

**Pamphlet  
For Squad Commanders  
of Submachine Gun Units**

*(on the topic of military tactics of the formation)*

*With Commander's commentary for the Contemporary Reenactor*

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## About this Document

This document is a translation of Памятка Командиру Отделения Автоматчиков, a 1943 guide for squad leaders which summarized two years of bloody lessons for the RKKA. Perhaps most interestingly, it shares quite a bit in common with modern U.S. military infantry platoon leading procedures, and it appears that many aspects of combat and leadership transcend the borders of time and language. As reenactors, one of our primary goals is to take the lessons from that time and apply them to our modern day hobby. **The notes in blue are several reenactors' thoughts on the document as they pertain to us today**, based on a combined 50 years in the hobby and more than ten years' of active duty military service.

## The Mission of the Infantry

The mission of infantry on the attack is to close with and destroy the enemy (or take him prisoner) in hand-to-hand combat via the skilled use of automatic fires and competent maneuver in the field. Immediately thereafter, the infantry must fortify the recently-seized positions and be prepared for counter-attack.

The mission of the infantry on the defense is to cut-off attacking enemy forces, inflict heavy losses upon the enemy and hold an assigned area via the use of competent and accurate fires and decisive counter-attacks.

The decisive movements of infantry on the attack and surprise defense can be the decisive factor in a battle.

Fire, maneuver, and hand-to-hand combat are the basic actions of the infantry.

**When attacking, don't stop!** When being fired upon, it's easy to get scared at the thought of failure or the loud noises, then hunker down for cover - don't allow yourself or your men to do this. Don't be afraid to get close and personal, most reenactors will panic on the defense as they are closed in on and enveloped, especially if everyone in your squad is firing a submachine gun at their position.

## The fundamentals of success for the infantry in battle.

Unlike in actual combat, for us there are no bullets flying, and barring things going very wrong no physical danger to anyone involved. **Real combat experiences must inform reenactors, but at best can be used only to influence how we perform in the field.** A few things worth mentioning from the get-go:

- Reenactors can only take hits if they are aware of being fired upon; troops need to be camouflaged prior to the engagement but visible to targets when firing to have any effect
- Opening fire at ranges greater than 100m is generally a waste of blanks, and will give away your position to the enemy
- Even traditional heavy weapons such as Maxims, DP28, and even mortars are effective only to around 200m
- Surprise is still a thing
- Suppression is still very much a thing

- **Shock, fear, and panic in the face of the enemy are very much still a thing**, and if you combine surprise with suppression most enemy reenactment defenses will collapse

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#### **The fundamentals of success for infantry in battle are:**

- Clear comprehension by all commanders and troops of their mission
- Use of their weapons in the most intelligent possible manner to defeat the enemy
- Understanding of the enemy's capabilities - **in our case, learn the different personalities of your fellow reenactment groups, and take these into account when skirmishing against them**
- Unwavering efforts to close with the enemy in order to engage him in close combat
- Intelligent efforts in applying forces and means to achieve victory - **the direct route is defended; you will often need to lead your squad via the indirect or more difficult path**

#### **In order to succeed in battle the infantry must:**

- Be ready at a moment's notice to enter battle - **when in forward positions, your men should have their weapons ready to go and within an arm's reach. If weapons require cleaning, this should be done one at a time and with extra care towards not losing parts or accidentally firing a blank.**
- Be ready to change direction of efforts without notice
- Not allow the enemy to take him by surprise; maintain area security during down times, establish and maintain "sekrets", and continue reconnaissance efforts - **the most basic of perimeter security lacks in nearly every reenactment group. You must ALWAYS have a sekret deployed, and also be prepared to use the lack of sekrets/pickets against "enemy" groups when approaching for the attack**
- Fully integrate and maintain anti-tank and anti-air defenses, as well as chemical defense
- In all cases maintain cooperation with assigned enablers (such as machine guns, mortars, anti-tank rifles, artillery, etc.) and with neighboring units

In contemporary battle successful attacks and defenses with minimal casualties are only possible with the capable consideration of local conditions and rapid entrenchment on site. Because of this, **every soldier and squad, without waiting for orders, should immediately and rapidly entrench upon any halt in movement** (aside from designated halts for rest), digging these entrenchments to complete profile, to include anti-tank and anti-air defense considerations. **As reenactors we should also adhere to this rule. Keep in mind that for most, there's neither the time nor the desire to dig full man-depth trenches and you will need to select your defense to make the strongest use of natural features, camouflage, and the limited time you have to entrench via shallow foxholes.**

#### **Fires and the submachine gun squad**

**Success in a firefight can only be achieved by using the fires of the entire squad against only a small part of the enemy's force - preferably making use of complete surprise. As a general rule, a successful attack needs to outnumber the defenders 3 to 1. By attacking the enemy on a flank or from the rear, you are able**

TO achieve success in a firefight, it's critical to:

- Seamlessly integrate the infantry with supporting forces, pre-planning fires before the battle starts such that **on the attack** these supporting fires can provide suppression along the entire route of advance and **on the defense** engage enemy attacks piecemeal such that they are attrited and degraded before even reaching the main line of defense.
- Maintain vigilant observation of the battlefield, identifying new targets, evaluating the ongoing battle and possible signs of enemy activity
- Direct fires of the unit in such a manner that the most important enemy threats are rapidly and efficiently neutralized with minimum resources
- Organize **resupply** efforts during down time between skirmishes.

The submachine gun squad commander's role is to:

- Select and clearly identify to all under his command all landmarks within the unit's zone of fire; designate those which are most important for later reference during battle; number all landmarks from right to left and designate these with names (crossroads, clearing, butcher's hut, etc.) - **known as a "range card" in modern military parlance,**
- Identify to the squad the lanes of fire for the unit; identify areas which are also under possible by neighboring friendly forces
- Put thought into fields of fire for each weapon and position; **do not allow continued and repeated firing from a single position**, but rather have several to rotate between with a pre-planned rotation for use during battle - **one of the single most important (and overlooked) pieces of advice for anyone in our community**
- Maintain observation of the battlefield, develop and evaluate new targets, determine the ranges of these for indirect and direct fires, and select the weapons systems which might most effectively defeat the same
- Prepare reports for the application of indirect fires (target, targeting grid, form of fires, number of rounds to be expended) and create/maintain target reference points
- Select the most favorable moment to open fire, identify the targets, correct fires and shift as necessary from one to another targeting reference point; concentrate fires on a single point as necessary/divide between several during complex situations; open or cease fire as a unit. **At reenactments people will not take their hits to die unless they know they are being fired upon. Wait for the opportune time to engage the enemy, as a squad leader it is your duty to determine this and maintain fire discipline amongst your men until you give the order to fire.**

Amongst identified targets which cannot be defeated by the means available to the squad; notify the platoon leader (hand-carrying if necessary) in order to inform the next higher commander - of artillery, mortars, anti-tank troops etc. - which targets must be destroyed or suppressed. **When your squad sees any action, whether on the attack or defense, (if possible due to a lapse in combat) ensure to keep your platoon leader informed on the status of your squad, along with a short report on the engagement with the enemy.**

### **Duties of the commander**

The commander bears sole responsibility for composition and military preparedness of his squad, for the organization of its' efforts, and its' performance during battle. The same goes for reenactment commanders at all levels. "It's just a hobby" only goes so far as we're talking thread count, boot soles, etc. - **you are responsible if someone under your command is allowed to go into the field unprepared for the cold, without food, unaware of safety procedures**, etc. Help each other out.

#### The commander must:

- **Ensure that the political education and morale of his squad is as high as possible; maintain military discipline, military readiness, and military readiness of his subordinates as soldiers**
- **Capably take responsibility for ALL elements of the battle**
- Be the center of gravity and direction for his subordinates, an example of unwavering bravery, up to and including self-sacrifice. He must be an example of self-discipline, endurance, and self-composure, especially when times are tough. **Have faith in yourself and your judgment.** Do not hesitate as a commander, hesitation would get guys killed in actual combat, and in a reenactment it can lead to unclear orders, people potentially getting injured, or your squad members having a poor experience at the event. You have been trusted with your assigned level of responsibility, trust your decisions. (This doesn't mean do whatever you want, but act within the intent of your commander.)
- **Competently command his unit in battle** - competency is a subjective term here, and does not mean being right 100% of the time. Your goal is ensuring a flowing and interesting scenario based on historical accuracy. If the unit we are portraying was known for suffering terrible losses, then in this case acting incompetently is "competent command" in that case. **Don't stress about making mistakes, this is historically accurate.**
- Continually work to maintain and improve military and political readiness - help others understand what's historically correct and practically possible for modern reenactors. Politically, grow a sense of community amongst those of us with the same impression.
- Know regulations, field manuals, and general orders of the Red Army
- Know all weapons systems and military technology, and how to make use of these in battle - **Prep your BFONGs before the event!!!!** As this is a submachine gun squad at a reenactment, everyone will have a BFONG. As their leader it is your duty to inform them to have their weapons tested, cleaned and ready to go BEFORE the event. Your men should not be prepping and tuning their BFONGs at the event, they have months before the event to accomplish this.
- Study the technical means and methods of the enemy
- Work to educate his subordinates in the same; insisting each is fully competent on the safe and effective use of his personal weapon to tirelessly inflict losses on the enemy
- Know the condition of his subordinates and squad as a whole; their morale and emotional state as well as material readiness, supplies on-hand, condition of uniforms and equipment, footwear (socks too) and above all ensure they have everything necessary for both battle and life.

- Care for his soldiers and ensure they have time for rest and recuperation, living conditions and necessary items, take note of his soldier's achievements, ensure misconduct is punished, and shepard the military traditions of the unit

**Accurate, timely, and unquestioning completion of all military orders** is the **most basic** of military duties of the commander. In the event that the situation severely differs from the expected, the **commander must act under his own initiative**. Your objective should be clearly laid out by your platoon commander, and if not you should ask relevant questions before returning to your men. **There will be times that you face a situation entirely different than what's described in your orders**, and at such times you must "figure it out" and try to accomplish the commander's intent.

**A lack of orders from the higher commander must never serve as an excuse for lack of initiative or activity in battle.**

For successful completion of assigned tasks the commander must understand the concept of initiative, military cunning, how to deceive the enemy - he must be "street smart".

**The submachine gun squad commander** on the ground, having given orders on squad orientation, lays out tasks to his subordinates by explaining the following:

- Where is the enemy and what is he doing?
- What is the main mission of the squad?
- Where are neighboring friendly units, and what are their missions?
- For his subordinates, what are the orders for each individual man?

#### 5) Signals and markers for leading your troops.

Having given these initial orders to his squad, the submachine gun commander designates a deputy squad commander who takes charge in the event that he is unable to continue his duties; he ensures the deputy is able to repeat back to him all standing orders for the squad.

**The commander must take all actions necessary to ensure his orders are carried out, without hesitation or overthinking; he must be decisive and avoid confusion that might be caused by incomplete or multiple confusing commands.** He must command full adherence to his orders, decisiveness from his subordinates in battle, stubbornness in defense, and full readiness of his forces.

During the course of battle **the commander must not waver in his combat presence in leading the squad:**

- Conduct continuous reconnaissance of the enemy
- Maintain understanding of the entire field of battle, the overhead airspace, to know the location of his subordinates, neighboring units, and higher commanders, and maintain communications with the same
- Ensure both flanks and the rear areas of his unit are secure
- Ensure given orders are being followed
- Receive the signals and signs of his higher commander or neighboring units and as necessary respond to these
- Look for indicators of armored, aviation, and chemical threats and respond to these promptly

- Rapidly exploit the results of his unit's fires on enemy positions for rapid movement or a swift attack against the same
- Oversee the construction of trenches and trench shelters
- Concisely, truthfully, and accurately report all activities observed on the field of battle to the higher commander and neighboring units
- Among his subordinates, support taking the initiative, encourage bravery, self-reliance, military acumen and ingenuity
- Organize the treatment and evacuation of the wounded
- Provide for supplies to his subordinates (including military supplies and fuel)

The commander must always consider the impact his unit's actions will have on neighboring units and cultivate the same in his subordinates.

The commander must be an example of revolutionary vigilance, vigilance in the war against spies, sabotage, and deserters and demand the same from his subordinates; he must severely care for military secrets, **he must firmly suppress all harmful and false rumors.**

### **Combat Operations of the Submachine Gun Squad General Provisions**

**The most fundamental task of the Submachine Gun squad is:**

- **Rapid, daring, and unexpected operations on the flanks and to the rear of enemy units, with the aim of inflicting severe losses on them via automatic fire, spreading panic, disrupting lines of command and control, and blocking escape routes.**
- Organizing ambushes, the capture of prisoners, and the destruction of enemy forces who have penetrated into Soviet rear areas
- Actions as part of mechanized operations to support Armored forces (tank descent)

The submachine gun squad acts as a part of the submachine gun platoon or independently, and can be attached to standard rifle units.

Skillfully using their weapons, the squad must be prepared to attack **even enemy units who number several times their own size** in order to destroy or capture these.

The submachine gun squad approaches an enemy force with the goal of getting **as close as possible**, only opening fire at close range and **all soldiers commencing fire at the same time.**

Submachine gun units consume a large amount of ammunition. Because of this, the squad commander must take care to ensure that there is a consistent and continued supply with a reserve of ammunition.

A submachine gun squad operates in battle in small groups on a wide front. One of the groups is designated as leading operations [point group]. The squad leader always accompanies this group.

### **The Submachine Gun Squad on the attack**

When advancing, the submachine gun squad moves either as a chain or in small groups of 2-3 men in the general form of an infantry formation. **As commander on the attack, you are the one who controls your contact with the enemy.** Make sure that this is as violent and unexpected as possible for those on the receiving end.

Upon commencing the attack phase, the squad opens concentrated fire against known and strongly-suspected enemy positions located at the leading edge of enemy defenses. **Use an audible signal for commencing fire, such as shouting “yrrraaa”, blowing a whistle, or firing a pistol shot into the air.** Make sure your squad is expecting such a signal and thus ready to immediately open fire.

**The submachine gun squad identifies unoccupied or weakly-defended areas**, then boldly pushes through these areas. Having broken through front line enemy defenses, **the submachine gun squad then turns and attacks enemy positions from the flanks or rear.** Priority should be given to destroying or disrupting enemy heavy weapons such as machine guns, mortars, and anti-tank weapons. Immediately after, the submachine gun squad directs fires to help clear a route for advancing friendly infantry by attacking enemy command points and headquarters. **After the first stage of a successful breakthrough, most reenactors will want to stop and chat with the other side, smoke, or pause. As a commander, you must keep them moving against additional targets to the flanks and enemy’s rear in support of the larger advance**

During the enemy counter-attack, the submachine gun group coordinates with the parent rifle unit to support with fires, in particular attacking enemy attacks at the flanks and attempting to penetrate behind the rear of such formations.

**During an attempted enemy withdrawal**, the squad quickly intercepts the main route of enemy advance using effective fires, and does not allow the enemy to withdraw any material elements. The squad destroys withdrawing enemy units or takes them prisoner wholesale.

**When attacking in forests** (or in overgrown areas), the squad must “comb” the area carefully and attempt to strike enemy forces from the flank undetected.

**When acting as tank riders**, the submachine gun squad breaks through enemy defenses, disperses with purpose, and destroys all resistance with submachine gun fire and grenades. The submachine gun squad attacks enemy gun crews, clears enemy trenches, communications passages, houses and other structures, and vehicles - the submachine gun pays special attention to disrupting communications.

## **The Submachine Gun Squad on the Defense**

The mission of the submachine gun squad on the defense is:

- Fill gaps between friendly units
- Destroy or capture enemy forces that have broken through the main line of defense
- Take part in defending from enemy attacks

In the moment immediately after enemy preparatory artillery shifts to target friendly areas further to the rear, the submachine gun squad quickly and secretly moves out of cover and into pre-prepared, pre-designated positions along the front line for immediate response to the enemy attack. Such movements are best executed along a known line of communication or a hidden



approach away from enemy observation. As a unit, the submachine gun squad destroys attacking enemy forces with concentrated fire from all submachine guns.

**To ensure gaps between rifle units are secure** the submachine gun squad commander deploys his men in groups of 2-3 spread at a distance of 100-150 meters between, ensuring positions can provide mutual fire support. When the enemy approaches within 200-100 meters [closer is preferred], the submachine gunners open destructive fire using all available automatic weapons.

If the enemy manages to breach the platoon's security perimeter, the commander must immediately report this to his senior commander, inform neighboring units, and continue engaging the enemy while awaiting further orders.

Submachine gun squads supporting a counter-attack by a friendly rifle platoon aims to flank the enemy that has infiltrated, and cooperates with the rifle squad unit to deliver fire on the enemy's flank and rear with the goal of destroying or capturing them during the counterattack.

Upon receiving the task to eliminate the penetrated enemy, the platoon leader quickly and discreetly advances to the designated location with the automatic riflemen, stealthily approaches the enemy, launches a sudden attack from the flank and rear, and eliminates them with automatic rifle fire and hand grenades.

The rifle squad, while covering the withdrawal of the rifle squad unit, suddenly engages the pursuing enemy with fire from the flanks, ambush positions, or holds them back from advantageous positions.

**Table of Signals and Pre-Designated Signs for Communications**

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Symbol/Sign</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	<b>Attention</b>	Raised hand to head-height
2	<b>“I see...”, “I hear...”</b> (I understand your signal)	Raise both hands to head height, then drop them
3	<b>“Repeat...”</b> (I did not understand your signal)	Raise both hands to head height, then wave cross-wise in front of face
4	<b>“Assemble on me”</b>	Raise one hand above head to full height, rotate arm several times in a small circle, then drop immediately towards ground
5	<b>“Deploy on line”</b> (from marching formation)	Extend both arms to the sides several times
6	<b>“Halt!”</b> (take cover, cease fire)	Raise arm in air, drop to ground repeatedly in-front of face
7	<b>“Advance”</b> (forward in a new direction)	Raise one hand to head-height, make several energetic swings with the other and leave it in the direction of movement
8	<b>“Open fire!”</b>	Raise both arms outward to shoulder height, hold there until fire has commenced
9	<b>“Bring ammo!”</b>	Raise your hand to head-height and swing it to the side outward
10	<b>Right, Left, Forward, to the Rear</b> (in the desired direction etc.)	Raise hand above head to maximum extension, lower it several times to shoulder height in the same direction
11	<b>“I see the enemy...”</b>	Extend both hands to shoulder height and hold there (do not extend outward,

		but upward)
12	<b>“Route is clear...”</b>	Raise arm to shoulder height and drop it several times
13	<b>“Gas!!”</b>	Raise your cap above your head

Note 1. Signals can be given with the hand, with a shovel, or other small objects.

Note 2. The commander may give signals to only a small part of the formation by slight variation; eg. a shovel with blade up (calling first detachment), shovel with blade down (calling second unit)

Note 3. **If you have given a signal, you must receive a response in form of hand signal #2.**

## PROCEDURE FOR PERFORMING ENGINEERING WORK

Upon receiving the platoon commander's order, **the squad leader leads the squad to the area of their position** and specifies the location of the trench. Observation and shelling are checked while lying down, the necessary height of the parapet is established, and work to clear the shelling area is outlined.

After specifying the location of the trench, the breaking and tracing of bends and boundaries of excavations and embankments (parapets) are carried out. At the beginning of the work, the surface layer of soil (sod, plow) at the site of excavations and embankments is removed and piled up in a designated area, which will be used for camouflage after the work is completed.

Minor clearance of the observation and shelling is carried out simultaneously with the excavation of the trenches. When dealing with a large volume of shelling area clearance work, it is advisable to start with that, and after its completion, proceed with the construction of the trench.

The squad leader ensures that the correct size and shape of the trench are maintained and oversees camouflage. Upon completion of the work, they thoroughly check the convenience of firing and throwing hand grenades from the trench. The squad leader indicates the locations of additional firing positions that are not accessible from the trench. Additional positions can be constructed both within the trench itself and in the communication trenches adjacent to it. The camouflage of the trench is checked by the squad leader from the enemy's side. The sequence of work:

- **First phase:** clearance of observation and shelling, construction of firing positions, and false trenches, camouflage of communication trenches for movement to reserve trenches.
- **Second phase:** construction of reserve trenches and firing positions, connection of communication trenches between the main trenches and along the front line, and adaptation to the terrain.
- **Third phase:** construction of communication trenches to the rear, connecting communication trenches to reserve trenches, slots, under-parapet niches, and equipping trenches and communication trenches with combat and logistical equipment. It is permitted to construct both paired and single portable positions. The positions must be constructed no less than two.

**Diagram of Entrenched Positions for Submachine Gun Squad  
(in order of development)**

- A. First stage of work: half-depth foxholes for two men each
- B. Second stage of work: construction of alternate firing positions and communications trenches between foxholes
- C. Third stage of work: installation of overhead cover for majority of positions

