

## Chapter 13

### Defensive Tactics

#### 13001. Weighing the Defense

As with offensive scenarios, situations that may require a unit to assume the defense in a CWE differ little than in a temperate environment. Winter combat between Allied and Soviet forces in Northern Russia during 1918-19 demonstrates that the defense was typically superior to the offense because the attacker:<sup>i</sup>

- Was exposed to frost and wind chill
- Became exhausted after moving through deep snow
- Was afforded little concealment

Other historical sources, however, indicate that a defense centered on prepared positions is strategically a postponement of defeat.<sup>ii</sup> So...what historical lessons are to be followed in the consideration of small unit defensive tactics in a CWE? This chapter presents defensive techniques and procedures that are uniquely affected by cold weather or snow. Still, warfighting philosophy of MCDP 1 "Warfighting" is quite relevant in a CWE, especially when applied in a defensive scenario: whether the defense is of a temporary bivouac or for a prolonged period of time, it must incorporate an offensive character (security patrols, ambushes, planned counterattack elements, etc.)

#### 13002. Common Camouflage Problems

- a. **Ice Fog.** Ice fog is caused by condensation of supercooled fine droplets of water. Weapons firing, vehicle exhaust and human breath can cause ice fog. The formation of ice fog can reveal weapons' positions, vehicle parks and bivouac sites. Ice fog emitted from the rockets of anti-tank missiles can cause the gunner to lose observation of the missile. Deliberately caused ice fog can be used as a deception measure or to conceal movement.
- b. **Sound.** Sound carries for very long distances in cold, dry air. Marines must be made especially aware of the need for good sound discipline. Marines must be trained to be quiet, particularly when in their shelters where they feel protected and where noise levels and need to talk seem to rise. The sound of skis, snowshoes and ice-crust breaking can warn the enemy of a unit's approach from long distances.
- c. **Light.** Maintain good light discipline both when on the move and when in bivouac. Artificial light is particularly noticeable in the sparsely settled areas where cold weather operations are likely to take place. In addition, artificial light can be seen from great distances due to snow reflection and excellent visibility in clear, cold air.
- d. **Thermal Signature.** Detection by infrared devices is very likely because of the contrast between the heat radiated by vehicle engines, cook stoves, fires, human bodies and even candles, and the cold background temperatures of snow-covered or frozen ground. All possible methods to lessen this detection must be used (snow is an excellent thermal-barrier and can minimize heat signatures if used to conceal tents, vehicles, etc.)

#### 13003. Camouflage Measures

- a. **Principles.** Snow, natural vegetation and white camouflage nets can be used to conceal defensive positions from ground and aerial observation. Ensure bivouacs and defensive positions blend into the surroundings by rounding accumulations of snow and ice into natural contours (avoid sharp corners that may cast an unnatural shadow.) In the absence of freshly fallen snow, dirt or dirty snow must be covered by existing snow.

- b. Track Plan.** Tracks made in snow-covered terrain will lead the enemy directly to defensive positions unless a track plan or deception plan is strictly enforced. The track plan must be determined and the information disseminated before the position is occupied. Small-unit leaders must strictly enforce the track plan and mention of the plan should be made in all subsequent patrol orders. The use of deception is a necessity. Tracks should be continued well beyond the entrance to the bivouac/defensive position. If possible, the entrance track should lead into the rear of the position and be covered by an automatic weapon. Dummy positions and dummy tracks can be used to lead an enemy force into the killing zone (see paragraph 6006).
- c. Track Discipline.** Some inevitable tracks will be visible to enemy ground troops and aircraft. Take care to minimize the enemy's ability to find them. Where possible, tracks should not cross an open area. Move in forests and along treelines; use dips and hollows in the ground or small watercourses to hide tracks. Move in old tracks, when possible, and disguise ski pole marks to prevent the enemy from determining your unit size.
- d. Light Discipline.** The ECW 4-man tent with fly is constructed with light retention material, and is literally light proof when all hatches are zipped. When entering and exiting tents and shelters, ensure lights being used inside are extinguished prior to opening the hatch. When emplacing a bivouac, orient all tent openings away from the main track and construct a snow wall to screen the opening.

#### **13004. Considerations for the Defense**

General unit procedures for establishing a defensive position (whether temporary or a bivouac, or prolonged of a sector) do not change in a CWE. Maximizing terrain advantages and natural obstacles, maintaining sound security measures and building a defense in depth remain paramount to a solid defense.

- Siting a defense on high ground is optimal for observation and firing purposes. Most over-the-snow vehicles (BV-206) have difficulty climbing ungraded slopes that are icy. Further, freshly fallen or deep snow makes fire and movement difficult. Use these conditions to your advantage to dissuade an enemy force from attacking you.
- Design bivouacs and track plans in accordance with paragraph 6006. Fighting positions should be relatively close to shelters. Sentry rotation will be more frequent than in temperate weather for the purpose of minimizing the potential for cold weather injuries. Marines will typically sleep in full gear in order to expedite this rotation.
- Communications wire or 550 cord is a good method of linking fighting positions to tents. If the sentry detects enemy movement, he can easily alert the sleeping Marines with a pull on the wire.
- Obstacles can be built to channelize the enemy into areas of deep snow. Detailed information relating to snow fieldworks and camouflage is found in MCWP 3-35.1.
- Fighting positions should be dug into the ground snowpack, though demolitions may need to be used if the ground is frozen. If engineer support is unlikely, train Marines in the employment of basic demolitions.

#### **13005. Defensive Positions**

Fighting positions and shelters made from snow can provide protection from both the elements and hostile fire. As indicated by the chart contained within this charter, small arms fire penetration varies from four meters in newly fallen snow to 0.3 meters in icecrete (frozen water and soil.) Examples of possible field fortifications that follow are simply guides to methods and materials that can be used; imagination is the limiting factor in the use of snow and other natural resources for the purpose of protecting Marines.

<u>TYPE OF SNOW MIX</u>	<u>YARDS</u>	<u>METERS</u>
Newly Fallen Snow (no wind)	3.6	4
Packed Snow	1.98	2.2
Ice	0.9	1
Icecrete	0.27	0.3
Frozen Snow/Water mix (snowcrete)	1.125	1.25

This table gives the minimum thickness necessary to stop small arms fire.

- a. **Tree-Supported Wall.** Logs are laid on top of one another and lashed to trees. Snow is then piled against them.

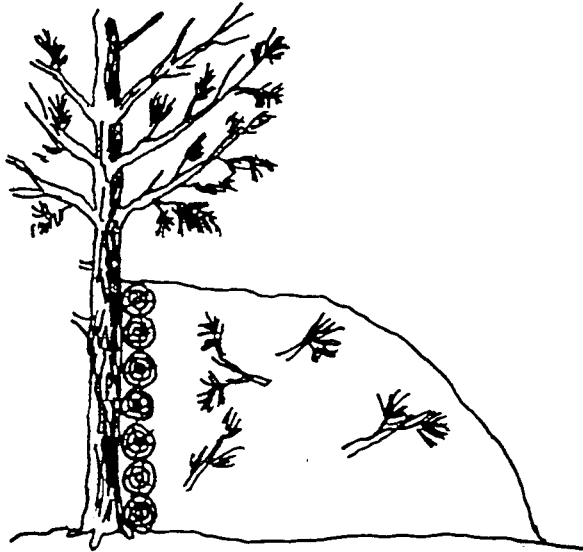
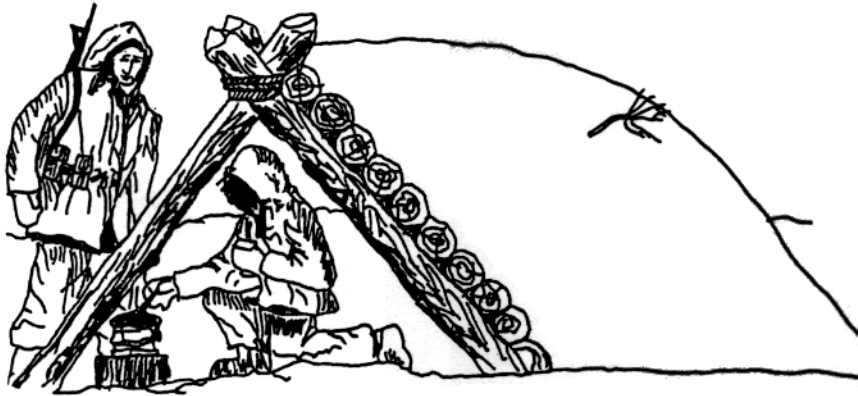


Figure 13-4: Tree-Supported Wall (Side View).

**b. Tripod-Supported Wall.** Construct tripods as shown to add a limited degree of overhead protection.

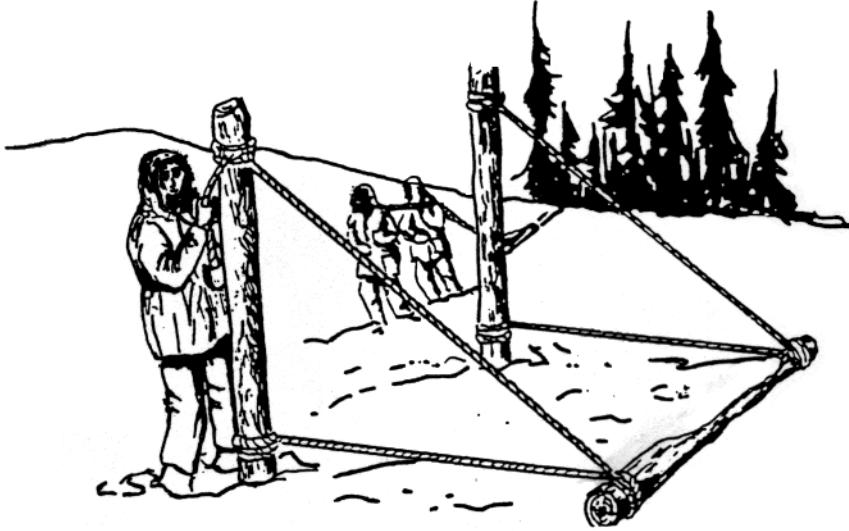


**Figure 13-6. Tripod-Supported Wall (Side View).**

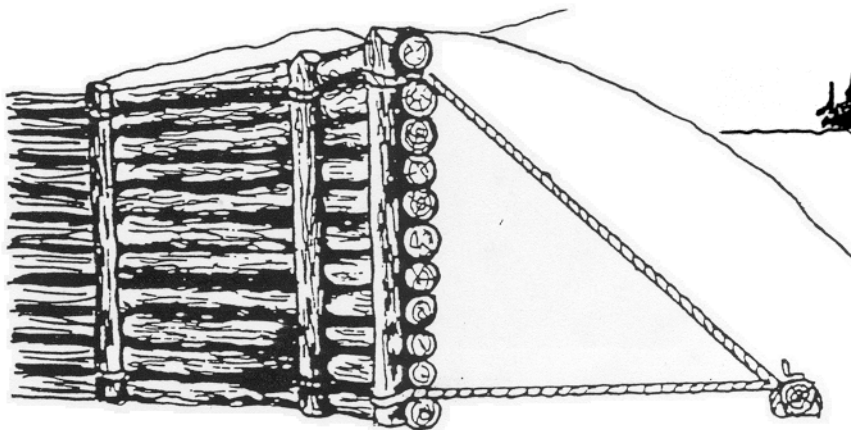


**Figure 13-7. Tripod-Supported Wall (Rear View).**

**c. Anchor-Supported Wall.** This wall requires two short logs for uprights, one long log for anchor, two lengths of rope or communication wire, and as many logs as need for height. Before securing lines, adjust uprights to lean slightly toward anchor, then bank snow to hold logs in place.



**Figure 13-8. Anchor-Supported Wall (Oblique View).**



**Figure 13-9. Anchor-Supported Wall (Side View).**

**d. Defenses Using Ice.** Icecrete is made by mixing gravel, sand, pebbles or dirt with snow and water. When well mixed, the icecrete is shoveled into any of the following containers or forms”:

- Ration Cases:** Use any type of cardboard box. When stacking, wet the top of each layer so the next layer you place on it will freeze to it. If water is scarce, use short stakes and peg the layers together.
- Ammunition Boxes:** Use only wooden boxes. Metal boxes increase ricochet danger. Build a wall as with ration cases. Use stakes to peg layers together.
- Sandbags:** Fill bags with icecrete. Wet bags so they will freeze together.

<sup>i</sup> Dr Allen F. Chew, *Leavenworth Papers No.5 Fighting the Russians in Winter: Three Case Studies* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1981) p. 15.

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<sup>ii</sup> George K. Swinzow, *CRREL Special Report 93-12 On Winter Warfare* (Hanover, New Hampshire: U.S. Army CRREL, 1993) p. 62.