

APPENDIX E

EMPLOYMENT

Though the automatic rifle has changed, the role of the automatic rifleman has not since its conception circa World War I. The automatic rifleman supports the infantry squad in the offense and defense. The M249 AR provides accurate fire approaching that of the rifle yet gives the heavy volume of fire common to a machine gun. The automatic rifle is a squad leader's weapon.

E-1. OFFENSE

In the offense, the automatic rifle contributes primarily to the maneuver element. That is, it gives the squad leader the fires of “ten soldiers” for the close-quarter fight. Depending on the tactical situation, it may also be used in the base-of-fire element.

a. **Maneuver Element.** The squad undertaking the assault brings its automatic rifles with it to provide additional firepower. These weapons are fired either from the biped or in an assault mode from the hip or underarm position. They target any enemy automatic weapons anywhere on the squad's objective. Once the enemy automatic weapons have been destroyed, or if there are none, the automatic riflemen distribute their fire over that portion of the objective that corresponds to their team's positions. In terms of engagement ranges, the automatic rifles in the assault engage from within the last 300 meters and most probably at point-blank ranges.

b. **Base-of-Fire Element.** Automatic rifles organic to the squad may augment the fires of the machine gun in the base of fire. In this case, the platoon sergeant positions and controls the fires of the automatic riflemen. Automatic rifle targets include key enemy weapons not covered by machine gun fire or groups of enemy targets either on the objective or attempting to reinforce or counterattack. In terms of engagement ranges, automatic rifles in the base-of-fire element may find themselves firing at targets anywhere from 800 meters to within the last 300 meters where the assault takes place. These ranges do not reflect a hard rule, simply a practical average. The nature of the terrain and desire to achieve some stand-off leads the platoon leader to the correct tactical positioning of the base-of-fire element. If automatic rifles are employed as part of the base of fire, then that element must be within 800 meters.

c. **Task Organization of Automatic Rifles.** The organization of the squad into two fire teams does not prevent the squad leader from organizing his automatic rifles to conform to a specific situation. For example, when assaulting, he may require more firepower than can be provided by one

team. He may designate the automatic rifles and one fire team leader to establish a base of fire, while he continues the assault with the remainder of the squad. However, such an organization takes time to accomplish and reduces both the squad's flexibility and its on-hand firepower in the assault.

E-2. DEFENSE

The dismounted infantry defense centers around the platoon's machine guns. The platoon leader sites the rifle squad to protect the machine guns against the dismounted assault of an enemy formation. The automatic rifle provides the requisite range and volume of fire to cover across the squad front in the defense. The squad leader sites each of his automatic rifles to cover the entire squad sector or cover an overlapping sector with the other automatic rifle. Automatic rifles can augment platoon and company machine gun fire out to the maximum ranges. The engagement range of a squad leader's weapon may extend from the last 300 meters where the enemy began his assault to point-blank range. Automatic rifle targets include enemy automatic weapons and command and control elements.