

# TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY

## Terrain Analysis (Sectors of Fire vs. Fields of Fire)

By Sid Heal

Two of the most often confused terms in tactical operations are "Sectors of Fire" and "Fields of Fire." Although they are closely related, they describe different characteristics and have entirely different functions.

*A field of fire* is defined as that area which a weapon can cover effectively from a given position. This means that it is the characteristics of the weapon and how it is employed which defined a field of fire.

For example, a long rifleman armed with a .308 caliber rifle and scope deployed on the top of a tall building would command a considerably larger area than his spotter deployed in the same position but armed with a shotgun. The differences in the ranges of the weapons affect their respective fields of fire. Likewise, the terrain has an effect. Consider two identically armed long riflemen. One is deployed on the top of the tall building and the other is deployed looking out a window from inside. The field of fire for the long rifleman on top of the building is considerably larger than the one inside the building, since he is limited to the fan-shaped area he can see to his front.

In contrast to a field of fire is *a sector of fire* which is an assignment that defines the limits within which a weapon is allowed to be fired. Consequently, a sector of fire is almost always smaller than a field of fire. Sectors of fire keep us from shooting innocent bystanders or even each other. As Murphy says, "Friendly fire – isn't."\* Because they are assignments, they can take any shape, including three dimensional. A rifleman positioned inside a skyscraper might well be given vertical as well as lateral limits.

In summary, a field of fire is concerned with capability while a sector of fire is concerned with permission. A field of fire is a factor to be considered during a terrain analysis; a sector of fire is a factor to be considered during planning.

\* "Murphy's Laws of Combat," by David Evans, as quoted in *Amphibious Warfare Review*, Spring 1989, p52. ■

## Tactical Resolution Challenge

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will not be able to see after the sun sets.

### Suspect Information

The suspect has no criminal history. A check of his driving history reveals only a ticket for speeding three years ago. The wife relates that her husband has never been treated for depression or alcoholism but that they have been separated for almost three months and she is not aware of any efforts he may have made on his own behalf. The wife relates that the suspect is an only child whose father died last year. His mother lives in the city but is severely afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and is confined to a rest home.

### Requirement

Your challenge is to develop a plan to provide for a successful resolution of the situation an safe release of the children. If this includes an intervention, describe your plan for clearing the house and safeguarding the children. (It may be assumed that all sides of the house offer equally protected avenues of approach.) Describe your plan in sufficient detail to explain your reasoning. ■

Solutions must be received by March 8, 1996. Send yours to TRC Solution, NTOA, P.O. Box 529, Doylestown, PA 18901. Please include contact information such as Internet address, phone and/or fax numbers.

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