Precision Room Clearing in Urban Operations

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In recognizing the reality of the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE), emphasis placed on urban operations has only increased at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The center portrays a small urban environment blended with a rural agrarian community set in complex terrain. The MOUT complex at Shughart-Gordon is the centerpiece for urban operations at the JRTC. It should be noted that recent shifts under COE have prompted commanders to look at mounting operations from within the confines of the urban complex. Central to the portrayal of urban operations at the JRTC is the issue of Rules of Engagement (ROE) and how they influence the scenario in exercising the unit's METL. Typically, such operations focus on precision-clearing operations rather than full-blown high intensity urban operations. Often this generates great debate among commanders and even observer/controllers over the risks precision-clearing operations.[1] Are such operations stacked against the attacker? Are they realistic? Are we really going to conduct precision-clearing operations? The answer to all three questions is, YES. Mitigating the risks involved in such operations calls for a better understanding of how they fit in the context of urban operations and a mastery of the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TOC) involved.

Precision-clearing techniques do not replace other techniques currently being used to clear buildings and rooms during high-intensity combat. Specifically, they do not replace the clearing technique in which a fragmentation or concussion grenade is thrown into a room before the U.S. forces enter. Precision room-clearing techniques are used when the tactical situation calls for room-by-room clearing of a relatively intact building in which enemy combatants and noncombatants may be intermixed. They involve increased risk to clear a building methodically, rather than using overwhelming firepower to eliminate or neutralize all its inhabitants. --FM 3-06.11

High-Intensity Urban Operations

In a surprising and threatening move, the federal forces relied heavily on fuel-air explosives and tactical missiles (SCUD and SCARAB). These systems suppressed the Chechens both physically and psychologically and these assets were used to attack fighters hiding in basements. Such fire strikes were designed for maximum psychological pressure—to demonstrate the hopelessness of further resistance against a foe that could strike with impunity and that was invulnerable to countermeasures. The TOS-1, heavy flame system, (a multiple rocket launcher mounted on a T-72 tank chassis) played a particularly prominent role as a terror weapon.[2]

*Equally noteworthy was the battalion's effective use of firepower, which was in keeping with Daniel's slogan, "Knock 'em all down." His principle was to keep up a continuous stream of fire from every available weapon, ranging from rifle to medium artillery. The division and corps artillery had remained south of Aachen when the assault forces moved to their jump-off points east of the city, misleading the enemy as to the Americans' intended axis of advance and permitting the artillery to shoot parallel to the front of the assault troops. This eliminated the danger of "short" rounds falling on friendly troops and allowed the infantry units to call down fire very close to their own positions. By shelling German lines of communication, Daniel isolated objectives. He also used artillery to drive defenders out of the upper floors of specific buildings. Direct fire from tanks, tank destroyers, antitank guns, and machine guns also chased the enemy away from his firing positions. Machine guns commanded the streets along the axis of advance, ready to cut down any evacuating Germans. Daniel's infantry stayed out of the streets whenever possible, preferring to move from building to building by blowing holes in walls. Ideally, by the time the infantry closed in on a given strong point, the Germans would have been driven down into the cellars. Grenades and, if necessary, flamethrowers and demolition charges finished the job.*3

As highlighted in the two historical excerpts, Grozny 2000 and Aachen 1944 were high-intensity operations. For that matter, so was the seizure of Jerusalem in the Crusades or many other military operations that resulted in the fall of a city. Conceptually, standard high-intensity room-clearing drills mirror a deliberate attack. The task is to seize control of the room with the purpose being the neutralization of the enemy in the room. As in a deliberate attack against any objective, the assaulting elements move into position using covered and concealed routes. The fragmentation and/or concussion grenades are the preparatory fires used before the assault. Preparatory fires—fragmentation and or concussion grenades—are initiated when soldiers are as close to the objective as they can get without being injured by the fires. The assault element follows the preparatory fires onto the objective as closely as possible. A rapid, violent assault overwhelms and destroys the enemy force to seize the objective.

Precision-Clearing Urban Operations

*Besides the safety of American citizens and the defeat of the PDF, BLUE SPOON planners also had to address another aspect of the "end state" desired by the White House: a stable, democratic, and friendly government in Panama, capable of exercising effective leadership as quickly as possible after the old regime had been swept away. To help ensure that outcome, U.S. combat operations had to minimize the damage they inflicted. Planners considered the vast majority of Panamanians themselves to be friendly or neutral toward the United States; every effort had to be made not to put these people or their homes and belongings at risk unnecessarily. Nor could Panama's political, economic, and social infrastructure be destroyed, or even severely damaged, if BLUE SPOON hoped to achieve its strategic objectives.*4

As for the attacker, one option is to assault the city directly from the march. In medieval and early modern times, however, attacking armies did not typically have sufficient mobility to achieve the surprise necessary to make such a tactic reasonable. Most often, the attacker

*chose to conduct a siege, an option that allowed him to take his time, make extensive preparations, and culminate his operations with a decisive assault on the city.*5

One can argue that precision-clearing urban operations is an oxymoron, that precision and urban battle are diametrically opposed ideas. But in a way, they are not; if war is political power applied by military means, then precision-clearing urban operations are an effort to make sure the political goals are not destroyed by the military means. That is NOT something new: The siege as an alternative to full assault allowed a more precise **threat** of force to avoid full fledge attack. If the defenders saw defeat as inevitable consequence, surrender became the preferred option—that is if they knew the attacking force would not brutalize and even exterminate the city's population. Conventional forces conduct precision-clearing operations to defeat an enemy that is mixed with noncombatants and to reduce noncombatant casualties and collateral damage. Precision MOUT requires severe accountability of individual and unit actions through strict ROE. It also requires specific TOC for precise use of combat power as in Operation JUST CAUSE.

Surgical Urban Operations

*In November 1979, a Spetsnaz battalion, clad in Afghan uniforms, deployed to Afghanistan and was incorporated into the presidential security forces, guarding the outer perimeter of Amin's residence. This so-called "Muslim" battalion was made up of Soviet Central Asian soldiers who spoke Pashtu, Dari (a dialect of Farsi), Tadjik or Uzbek. In December, two 30-man Spetsnaz groups, code-named "Grom" (Thunder) and "Zenit" (Zenith) deployed to Kabul and began reconnaissance of the 13 objectives that they would have to take out in the coming assault. More members of Zenith deployed later in the month.*6

*In 1702, the Austrians also used surprise and an unexpected approach to capture the northern Italian city of Cremona by infiltrating elite troops into the defense by way of an aqueduct. In 1597, the Spanish captured the city of Amiens in northern France using a ruse. A small group of Spaniards disguised as peasants approached the city gateway, at which point they pretended that their cart had broken a wheel. In the confusion that followed, they rushed and captured the gate. These techniques entailed risk-taking, and required boldness, imagination, and unique circumstances to be successful.*7

Surgical urban operations are usually the domain of special operations forces (SOF). The Soviet seizure of Kabul or U.S. SOF operations in Panama and Somalia used SOF in conjunction with conventional forces. They include missions such as raids, recovery operations, rescues, and other special operations (for example, noncombatant recovery). Again surgical urban operations are NOT a new phenomenon as indicated by the actions of the Austrians or the Spanish.

Room Clearing

There is a common link between the categories of urban operations. Regardless of intensity, ROE, or specificity target, soldiers will have to clear buildings room by room to neutralize possible threats. The degree of force used in doing so will vary according to the operation. In

full-scale urban assault, room clearing is still necessary as not all buildings will be blown down. Indeed, much of the fighting will occur inside the buildings rather than in the streets. Room clearing in high-intensity urban operations calls for use of pre-emptive fires: the grenade through the window or door. In precision-clearing operations, room clearing without preparatory fires is fundamental. Surgical operations rely on room-clearing techniques that borrow from both along with highly developed shooting and very specific intelligence. Again, all three categories of urban operations require soldiers to enter and clear buildings. As stated earlier, we will concentrate on precision-clearing operations.

Precision room clearing is rapidly and methodically seizing control of a room, or multiple rooms, and all of its inhabitants (both hostile and other) by eliminating the threat, dominating the room, and controlling the situation. The sequence for clearing a room is actions at the breach or point of entry, actions upon entry, and fundamentals of room combat.

Actions at the Point of Entry or Breach:

Movement to the objective.

The movement technique used for approaching a target building is dictated by several factors. Among these are the mission, cover and concealment, lighting conditions, type of breach to be used, and terrain.

Move close to, but do not touch, the building exterior.

Staying close to the building makes soldiers harder to see from inside the building. Conversely, the soldiers should avoid contact with the building, especially banging against the walls with a weapon or other piece of equipment.

Do not flag teammates.

Train soldiers to maintain muzzle awareness at all times. A soldier should never stack with his weapon's muzzle pointing at another soldier. This is why weapons must be carried at a low or high carry.

Use the path of least resistance.

The assault team should, whenever possible, line up on the side of the door that provides the path of least resistance upon entering. The swinging door is an obstacle that can best be avoided by lining up on the correct side. If the door opens inward, the team should line up on the hinge side. If the door opens outward, the team should line up on the doorknob side. Lining up on the correct side will result in the fastest and smoothest entry possible. See Figures 1 and 2.

Inward Opening Door
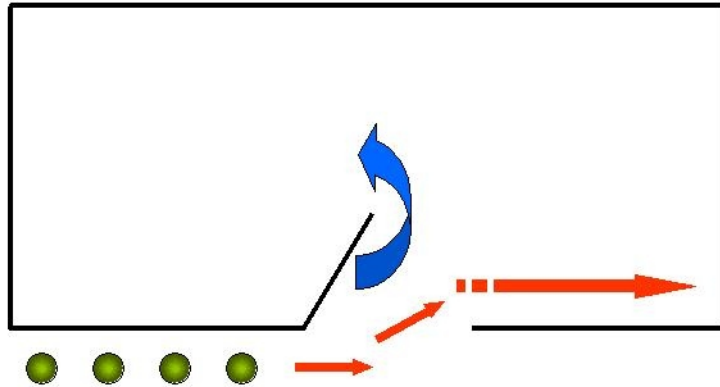
The rule of thumb is that if the door opens toward the inside of the room, the No. 1 man moves away from the door hinges.

Outward Opening Door
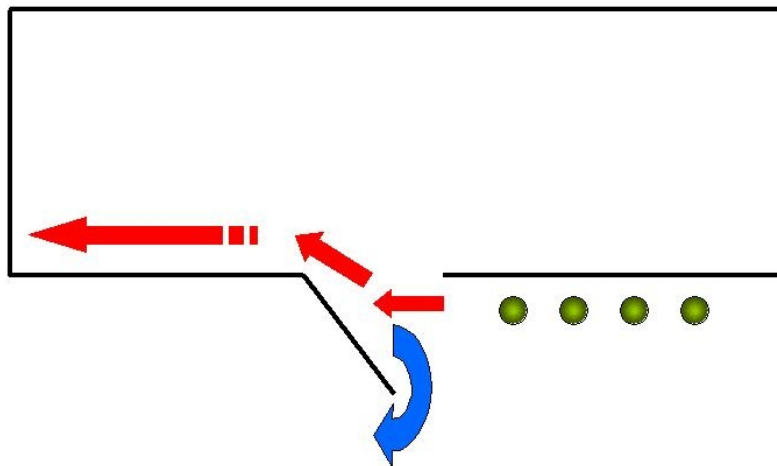
If the door swings open toward the outside, the No. 1 man moves toward the door hinges.

Pass signals.

There many different ways to pass the signal that everyone is ready. If a stealthy approach to the objective building is possible, the "Thumb back/Squeeze up" technique works well.

The No. 1 man assumes his position on the breach point first. His eyes and weapon are oriented on the breach point. When he feels comfortable with his position, he will signal the No. 2 man by nodding his head. The No. 2 man will acknowledge receipt by squeezing the No. 1 man's shoulder.

After he has received and acknowledged the nod of the No. 1 man, the No. 2 man will

pass the "thumb up" signal back to the No. 3 man. The No. 3 man will acknowledge by squeezing the No. 2 man's thumb, and will then pass a "thumb up" back to the man behind him. This will continue until the "thumb up" signal has been passed back to the last man on the initial entry team. The last man will then squeeze forward, and each subsequent man will send the signal forward so that all in the team are aware that all others are prepared to enter.

Example of a Countdown for Execution:

5 (The assault starts on 5)
4 (No action)
3 (No Action)
2 (Snipers Fire) If you have snipers or designated marksman in an over-watch position with the threat elements in their sights.
1 (Breach Executed)

Execute assault

If soldiers are using tactical lights during their assault, they remove the light covers prior to approaching the building.

If a stealthy approach is impossible, the team modifies the "thumb back/squeeze up" technique to increase speed of entry by reducing time at the entry point. After a bounding or a bounding overwatch approach, the No. 2 man maintains control of the No. 1 man just long enough to make sure the initial entry team is ready to enter and clear the first room. This action must be rapid, but remain controlled, or the resulting confusion can be fatal.

Actions Upon Entry:

The actions soldiers will execute upon entering a room are:

Clear the Point of Entry or Breach Point (Fatal Funnel).

The first action to be taken by the soldier upon entry into a room is to clear the fatal funnel—that area which surrounds the door threshold. This is the focal point of attention for anyone in the room. By moving quickly, the assault team members reduce the risk of being hit by hostile fire directed at the doorway.
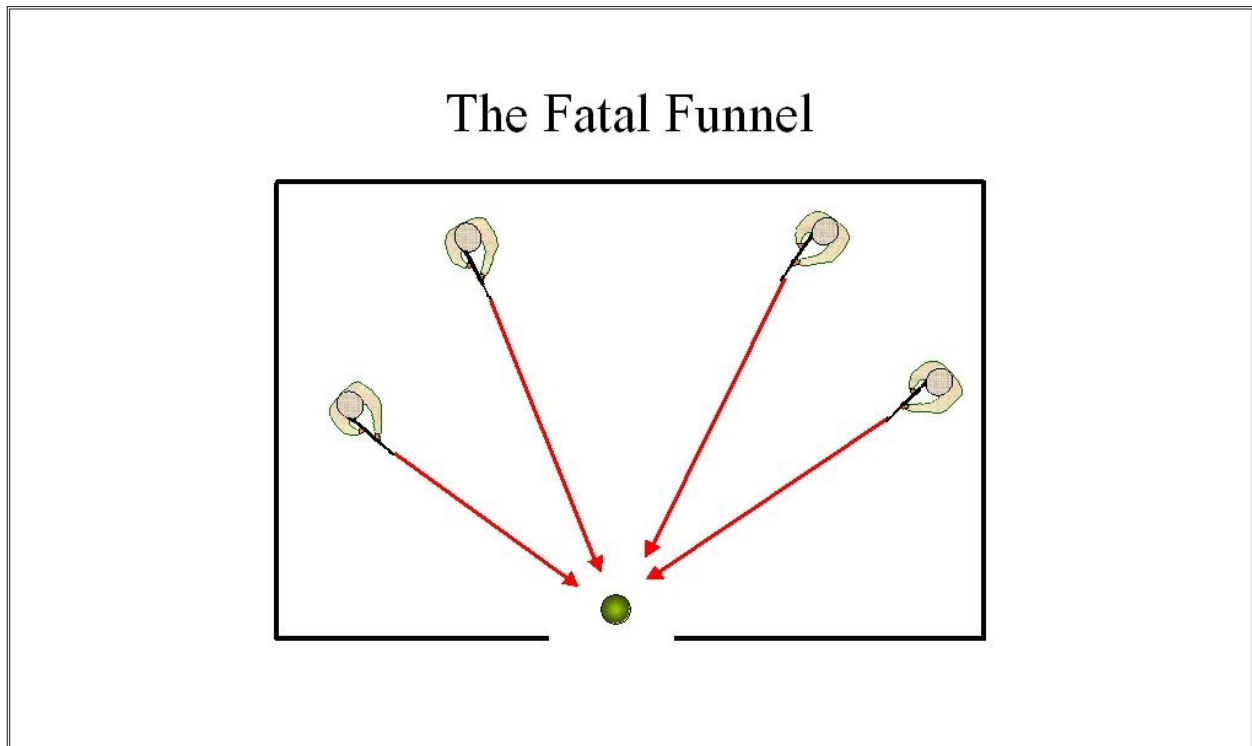
Engage Immediate Threat.

The next step is to engage any immediate threat encountered. The following criterion defines an immediate threat:

Any threat that blocks the movement of the soldier to his point of domination.

Any hostile target that is too close to be ignored is an immediate threat. Although this factor is vague, the decision of what is too close is, in the final analysis, the decision of the individual soldier. A general guideline of what is too close is whatever is within arm's reach. **However, a soldier must never turn completely around to engage a target.** Once he has passed a target, he must move on and not change his mind.

NOTE: The engagement of a perceived immediate threat cannot slow down the soldier's movement. **Identify the threat by looking at the hands or for threatening actions.** If the soldier has to slow down to aim, the target is NOT an immediate threat. Slowing down would also endanger the team as a whole by blocking them in the doorway and violating the principle of speed and the fundamental to dominate the room.

Move to Point of Domination.

Corners are the points of domination in any room. The next action the assault team takes is to clear those corners and occupy them as points of domination. The No. 1 man and the No. 2 man are initially responsible for the corners. If the No. 1 man and the No. 2 man are unable to clear the corners, the No. 3 man and the No. 4 man must assume this critical responsibility. Each soldier has a primary and secondary sector of fire; refer to the illustrations.

Note: If a one of the soldiers has a weapons malfunction, that soldier should sound off with weapon down, take a knee and work through his malfunction. The other soldier will scan his sector of fires. This works because all sectors of fire are interlocking, thereby providing redundant fire-power. The soldier should not stand up until one of his fellow soldiers moves to him and taps him on the shoulder. This will be his signal to stand up.

Clear Sector of Fire.

Every man has a primary and secondary sector of fire enroute to his point of domination. Upon reaching the point of domination, each soldier scans his sectors of fire from the point of domination. Each soldier will have a primary and secondary sector.

Collapse Sectors of Fire.

Once each man on the team has reached his points of domination, he ensures he has interlocking sectors of fire.
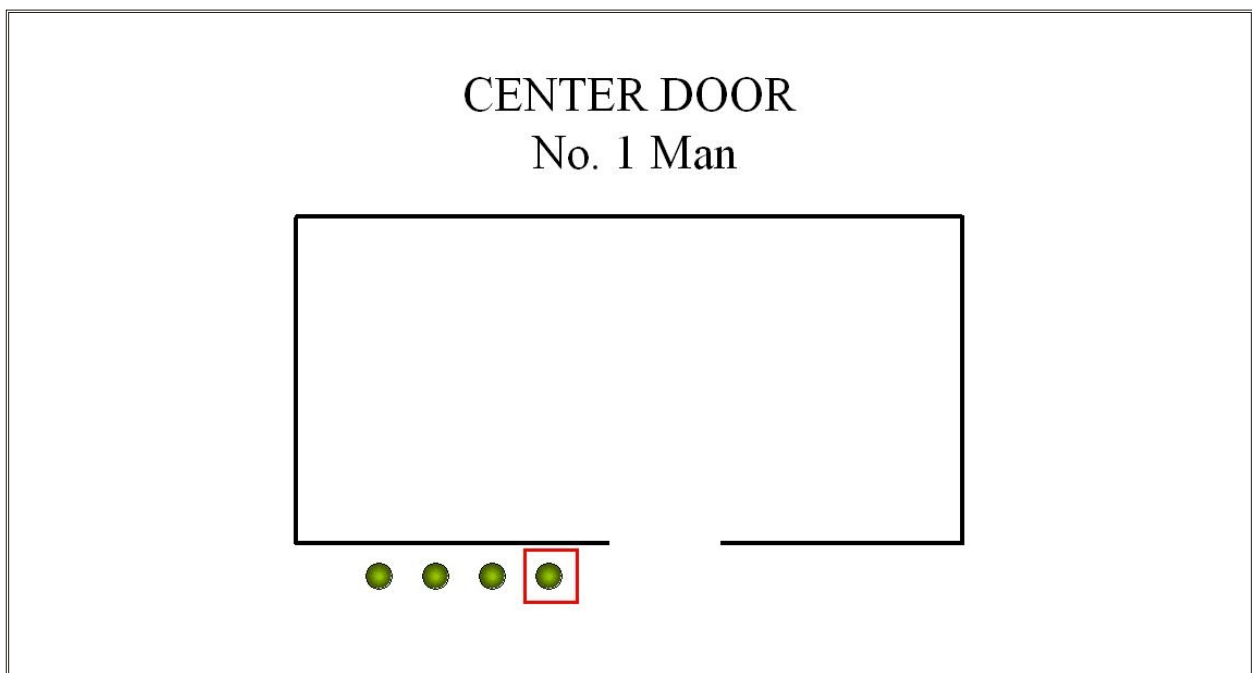
CENTER DOOR
No. 1 Man
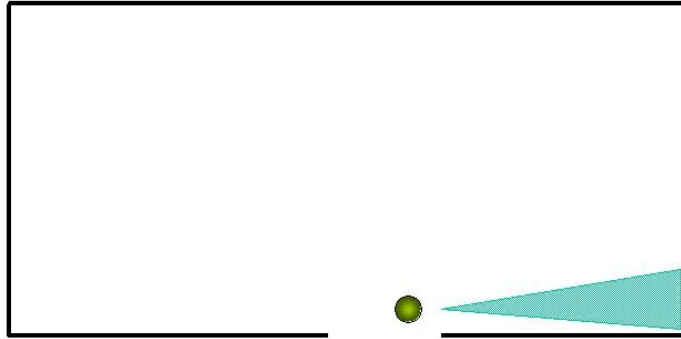
Center Door

The No. 1 man goes to the point of least resistance and clears his primary sector of fire.corner.

Center Door

He then clears his secondary sector of fire as he moves to his point of domination.
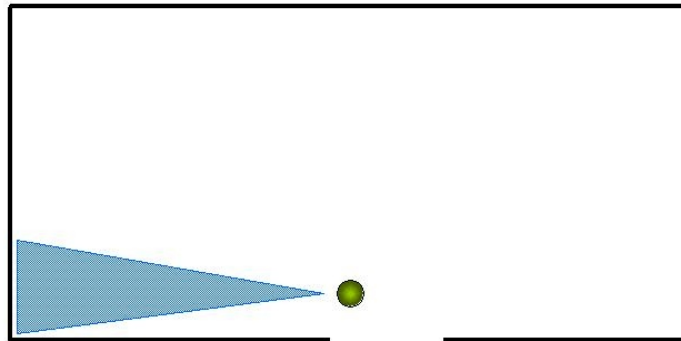
Center Door
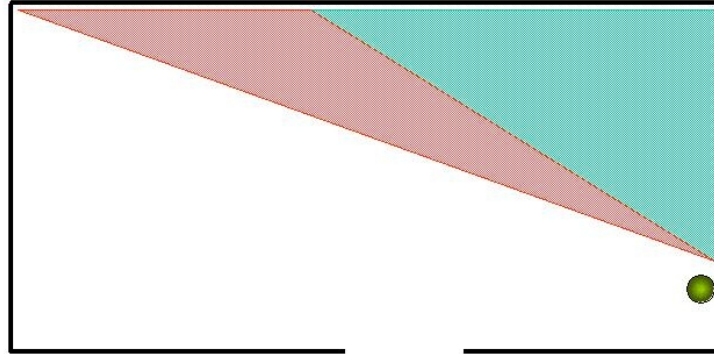
The No. 1 man reaches his point of domination. From his point of domination, he scans his **primary** and **secondary** sectors of fire.
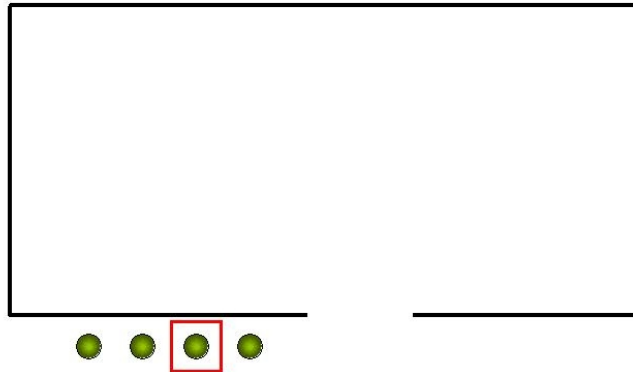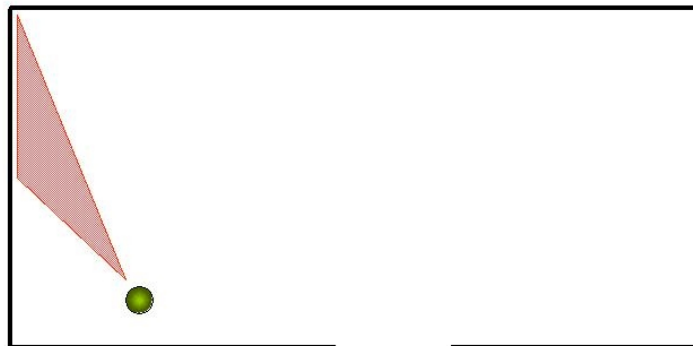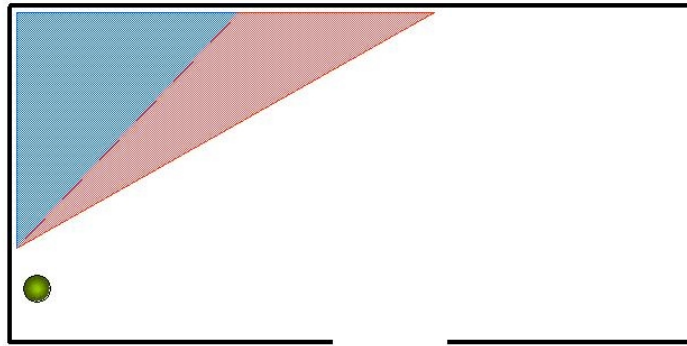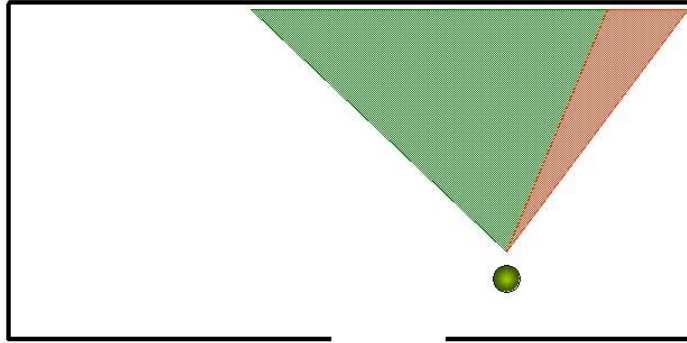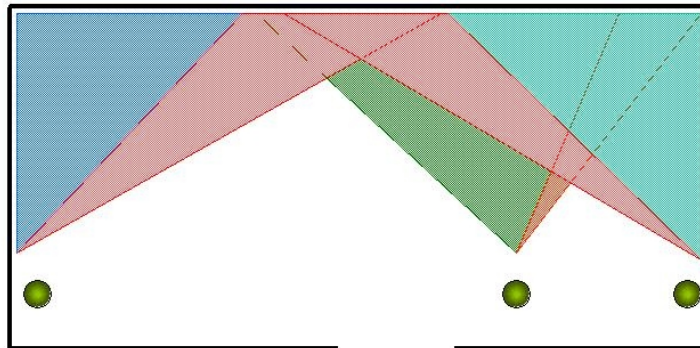
Center Door
No. 2 Man

Center Door

The No. 2 man moves in the opposite direction from the No. 1 man and clears his **primary** sector of fire.
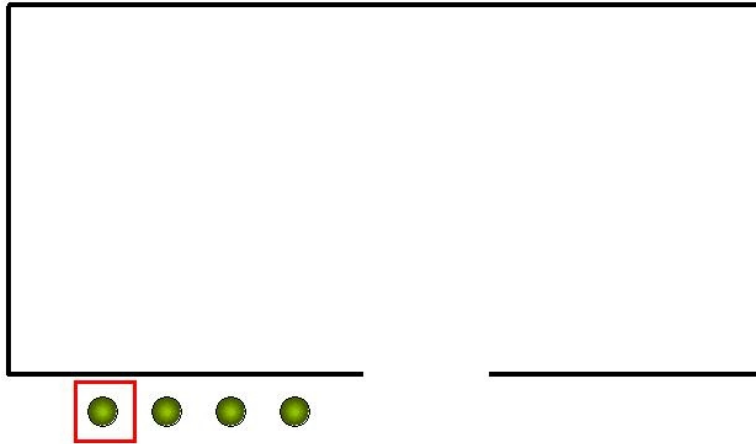
Center Door
No. 2 Man

As he moves to his point of domination, he clears his **secondary** sector of fire.

Center Door
No. 2 Man

Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his **primary** and **secondary** sector.

Center Door
No. 2 Man
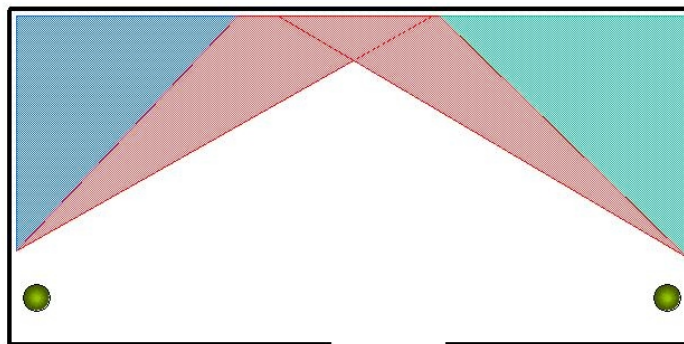
The No. 1 man collapses his sector of fire. Both men have primary and **secondary** sectors of fire. Note that they have interlocking sectors of fire.

Center Door
No. 3 Man

Center Door
No. 3 Man
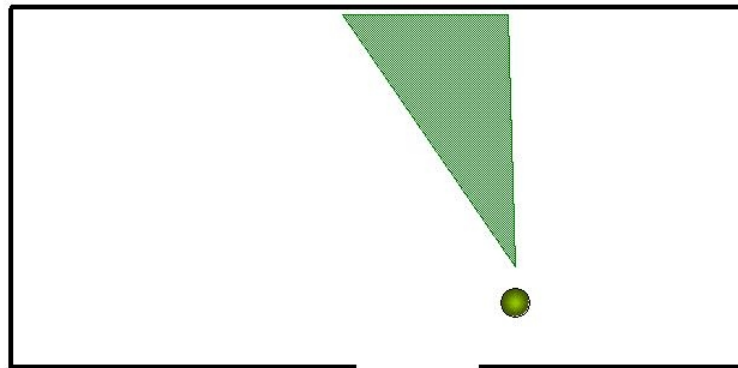
The No. 3 moves in the opposite direction from the No. 2 man and clears his **primary** sector of fire.

Center Door
No. 3 Man

Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his **primary** and **secondary** sectors of fire.
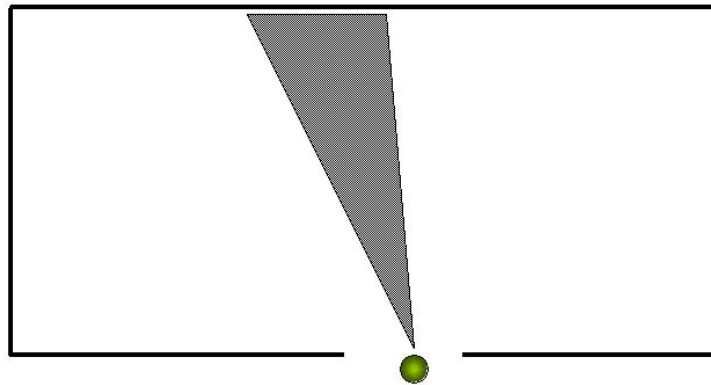
Center Door
No. 3 Man

Note the interlocking sectors of fire.
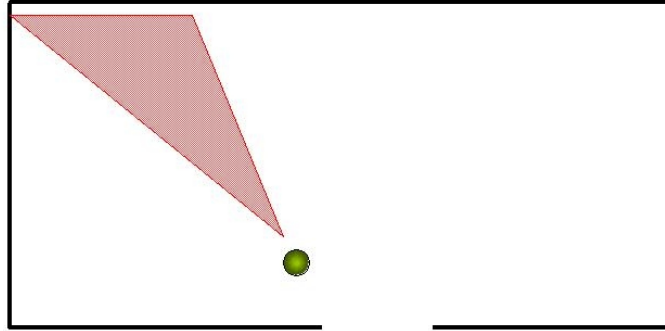
Center Door
No. 4 Man

Center Door
No. 4 Man

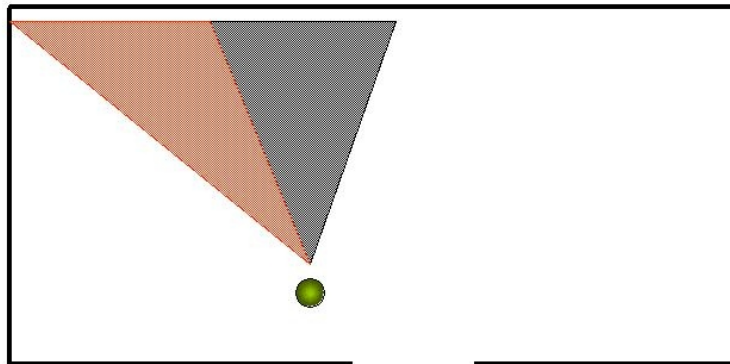
The No. 4 man moves in the opposite direction from the No. 3 man and clears his primary sector of fire.

Center Door
No. 4 Man

As he moves to his point of domination, he clears his **secondary** sector of fire.
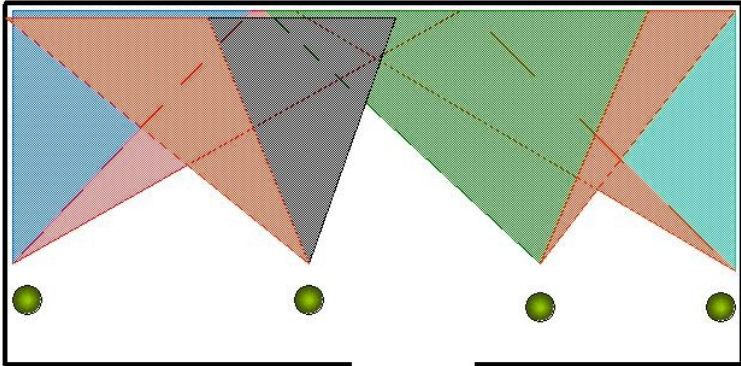
Center Door
No. 4 Man

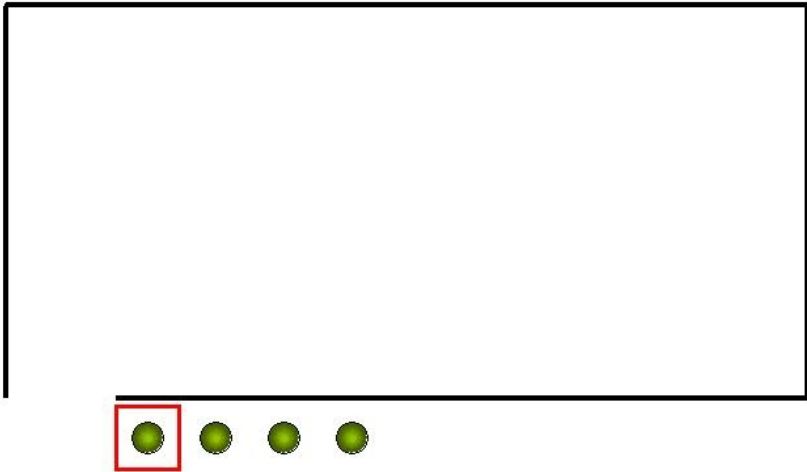From his point of domination, he scans his primary and secondary sectors of fire.

Interlocking Sectors of Fire

Each man is at his point of domination with primary and secondary sectors of fire.
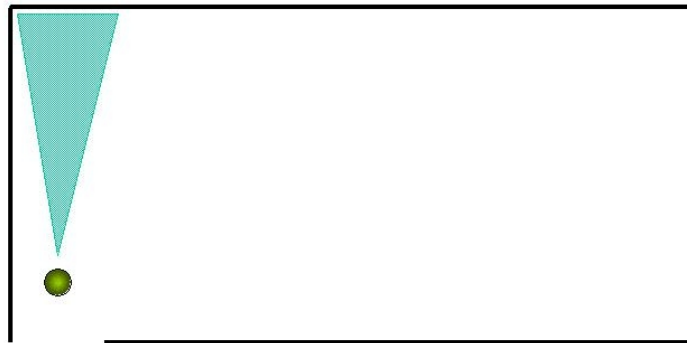
Corner Door
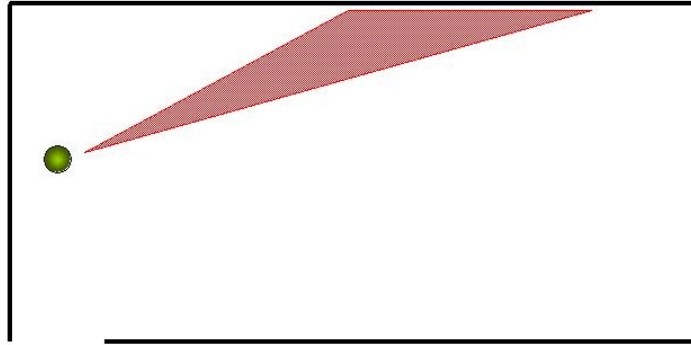# No. 1 Man

Corner Door
No. 1 Man

The No. 1 man moves to the point of least resistance.
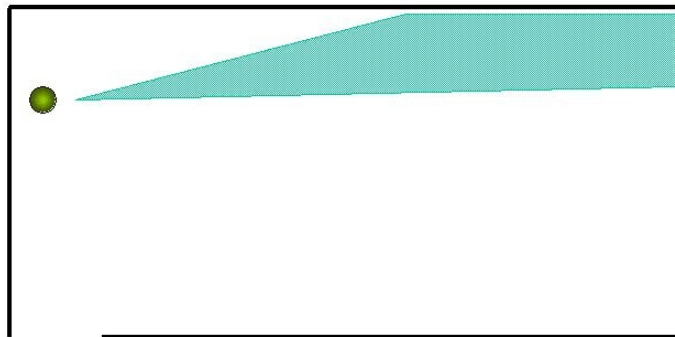
Corner Door
No. 1 Man

The No. 1 man clears his primary sector of fire.

Corner Door
No. 1 Man

As the No. 1 man moves to his point of domination, he clears his **secondary** sector of fire.

Corner Door
No. 1 Man
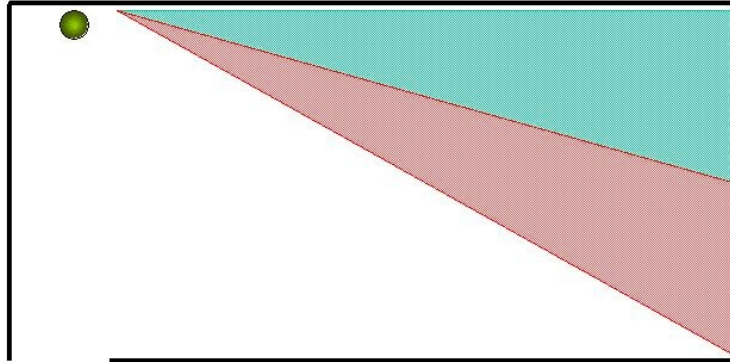
Corner Door
No. 1 Man

The No. 1 man reaches his point of domination and scans his primary and secondary sectors of fire.

Corner Door
No. 2 Man

Corner Door
No. 2 Man

The No. 2 man moves in the opposite direction of the No. 1 man.

Corner Door
No. 2 Man

The No. 2 man clears his primary sector of fire.

Corner Door/No. 2 Man

Then he clears his secondary sector of fire. His point of domination is about half way down the wall. It all depends on the size of the room.
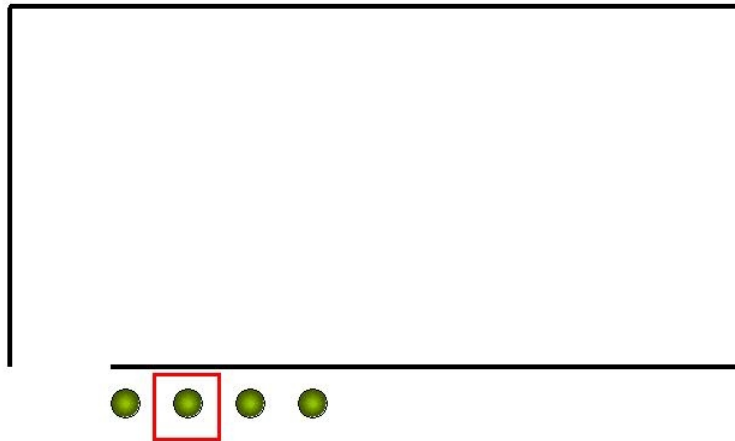
Corner Door
No. 2 Man
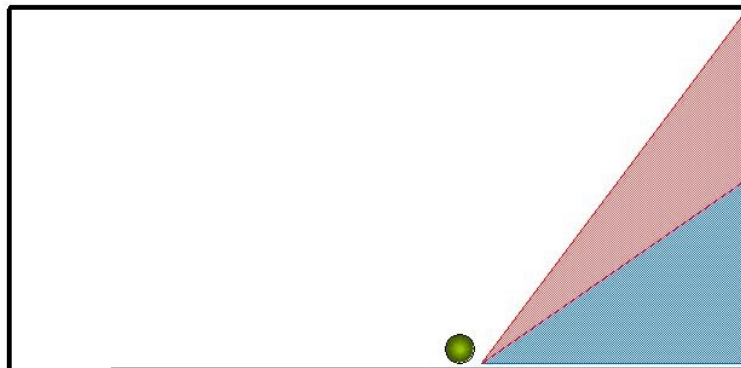
The No. 2 man reaches his point of domination and scans his primary and secondary sectors of fire.
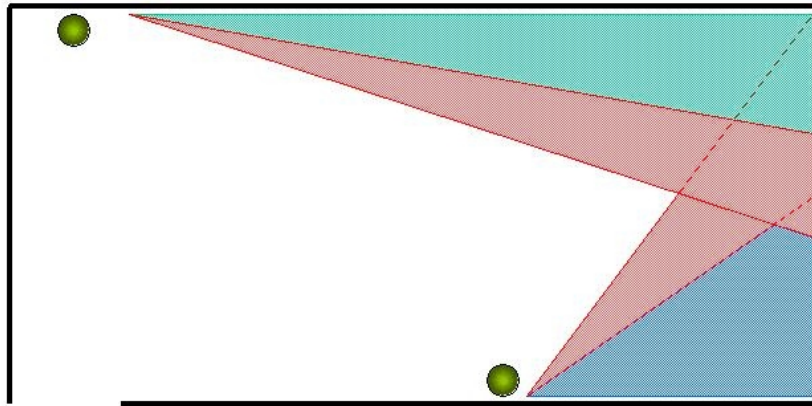
Corner Door
No. 2 Man

**The No. 1 collapses his sector of fire and scans his primary and secondary sector of fire.
The No. 2 man scans his primary and secondary sectors of fire.
Note the interlocking sectors of fire.**

Corner Door
No. 3 Man

Corner Door
No. 3 Man
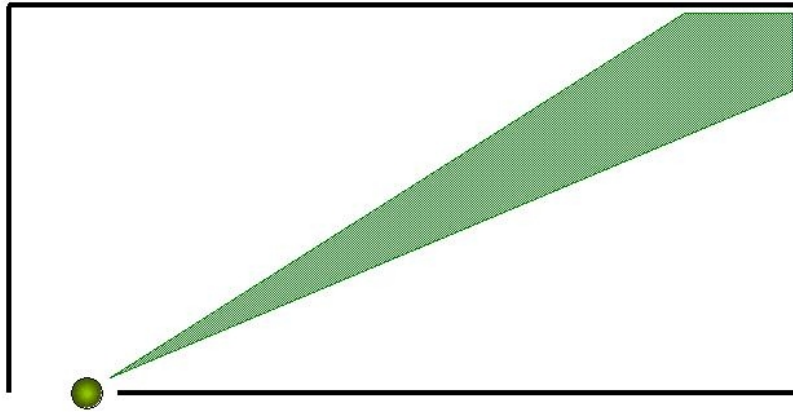
The No. 3 man moves in the opposite direction from the No. 2 man. He clears his primary sector of fire.
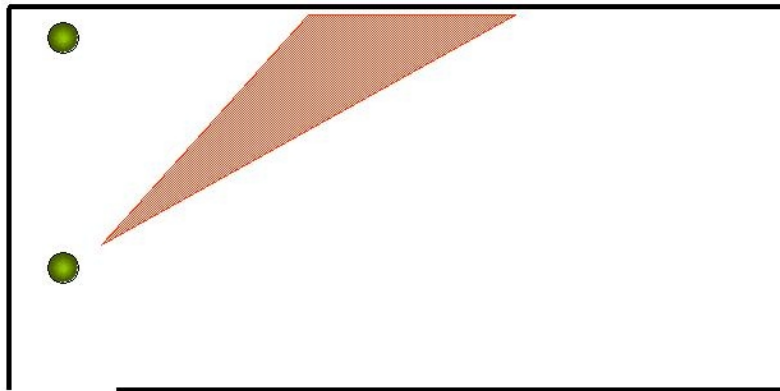
Corner Door/No. 3 Man

The No. 3 man moves to his point of domination and clears his secondary sector of fire.
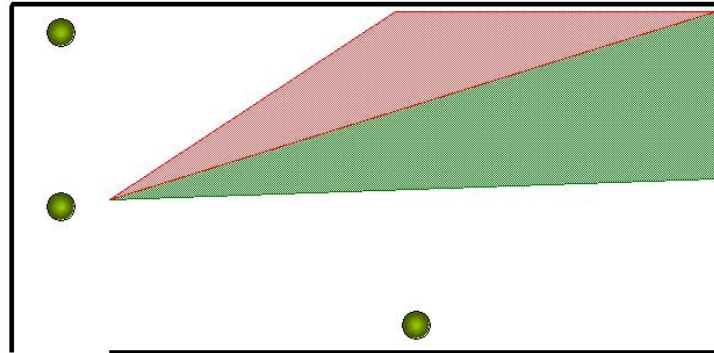
Corner Door
No. 3 Man

Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his **primary** and **secondary** sectors of fire.
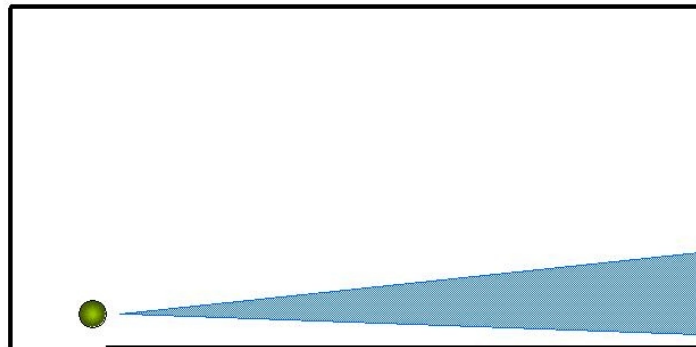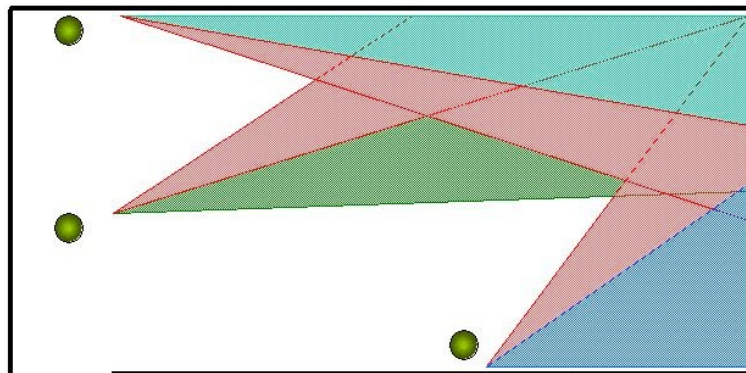
Corner Door
No. 3 Man

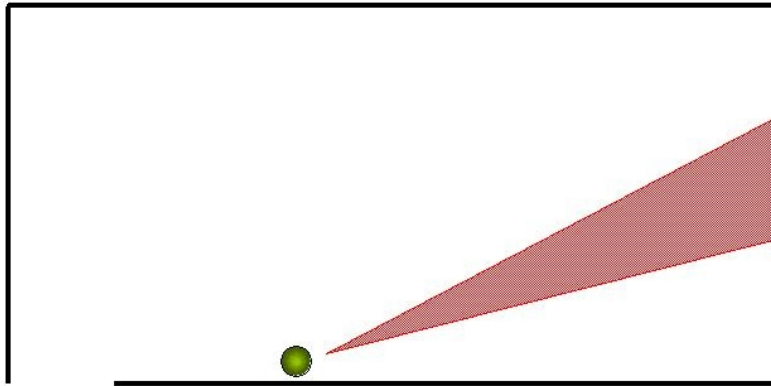Interlocking sectors of fire.
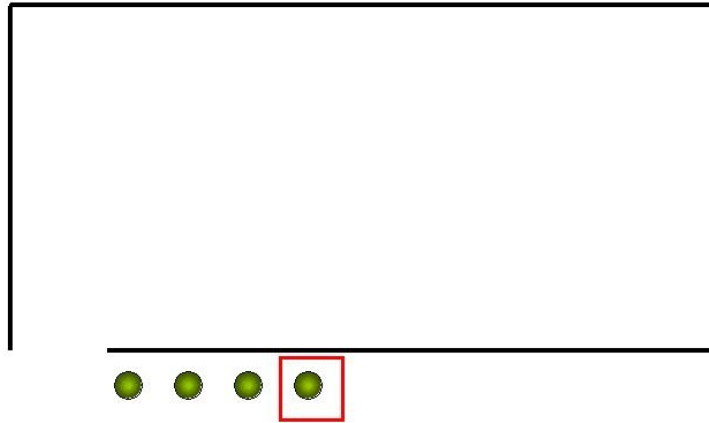
Corner Door
No. 4 Man

Corner Door
No. 4 Man
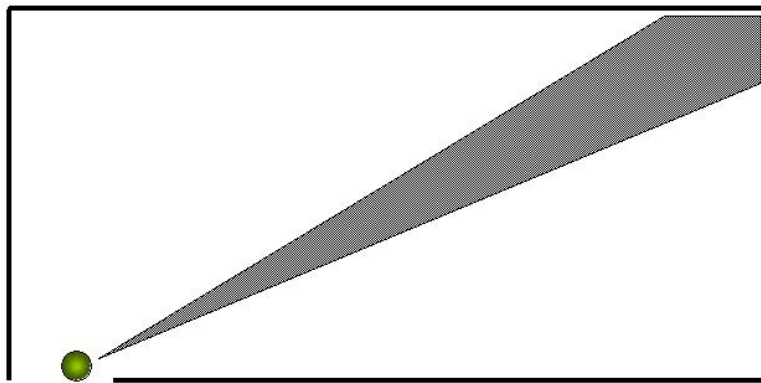
The No. 4 man moves in the opposite direction from the No. 3 man and clears his Primary sector of fire.
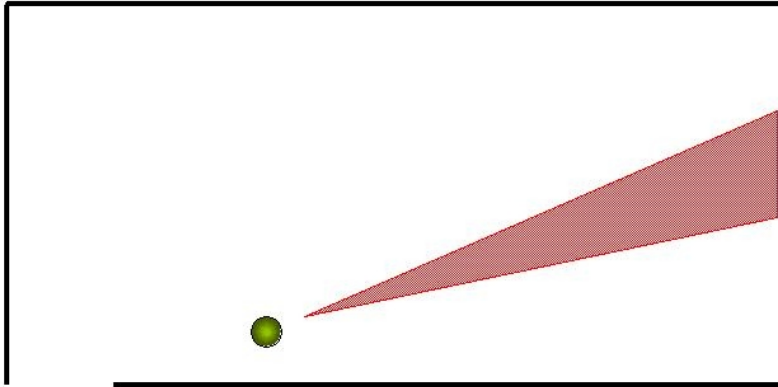
Corner Door
No. 4 Man

As he moves to his point of domination, he clears his **secondary** sector of fire.

Corner Door
No. 4 Man
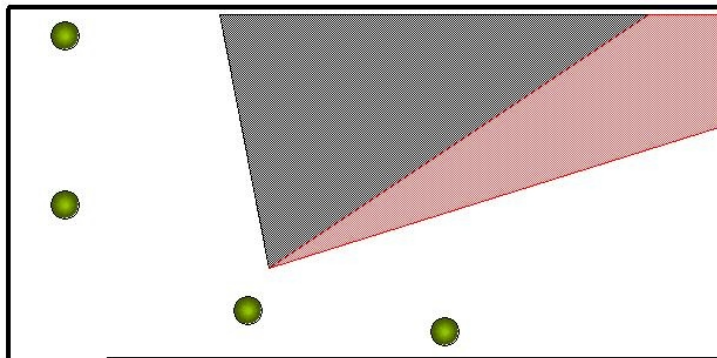
The No. 4 man reaches his point of domination and scans his primary and **secondary** sectors of fire.
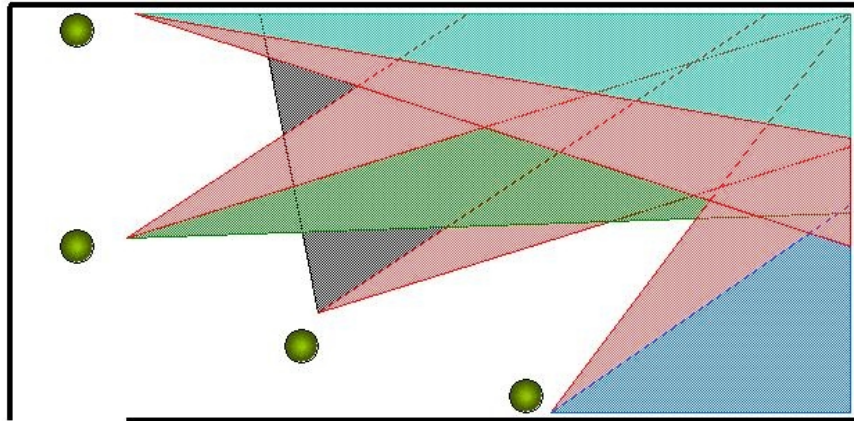
Although this technique is an effective procedure for clearing a room, leaders may be required to modify the existing action to meet their current situation. Some example reasons and methods of modifying the technique are shown below as dictated in **FM 3-06.11,** *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain.*

REASON	METHOD
Objective rooms are consistently small.	Clear with two or three men.
Shortage of personnel.	Clear in teams of two or three.
Enemy poses no immediate threat.	One or two men search each room to ensure no enemy or noncombatants are present.
No immediate threat, and speed is of the essence.	One man visually searches each room.

Table 3-1. Reasons and methods for modifying entry technique,
FM 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain.*

Three- and Two-Man Teams.

When full four-man teams are not available for room clearing, three- and two-man teams can be used. Figures 5 and Figures 5-1 (below) show the points of domination and sectors of fire for a three-man clearing team. Figures 6 and Figures 6-1 show the same thing for a two-man team. Leaders should use the entry technique *blueprint* when modifying their techniques.

Three-Man
Center Door

Each man still moves to his point of domination clearing his primary sector first, then his secondary. Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his primary and secondary sectors ensuring he has interlocking sectors of fire.
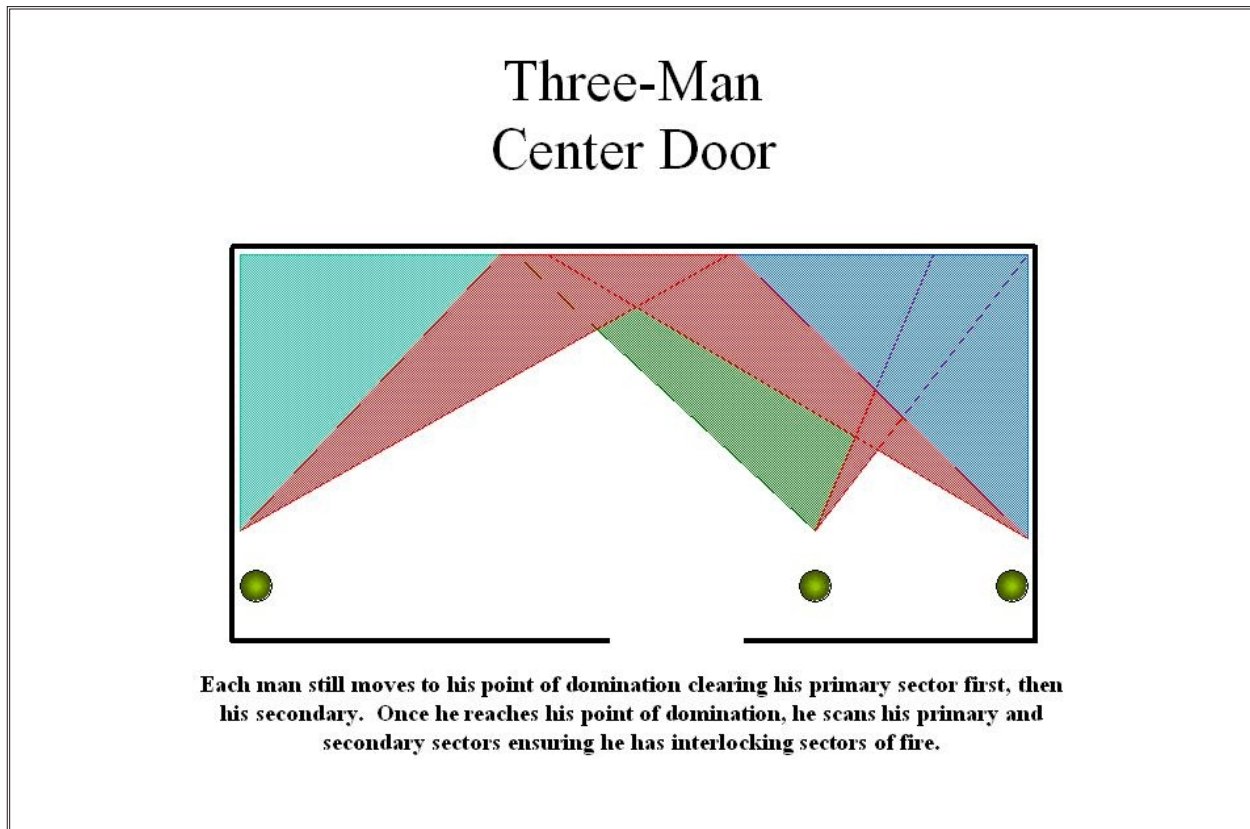
Figure 5. Points of domination and sectors of fire (three-man team, center door).

Three-Man Corner Door
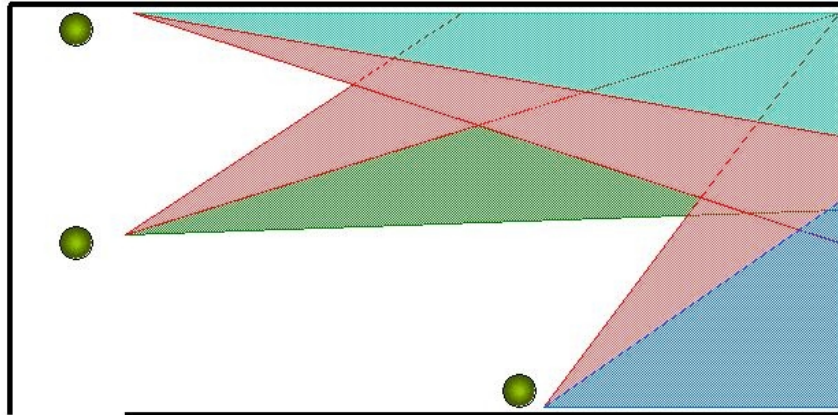
Each man still moves to his point of domination clearing his primary sector first, then his secondary. Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his primary and secondary sectors, ensuring he has interlocking sectors of fire.

Figure 5-1. Points of domination and sectors of fire (three-man team, corner door).

Two-Man Center Door
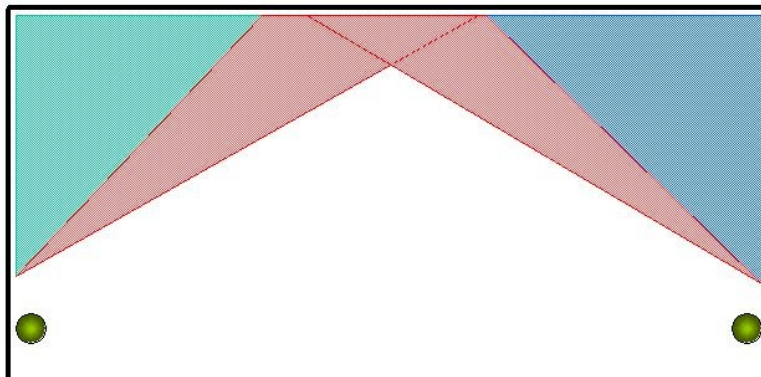
Each man still moves to his point of domination, clearing his primary sector first, then his secondary. Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his primary and secondary sectors, ensuring he has interlocking sectors of fire.

Figure 6. Points of domination and sectors of fire (two-man team, center door).

Two-Man
Corner Door

Each man still moves to his point of domination, clearing his primary sector first, then his secondary. Once he reaches his point of domination, he scans his primary and secondary sectors, ensuring he has interlocking sectors of fire.
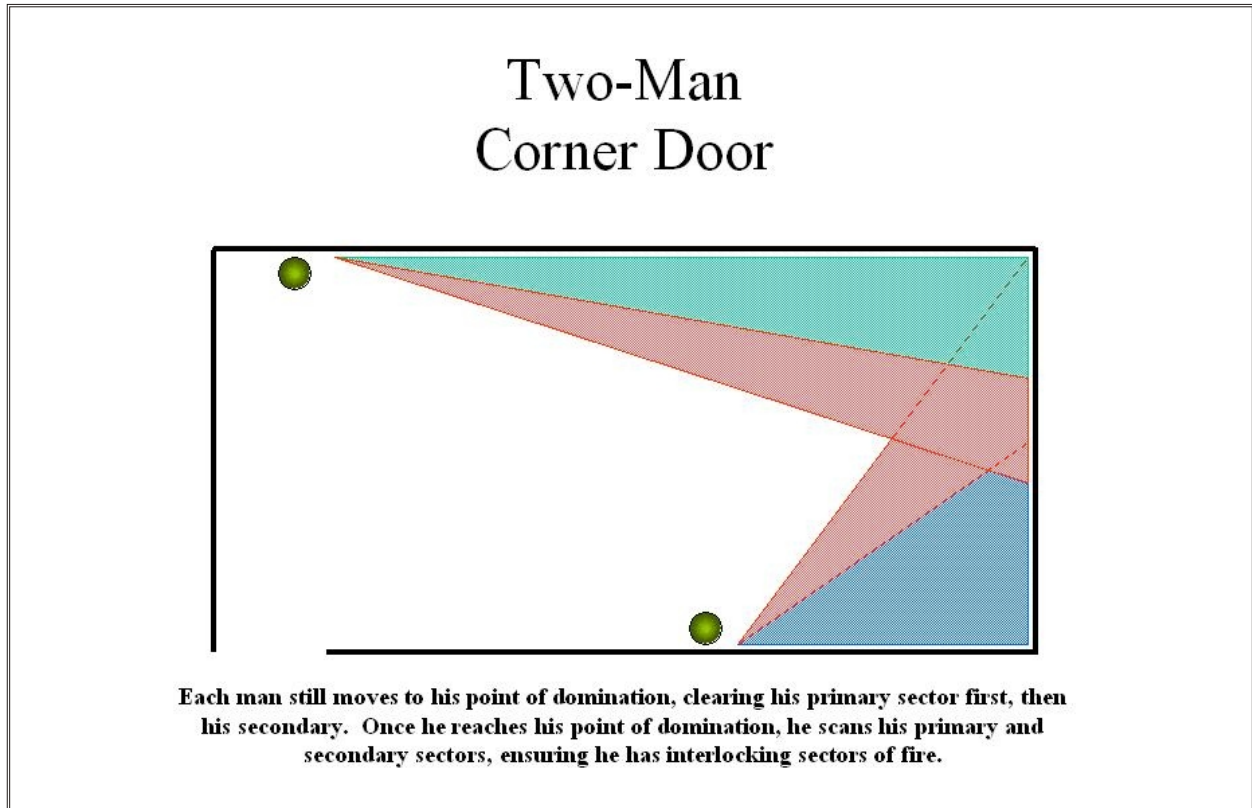
Figure 6-1. Points of domination and sectors of fire (two-man team, corner door).

Note: Each man still clears and scans the same sectors of fire as he would if it was a four-man team clearing the room. This allows each man to execute the same action always. Remember, keep it simple!

Control the Situation.

The actions of the assault team control the situation. By dominating the room and eliminating any threat, the assault team seizes control of the room and the initiative from the enemy. Inaction or slow execution gives the initiative back to any hostile element in the room. Live noncombatants or friendly personnel not engaged must also be controlled. The control measures used can be both verbal and physical.

The team leader or a designated team member must immediately begin speaking to any people in the room in a loud, commanding voice. He must take charge. Verbal control may be difficult because of the loss of hearing resulting from explosives and firearms use. Verbiage should be short and to the point, and it should be loud enough to be heard by those whose hearing may have been damaged by the sound of gunfire and explosives.

Physical control must be firm, but not overly harsh. Pain elicits response. Needlessly inflicting pain on friendly personnel may cause them to react in an unexpected manner, such as fighting back. This means possibly losing control rather than gaining it.

Search the Dead.

Searching the dead has only one function: to ensure they no longer pose a threat. With security, move all weapons away from the dead and conduct an "eye thump" on each body to ensure they are truly dead.

Search the Room.

There are two techniques: Cursory or Detailed.

- **Cursory Room Search.** Avoid opening drawers and moving items, and unnecessary disruption of the room when you search. It should be quick, systematic, and according to unit SOP.
- **Detailed Room Search.** These may be done based on the mission and time available on the objective.

Search the Living.

This should be a cursory search. It can be a standing modified search, kneeling search, or a prone handcuffing search. The situation will dictate the method of searching the living.

ACE/SALUTE Reports.

These should be according to unit SOP. Leaders must have friendly unit situational awareness. The ACE/SALUTE reports should consist of the status of the assigned sector (secured or unsecured), the status of the assaulters in the sector (wounded, dead), the number and status of friendly noncombatants encountered, the number and status of personnel of unknown disposition, and the number and status of combatants encountered. Sending in the count allows commanders to reinforce subordinate leaders and to determine when the overall objective is completely secured. It also allows the commander to set priorities for evacuation.

Evacuate on Command.

The last action is to evacuate the objective area on command. The overall commander of the objective will make the determination as to when the assault teams are ready to evacuate from the objective. If personnel or equipment recovery was the purpose of the clearing operation, the personnel or equipment should be immediately evacuated from the target area and extracted with the assault team.

Priorities for evacuation may be set in the operations order (OPORD) or based on the current situation.

If friendly personnel/adjacent units are outside the objective area, they must be notified prior to the assault team's exiting the objective area to avoid fratricide.

Once the assault teams leave the objective area, they should return to normal patrolling procedures in case of a counterattack by an enemy reaction force or any surviving enemy in the target area.

Breaching

Gaining quick access to the targeted rooms is integral to room clearing. Breaching techniques vary based on the type of construction encountered and the types of munitions available to the breaching element. Techniques range from simple mechanical and ballistic breaching to complex demolition breaching.

Ballistic (Shotgun) Breach.

Ballistic breaching is an alternate means of gaining entry into a structure through an existing opening, such as a door or a window. During the planning stages of an operation, never consider ballistic breaching as the primary method for gaining initial entry into a structure; ballistic breaching is not a positive means of gaining entry nor does it supply the surprise, speed, and violence of action necessary to minimize friendly losses upon initial entry. In certain situations, however, the use of ballistic breaching as an initial entry method may be necessary. The contents of the structure, a misfire of an explosive charge, or compromise of the assault force during its approach to the target may necessitate the use of ballistic breaching as a means of initial entry into the structure.

The order of movement for a shotgun breach has the gunner up front, followed by the No. 1 man, No. 2 man (team leader), and then the No. 3 man. After the door is breached, the gunner moves to the rear of the lineup and assumes the position of the No. 4 man.

Once initial entry is gained, however, ballistic breaching becomes the primary method for gaining access to subsequent rooms within the structure. Surprise is lost upon initial entry, and other breaching methods are too slow and tend to decrease the momentum of the assault team. **NOTE:** The shotgun should not be used as a primary assault weapon because of its limited magazine capacity and the difficulty of reloading the weapon.

Various shotgun rounds can be used for ballistic breaching. The clearing teams need to be familiar with the advantages as well as the disadvantages of each type of round. Leaders must take in consideration over penetration on walls and floors (if in a multi-story building).

- **Rifled slugs.** Rifled slugs defeat most doors encountered, including some heavy steel doors. However, rifled slugs present a serious over-penetration problem and could easily kill, maim, or injure anyone inside the room being attacked. Rifled slugs are excellent antipersonnel rounds and can be used accurately up to 100 meters.
- **Birdshot.** Birdshot (Number 6 through Number 9 shot) is used in close-range work up to 15 meters. A 2 3/4-inch shell of Number 9 shot typically contains an ounce of shot

(although it can be loaded to 1 ½ ounces with accompanying increases in recoil). The major advantage of birdshot is that it does not over-penetrate. Therefore, birdshot poses little hazard to fellow team members in adjoining rooms. When used at close range, birdshot offers the same killing potential as buckshot, especially in a full choke shotgun intended for dense shot patterns. Another advantage of birdshot is low recoil. This feature allows for faster recovery and quicker multi-target engagements. A problem with birdshot is rapid-energy bleed-off that reduces penetration at medium and long ranges. Moreover, the small size of the individual pellets requires hits be made with a majority of the shot charge to be effective. A hit with one third of the Number 9 shot charge may not be fatal, unless the shot is at extremely close range. But remember that when fired from a full choke shotgun, the pattern from birdshot inside 10 meters will be quite small. Inside 5 meters, all of the shot will still be clumped like a massive single projectile.

- **Buckshot.** Buckshot is used in close- to medium-range work, up to 30 meters. Because of its larger size, buckshot has a higher lethality than birdshot. A 2 3/4-inch shell of 00 buckshot contains nine .30-caliber balls. A hit with just one .30-caliber ball of the 00 buckshot charge can be fatal. Buckshot also retains its energy longer; therefore, it is lethal at a longer range. A disadvantage of buckshot is over penetration. Because buckshot is typically loaded with heavier shot charges, it also has a very heavy recoil. This problem becomes apparent when numerous shots have been taken.
- **Ferret rounds.** Ferret rounds contain a plastic slug filled with liquid chemical irritant (CS). When shot through a door or wall (drywall or plywood), the plastic slug breaks up and a fine mist of liquid CS is sprayed into the room. The effectiveness of one round is determined by the size of the room on the other side of the door or wall and the ventilation in the room.

Door breaching. When using the shotgun as an alternate breaching method to gain entry, shooters must consider the following target points on the door:

- **Doorknob.** NEVER target the doorknob itself because when the round hits the doorknob, the doorknob normally bends the locking mechanism into the doorframe. In most cases, the door is bent in place, thus preventing entry.
- **Locking mechanism.** When attacking the locking mechanism, focus the attack on the area immediately between the doorknob and the doorframe. Place the muzzle of the shotgun no more than 1 inch away from the face of the door directly over the locking mechanism. The angle of attack should be 45° downward and at a 45° angle into the doorframe. After breaching the door, kick it swiftly. This way, if the door is not completely open, a strong kick will usually open it. When kicking the door open, focus the force of the kick at the locking mechanism and close to the doorjamb. After the locking mechanism has been breached, this area becomes the weakest part of the door.
- *Hinges. The hinge breach technique is performed much the same as the doorknob breach, except the gunner aims at the hinges. He fires three shots per hinge—the first at the middle, then at the top and bottom. He fires all shots from less than an inch away from the hinge. Because the hinges are often hidden from view, the hinge breach is more difficult. Hinges are generally 8 to 10 inches from the top and bottom of the door; the center hinge is generally 36 inches from the top, centered on the door. Regardless of technique use, the gunner, immediately after he fires, kicks the door in or pulls it out.*

He then pulls the shotgun barrel sharply upward and quickly turns away from the doorway to signal that the breach point has been cleared. This rapid clearing of the doorway allows the following man in the fire team a clear shot at any enemy who may be blocking the immediate breach site. —**FM 3-06.11,** ***Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain,*** 3-20 Breaching.

When the assault team members encounter a door to a "follow-on" room, they should line up on the side of the door that gives them a path of least resistance upon entering. When the door is encountered, the first soldier to see it calls out the status of the door (opened or closed). If the door is open, soldiers should never cross in front of it to give themselves a path of least resistance. If the door is closed, the No. 1 man maintains security on the door and waits for a No. 2 man to gain positive control of the No. 1 man. The No. 1 man begins the progressive breaching process by taking his nonfiring hand and checking the doorknob to see if it is locked. If the door is unlocked, the No. l man (with his hand still on the door) pushes the door open as he enters the room. If the door is locked, the No. 1 man releases the doorknob (while maintaining security on the door) and calls out for the breacher ("breacher up").

Once the breacher arrives at the door (with round chambered), he places the muzzle of the shotgun at the proper attack point, takes the weapon off safe, and signals the No. 2 man by nodding his head. At that time, the No. 2 man (with one hand maintaining positive control of the No. 1 man) takes his other hand (closest to the breacher) and forming a fist, places it within the periphery of the breacher and pumps his fist twice, saying "ready breach." This action allows the breacher to see if a flashbang or grenade is to be used. Once the breacher defeats the door, he steps aside and allows the assault team to enter. He then either assumes the position of the No. 4 man if he is acting as a member of the assault team or remains on call as the breacher for any follow-on doors. He should keep the shotgun magazine full at all times. There may be numerous doors, and stopping to reload will slow the momentum of the assault.
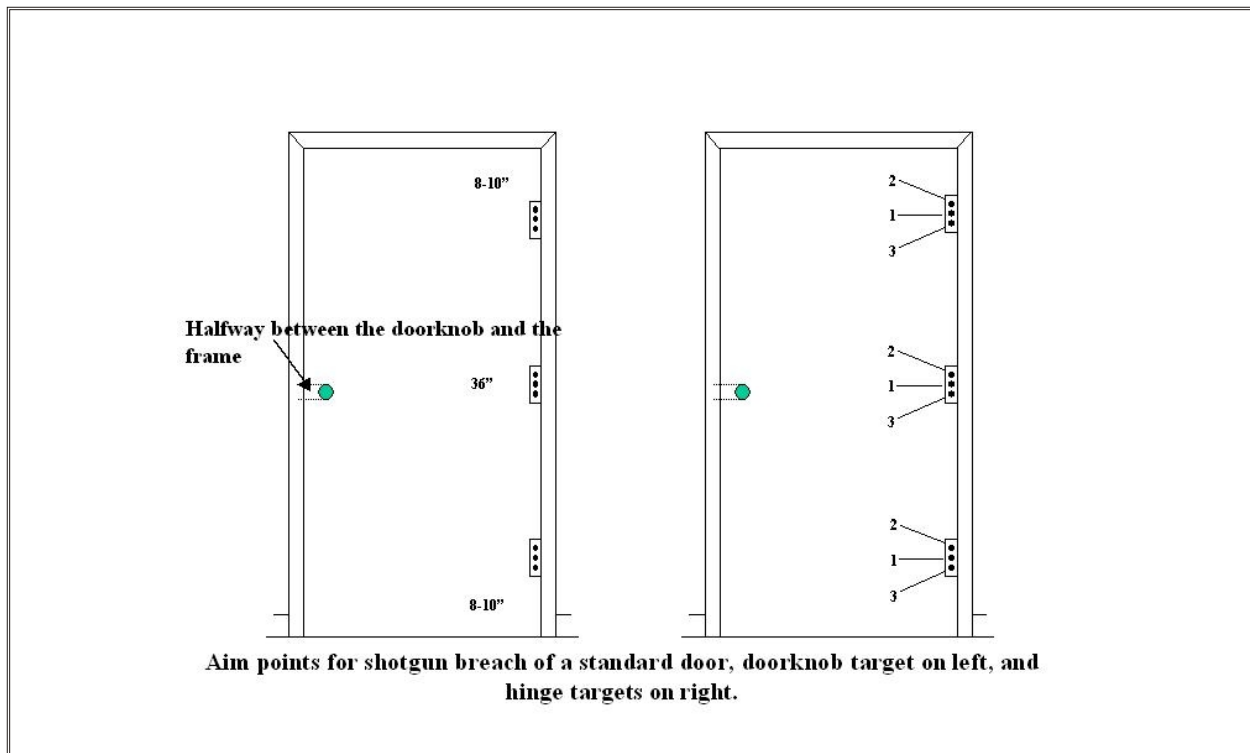
Figure 3-26. Aim points for shotgun breach of a standard door, doorknob target on left and hinge targets on right. FM 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain.*

NOTE: The use of small arms (5.56-mm or 7.62-mm) as a ballistic breach on doorknobs and hinges is unsafe and should only be used as a last resort.

Explosive (Demolition) Breach.

The order of movement for an explosive breach without engineer support is No. 1, No. 2 (team leader), No. 3, and then No. 4. The No. 1 man provides security at the doorway. The No. 2 man (team leader) carries the demolition charge and places it. The No. 3 man provides security overhead, and the No. 4 man provides rear security. After the demolition charge is placed, the team moves to covered positions and prepares to enter in the standard 1, 2, 3, 4 order. **Refer to FM 3-06.11, *Combined Arms Operations in Urban Terrain,* Chapter 8, sections 9 to 11, for** breaching reinforced and nonreinforced exterior walls, interior walls and partitions, and door-breaching charges.

Mechanical Breach.

A suggested order of movement for a mechanical breach is the initial assault team in order, followed by the breach man or element. At the breach point, the assault team leader brings the breach team forward while the assault team provides local security. After the breach is conducted, the breach team moves aside and provides local security as the assault team enters the breach.

Conclusion

Room clearing has always been fundamental to urban operations, be it high intensity assaults, such as Grozny 2000 or Aachen 1944, precision-clearing operations, as in Panama, or the success of a medieval siege, or surgical operations conducted by the Soviets in Kabul or Austrians infiltrating an Italian city in 1702. Still, it can be argued that the basic techniques in room clearing have become more central to basic soldier skills than they were in recent decades. The expansion of urban areas, the imbalance between opposing military forces, or the strategic importance of an urban center means that one or both sides may chose to fight inside a city. COE recognizes this trend. Both attacker and defender will use room-clearing techniques in such a struggle just as opposing forces use similar tactics in more open warfare. It should be apparent that casual (or clumsy) familiarity with precision room-clearing techniques is a formula for disaster. Untrained or unrehearsed soldiers trying to breach a defended building are as likely to kill each other as they are the enemy. Meanwhile, a skilled defender will devastate the amateur urban attacker.

1   Odom, Thomas P., **"METL, MREs and MOUT Shugart-Gordon is Training, Not War!",** *News from the Front!,* July-August 2002, the Center for Army Lessons Learned.

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3   Gabel, Christopher R., Dr., *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain; the 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, at Aachen, October 1944 and Combined Arms in Battle Since 1939,* Spiller, Roger., Dr., editor.

4   Yates, Lawrence A., *Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama City,* December 1989.

5   DiMarco, Lou, *Attacking the Heart and Guts: Urban Operations through the Ages.*

6   Grau, Lester, *The Take-Down of Kabul: An Effective Coup de Main.*

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