CHAPTER 6

COMBAT SUPPORT

Combat support is fire supportand other assistance provided to combat elements. It normally includes field artillery, air defense, aviation (less air cavalry), engineers, military police, communications, electronic warfare, and NBC.

6-1. MORTARS

Mortars are the most responsive indirect fires available to battalion and company commanders. Their mission is to provide close and immediate fire support to the maneuver units. Mortars are well suited for combat in built-up areas because of their high rate of fire, steep angle of fall, and short minimum range. Battalion and company commanders must plan mortar support with the FSO as part of the total fire support system. (See FM 7-90 for detailed information on the tactical employment of mortars.)

a. **Role of Mortar Units.** The role of mortar units is to deliver suppressive fires to support maneuver, especially against dismounted infantry. Mortars can be used to obscure, neutralize, suppress, or illuminate during MOUT. Mortar fires inhibit enemy fires and movement, allowing friendly forces to maneuver to a position of advantage. Effectively integrating mortar fires with dismounted maneuver is key to successful combat in a built-up area at the rifle company and battalion level.

b. **Position Selection.** The selection of mortar positions depends on the size of buildings, the size of the urban area, and the mission. Also, rubble can be used to construct a parapet for firing positions.

(1) The use of existing structures (for example, garages, office buildings, or highway overpasses) for hide positions is recommended to afford maximum protection and minimize the camouflage effort. By proper use of mask, survivability can be enhanced. If the mortar has to fire in excess of 885 mils to clear a frontal mask, the enemy counterbattery threat is reduced. These principles can be used in both the offense and the defense.

(2) Mortars should not be mounted directly on concrete; however, sandbags may be used as a buffer. Sandbags should consist of two or three layers; be butted against a curb or wall; and extend at least one sandbag width beyond the baseplate.

(3) Mortars are usually not placed on top of buildings because lack of cover and mask makes them vulnerable. They should not be placed inside buildings with damaged roofs unless the structure's stability has been checked. Overpressure can injure personnel, and the shock on the floor can weaken or collapse the structure.

c. **Communications.** An increased use of wire, messenger, and visual signals will be required. However, wire should be the primary means of communication between the forward observers, fire support team, fire direction center, and mortars since elements are close to each other. Also, FM radio transmissions in built-up areas are likely to be erratic. Structures reduce radio ranges; however, remoting of antennas to upper floors or roofs may improve communications and enhance operator survivability. Another technique that applies is the use of radio retransmissions. A practical solution is to use existing civilian systems to supplement the unit's capability.

d. **Magnetic Interference.** In an urban environment, all manetic instruments are affected by surrounding structural steel, electrical cables, and