

CONTROL of FIRES

Small unit leaders—squad, section, and team leaders—are responsible for directing the fires of their units. Fires need to be coordinated in order to be effective.

Concentrate your fire

Without direction, Marines tend to fire at random targets. This leads to ineffective, dispersed fires.

Unit leaders need to concentrate overwhelming fires on a single target—*point fire*. When that target is destroyed, *all* fires can be shifted to the next target.

Sequentially destroying multiple targets with mass fires is far more effective than distributing ineffective fires across the battlefield.

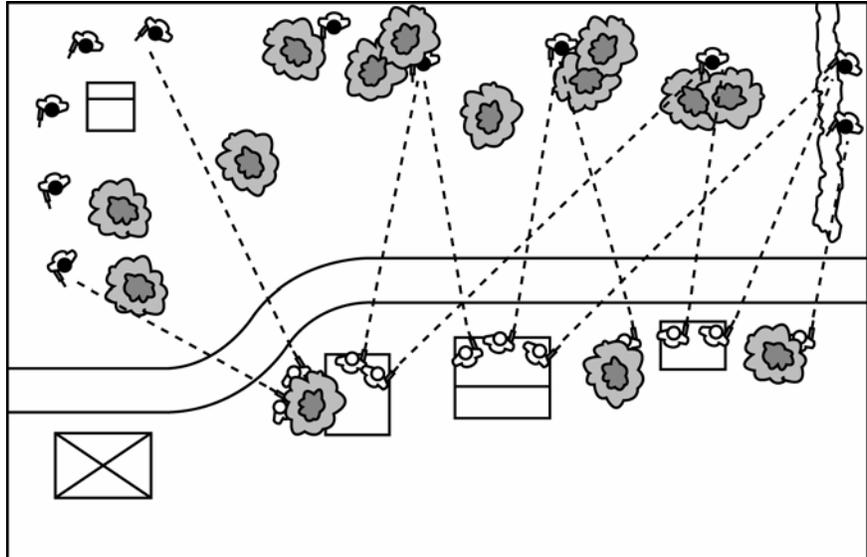
Area fire is sometimes needed, particularly when suppressing suspected enemy positions. Assigning specific targets to specific weapons is sometimes necessary. Always realize, however, that dispersal of fires weakens your effort.

Control Techniques

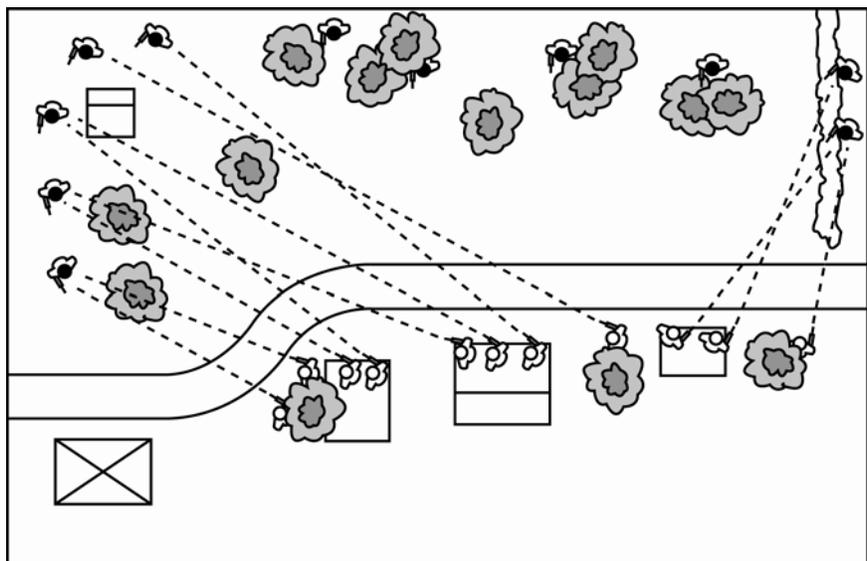
Base Weapon or Base Unit. The unit leader physically directs the fires of his base weapon or his base unit. All others follow suit.

“On my tracer” or “On my laser.” Leaders point out the target with tracer rounds or a laser pointer.

Fire Commands. Voice commands are effective before opening fire. Once engaged, battlefield noise



Dispersed fires are ineffective fires. Without control by the unit leader, each man selects and fires at a target to his front.

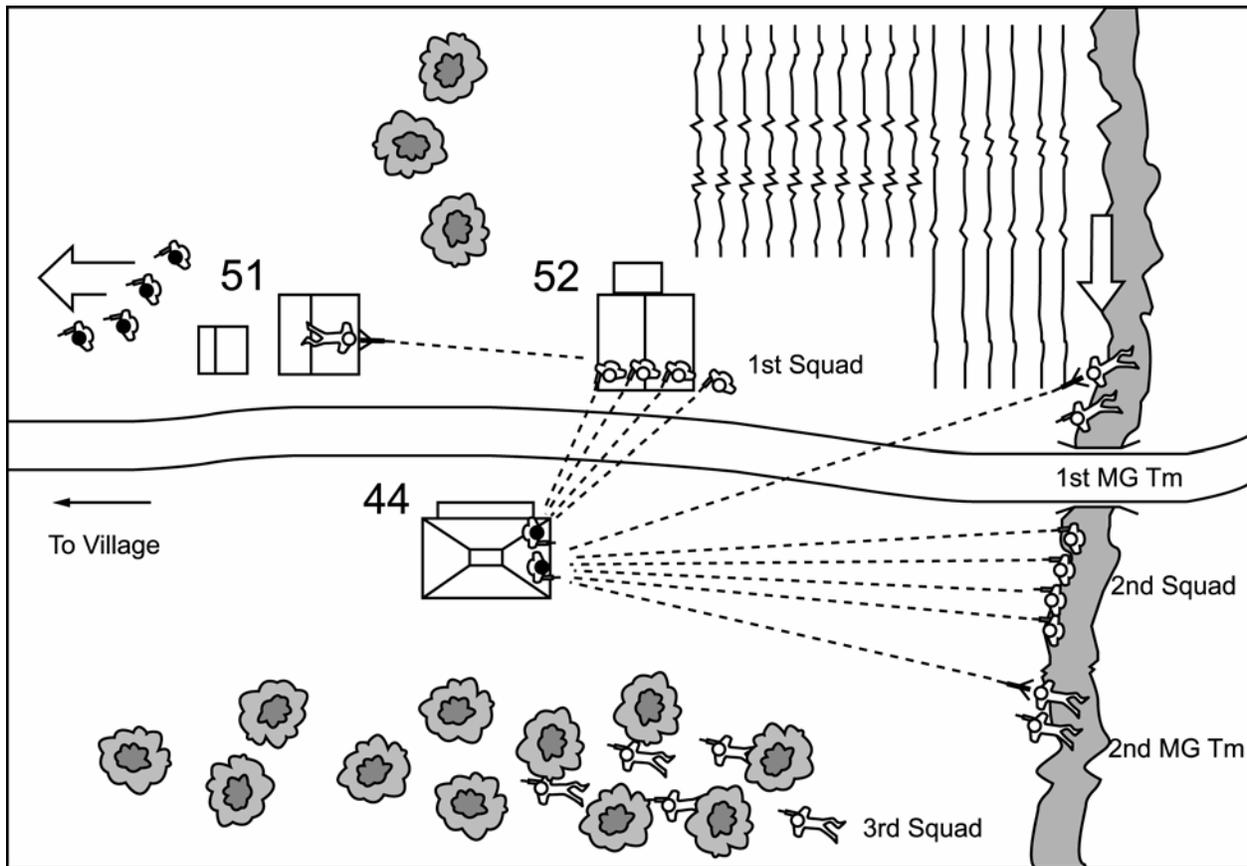


The enemy’s flanking move can only be stopped by a leader who controls the fires of his unit and concentrates on the greatest threat.

and temporary deafness make voice commands impossible. Sound and visual signals, including hand and arm signals, replace voice commands under fire.

In stationary positions, leaders can establish terrain references such as target reference points and trigger lines to help coordinate fire control.

CONTROL of FIRES Example



As 1st Squad moved from the streambed to Building 52, enemy fire erupted from Buildings 51 and 44. The platoon commander ordered, *“Destroy the enemy in the slate roof building (Building 44) in order to clear the route into town! 3rd Squad, main effort, flank left. Remainder of platoon support!”*

- 1st MG Team moved south to mask themselves from the enemy MG firing from Building 51.
- 1st Squad took cover from the MG firing from Building 51, and focused fire on Building 44.
- 2nd Squad and 2nd MG Team ignored the enemy MG in Building 51, ignored the enemy infantry behind Building 51, and focused their fire on Building 44.
- 3rd Squad’s route masked Building 51, had good concealment, but little cover. Overwhelming suppression of Building 44 was needed to get 3rd Squad into their assault position. Any supporting units tempted to shift from Building 44 and fire on other targets endangered 3rd Squad and risked the entire attack.
- If mortars were available, they too would have attacked Building 44. Smoke would be used to obscure the movement of 3rd Squad.

Movement, defilade, unit positioning, and the fire commands of small unit leaders all constitute **Control of Fires** at the small unit level. Ineffective, dispersed fires were prevented by small unit leaders who knew the importance of concentrating fire, and knew the techniques of fire control.

Small unit leaders tend to prioritize differently. This leads to uncoordinated actions. The commander’s order clarified priorities. Squad leaders focused the fire of their squads, and the platoon commander directed the fire of his platoon. In rapidly changing situations, everyone will have a different priority. Control of fires becomes *vital* important in combat.