so that the position of the firer is hard to detect. Firing from the bottom of the window gives the firer the cover advantage of the wall because the firing port is less obvious to the enemy. Sandbags are used to reinforce the wall below the window and to increase protection for the firer. All glass should be removed from the window to prevent injury to the firer. Lace curtains permit the firer to see out and prevent the enemy from seeing in. Wet blankets should be placed under weapons to reduce dust that may create a signature. Wire mesh placed over the window keeps the enemy from throwing in hand grenades.

b. Although windows are usually good firing positions, they do not always allow the firer to engage targets throughout his sector.

(1) To avoid establishing a pattern of always firing from windows, an alternate position is required such as the prepared loophole (Figure A-57). This involves cutting or blowing a small hole in the wall to allow the shooter to observe and engage targets in his sector.

(2) Sandbags are used to reinforce the walls below, around, and above the loophole. If the position is on the second floor or higher, two layers of sandbags are placed on the floor under the firer to protect him from an explosion on a lower floor. A wall of sandbags, rubble, furniture, and so on should be constructed to the rear of the position to protect the firer from explosions in the room.



Figure A-56. Window Firing Position

(3) A table, a bedstead, or other available material provides overhead cover for the position. This prevents injury to the shooter from falling debris or explosions above his position.

(4) The position should be camouflaged by knocking other holes in the wall. This makes it difficult for the enemy to determine which hole the fire is coming from. Siding material should be removed from the building in several places to make loopholes less noticeable.



Figure A-57. Prepared Loopholes

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c. A chimney or other protruding structure provides a base from which a sniper position can be prepared. Part of the roofing material is removed to allow the sniper to fire around the chimney. He should stand inside the building on the beams or on a platform with only his head and shoulders above the roof (behind the chimney). Sandbags placed on the sides of the position protect the sniper's flanks.

d. When the roof has no protruding structure to provide protection, the sniper position should be prepared from underneath on the enemy side of the roof (Figure A-58). The position is reinforced with sandbags, and a small piece of roofing material should be removed to allow the sniper to engage targets in his sector. The missing piece of roofing material should be the only sign that a position exists. Other pieces of roofing material should be removed to deceive the enemy as to the true sniper position. The sniper should be invisible from outside the building, and the muzzle flash should be hidden from view.



Figure A-58. Sniper Position

e. Some rules and considerations for selecting and occupying individual firing positions are:

- (1) Make maximum use of available cover and concealment.
- (2) Avoid firing over cover; when possible, fire around it.
- (3) Avoid silhouetting against light-colored buildings, the skyline, and so on.
- (4) Carefully select a new firing position before leaving an old one.
- (5) Avoid setting a pattern; fire from both barricaded and unbarricaded windows.
- (6) Keep exposure time to a minimum.

- (7) Begin improving a hasty position immediately after occupation.
- (8) Use construction material that is readily available in the built-up area for prepared positions.
- (9) Remember that positions that provide cover at ground level may not provide cover on higher floors.

f. In attacking a built-up area, recoilless weapon and ATGM crews may be hampered in choosing firing positions by the backblast of their weapons. They may not have enough time to knock out walls in buildings and clear backblast areas. They should select positions that allow the backblast to escape, such as corner windows where the round fired goes out one window and the backblast escapes from another. The corner of a building can be improved with sandbags to create a firing position (Figure A-59).



Figure A-59. Corner Firing Position

- g.** The rifle squad is often reinforced with attached antitank weapons during an attack on and in defense of a built-up area. Therefore, the rifle squad leader should be able to choose good firing positions for the antitank weapons under his control.
- h.** Various principles for employing antitank weapons have universal applications, such as making maximum use of available cover, trying to achieve mutual support, and allowing for the backblast when positioning recoilless weapons, TOWs, Dragons, and AT4s.