

# ATLANTIAN ARMY BASIC MELEE TRAINING MANUAL

*Formerly Known as “The Dogs of War”*



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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Atlantian Army Basic Melee Training Manual is to provide minimum training standards for every member of the Atlantian Army regardless of rank, time spent in the Society, geographic location, or affiliation. This manual is intended to be a very basic guide to understanding how the Atlantian Army fights melees. It assumes that the reader is already authorized, or is about to be authorized. The manual provides a common-sense approach to prepare the reader for the first battle and beyond.

Reference materials used in the creation of this document are cited in Section 7. (In the real world, plagiarism is a perfectly acceptable time management tool.)

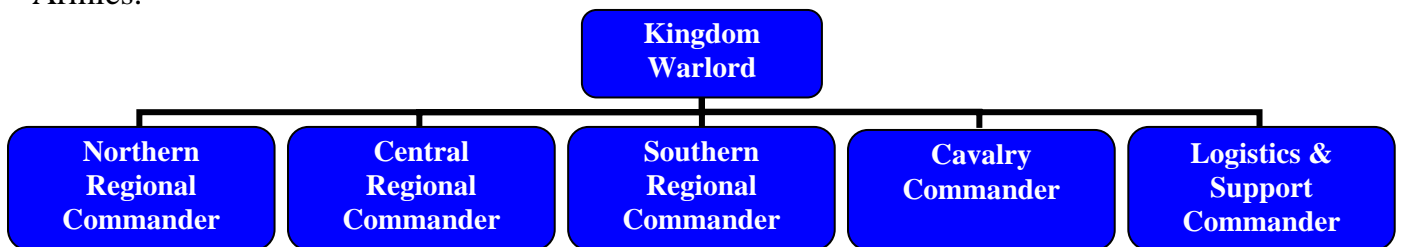
The Atlantian Army is made up of both men and women. Since the English language lacks a gender-neutral pronoun, the masculine form refers to both.

**NOTE:** This manual and its references were written from the perspective of shieldmen. Appendices are in development to address basic melee concepts for Spearmen, Polearmsmen, Combat Archers, Scouts, Siege Engineers, and Sappers. These documents will be appended to Version 2 of this manual.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE ATLANTIAN ARMY AND CHAIN OF COMMAND

### A. Structure

The structure of the Atlantian Army is broken down into three geographic areas (Northern, Central, and Southern), one specialized unit, the Cavalry, and a Logistics and Support Command. These geographical units are referred to as the Atlantian Regional Armies.



*Figure 2-1: Chain of Command*

Baronial Forces make up the bulk of the Regional Armies. Households and other, smaller units are expected to combine together within their Baronies to form the Regional Armies. Small unit integrity is accommodated as much as possible within the Regional Armies.

One aspect of the Atlantian Army that is often overlooked is the Logistical and Support Command. This command is made up of hardworking, service-oriented people who perform vital duties, such as Waterbearing, Timekeeping, Scorekeeping (for specific scenarios), Inspections, and Troop Transport. At the discretion of the Kingdom Warlord, an individual may be appointed the Logistics and Support Commander (LSC) to

organize, coordinate, and supervise the completion of these tasks in a timely and efficient manner. The LSC may designate subcommanders to oversee specific tasks; however, overall responsibility for this command belongs to the LSC.

### B. Chain of Command

The Kingdom Warlord is the commander of the Atlantian Army as a whole and answers only to the King. There is one commander of the Cavalry and one for each Regional Army, each of whom answer directly to the Warlord. Subcommanders for the Regional Armies and the Cavalry are assigned as needed by the Regional/Cavalry Commanders.

### 3. TRIADS IN LARGE UNIT FORMATIONS

The overall formation of the Atlantian Army for any battle is dependent upon the type of battle, the number of Atlantians present, or the assignments given by our allies hosting the war (for example, at Pennsic, the East or Middle Kingdom).

Melee fighting is teamwork. The basic Atlantian team is the Triad, consisting of three fighters, usually two shields and a polearm or spear. The shields provide defense by blocking any blow within reach, allowing the polearm or spear to command and attack with minimal concern for his defense.

If a commander must fight and command, he can effectively command no more than three to five fighters. The triad system allows a commander a small enough unit of direct responsibility that he can command his triad and, if necessary, the remaining shieldmen of a second triad.

Teamwork is the result of group experience gained through group practice. Rotating triad members within a larger unit during practice is helpful in case a triad is broken and reforms with different members.

Triads establish a chain of command, thereby providing lines of communication. Triad commanders report to larger unit commanders (e.g., Baronial Warlords). In turn, these subcommanders report to the Regional Commanders, who report directly to the Kingdom Warlord. Orders from the Kingdom Warlord are passed back through the chain of command to the individual triad leaders.

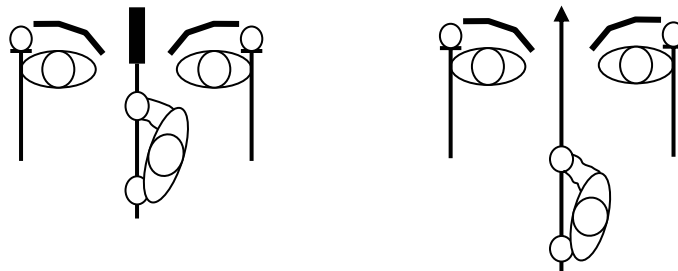
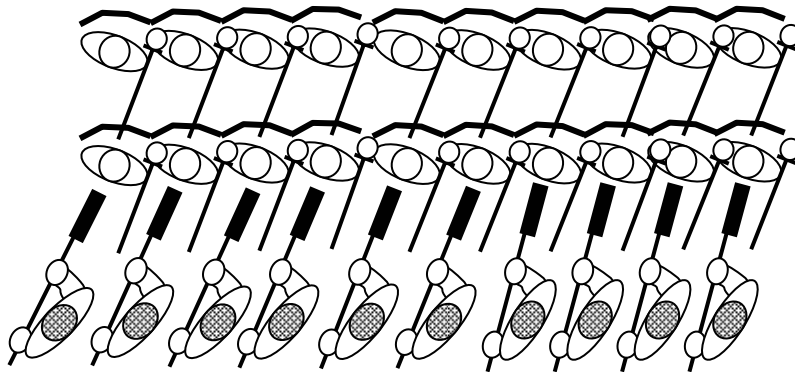


Figure 3-1: Triads With Polearm and Spear

Multiple Triads are the basis for the Shield Wall unit formations. A Shield Wall is defined as an unbroken wall of shields formed by fighters standing next to each other. Given the tactical situation, the shield wall takes one of three forms:

- Defensive or Tight – Shoulder-to-shoulder with shields interlocked
- Offensive – Shoulder-to-shoulder, shields not interlocked to provide better mobility
- Static – 6 to 8 inches between each shield to provide space for polearms and spears

A shieldman's primary role is to stay alive and to keep the fighter to the right (reversed for lefties) alive, thereby protecting the spears and polearms. Spears and polearms have primary responsibility for killing the enemy.



*Figure 3-2: Basic 30-Person Shield Wall*

The general philosophy of unit makeup is two-thirds shields and one-third spears and/or polearms. This philosophy is based in the Triad. Ten Triads combine to create a 30-person unit. The reason for the 2 to 1 ratio is that unsupported (or under-supported) spearmen and polearms are vulnerable and easily run down.

While each individual fighter is allowed to use any weapons form in which he is authorized, the use of other weapons forms in melee is highly discouraged for the following reasons:

- A two-sword (or Florentine) fighter is an under-equipped shieldman against spears and polearms.
- A greatsword is too short to compete with the 9-foot spears or even the 7.5-foot polearms.

As each fighter progresses, authorizing in advanced weapons forms, he must re-evaluate how to best fit into and support his Regional Army. Those who choose to fight with the highly discouraged melee weapons forms may find themselves in the role of diversion or decoy.

A shieldman's choice of weapon is limited to his authorized forms and is dependent on the type of battle being fought. Typically, a shieldman carries a sword, because the sword has the most practical applications in any given scenario. Fighters with more experience sometimes carry a different one-handed weapon into specific battles for specific purposes. For example, an axe can be used to hook an enemy shield, creating an opening in the enemy shield wall.

### **A. Open Field Formations**

The two-thirds to one-third unit configuration is most often used in the Open Field battles. It provides the greatest protection for the unit while maintaining mobility and a means of engaging the enemy from a distance.

In each of the formations, the Cavalry usually operates as an independent unit, exploiting enemy flanks and targets of opportunity.

The following diagrams (beginning on the next page) are notionally based on 30-person units. Commanders adjust the formations upon determining who showed up to play with what toys.

Possible formations for Open Field battles include:

1. The entire army formed together as one massive unit.
  - a. On Line – The three Regional Armies standing side-by-side.

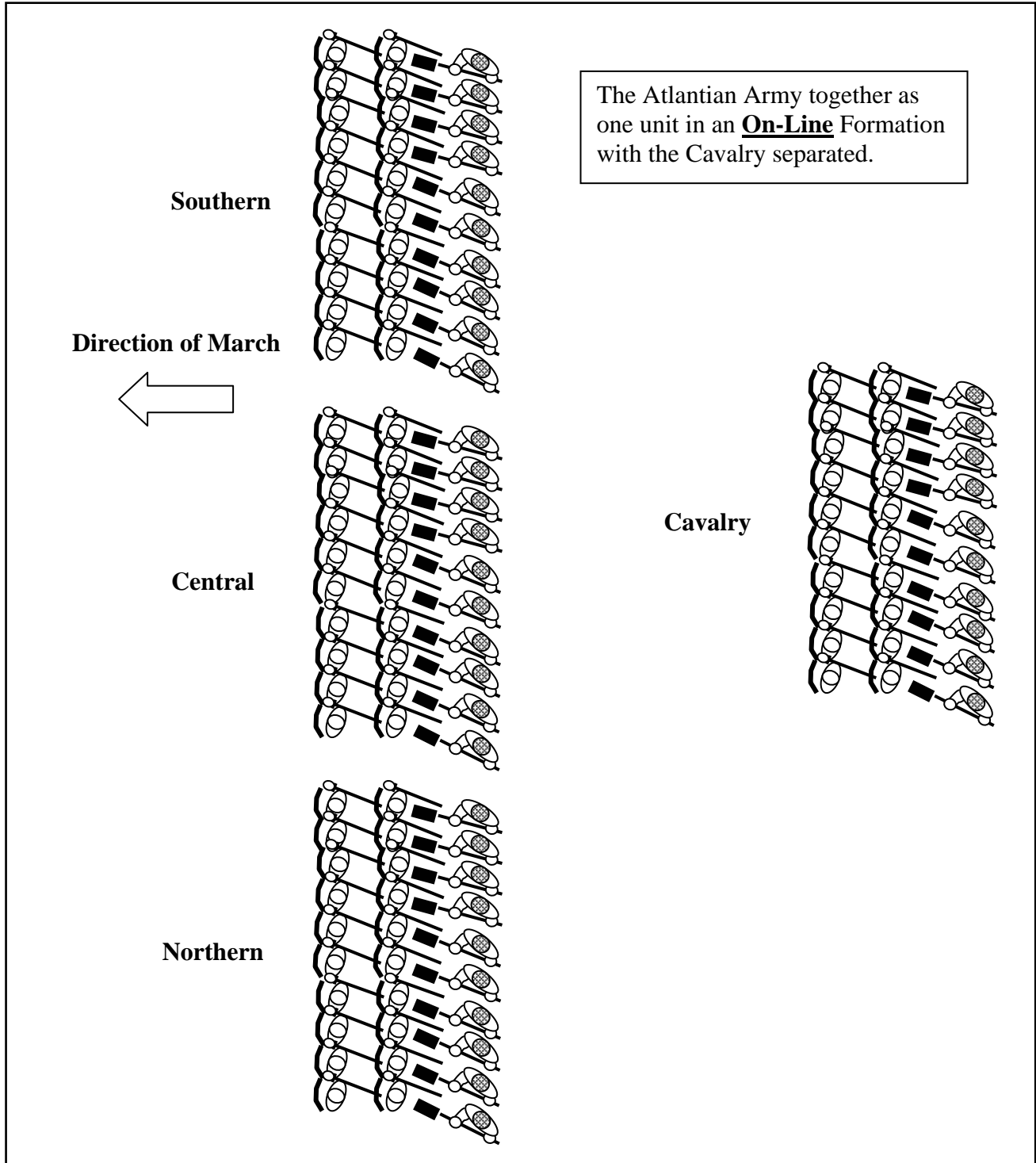


Figure 3-3: On Line (as one unit)

b. In Column – The three Regional Armies standing one behind the other.

**In-Column** Formation – the Atlantian Army as one unit with the Cavalry separated.

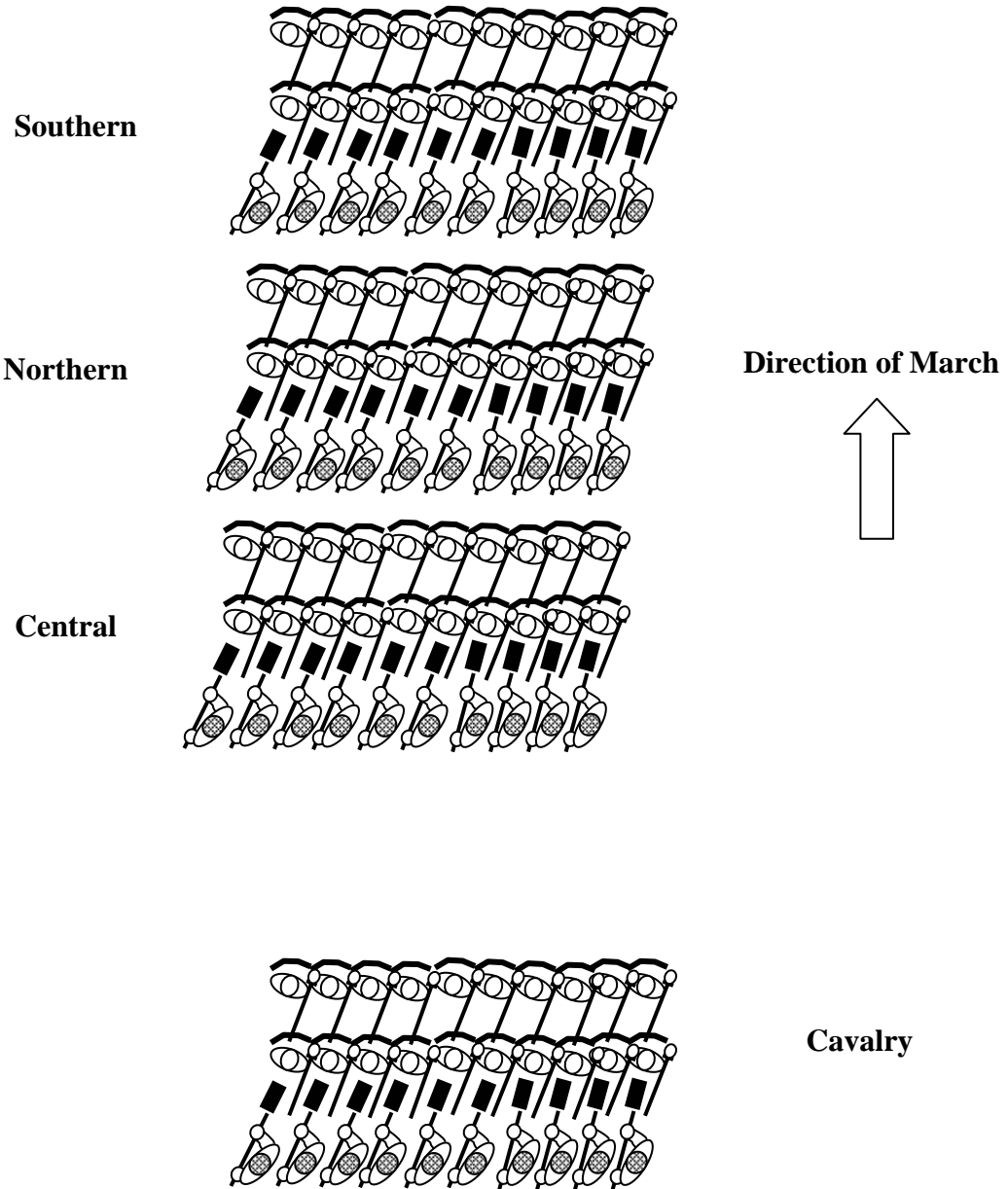


Figure 3-4: In Column (as one unit)



- 2. The Regional Armies formed as separate units.
  - a. On Line – The Regional Armies standing side-by-side, spaced 10 to 15 feet apart.

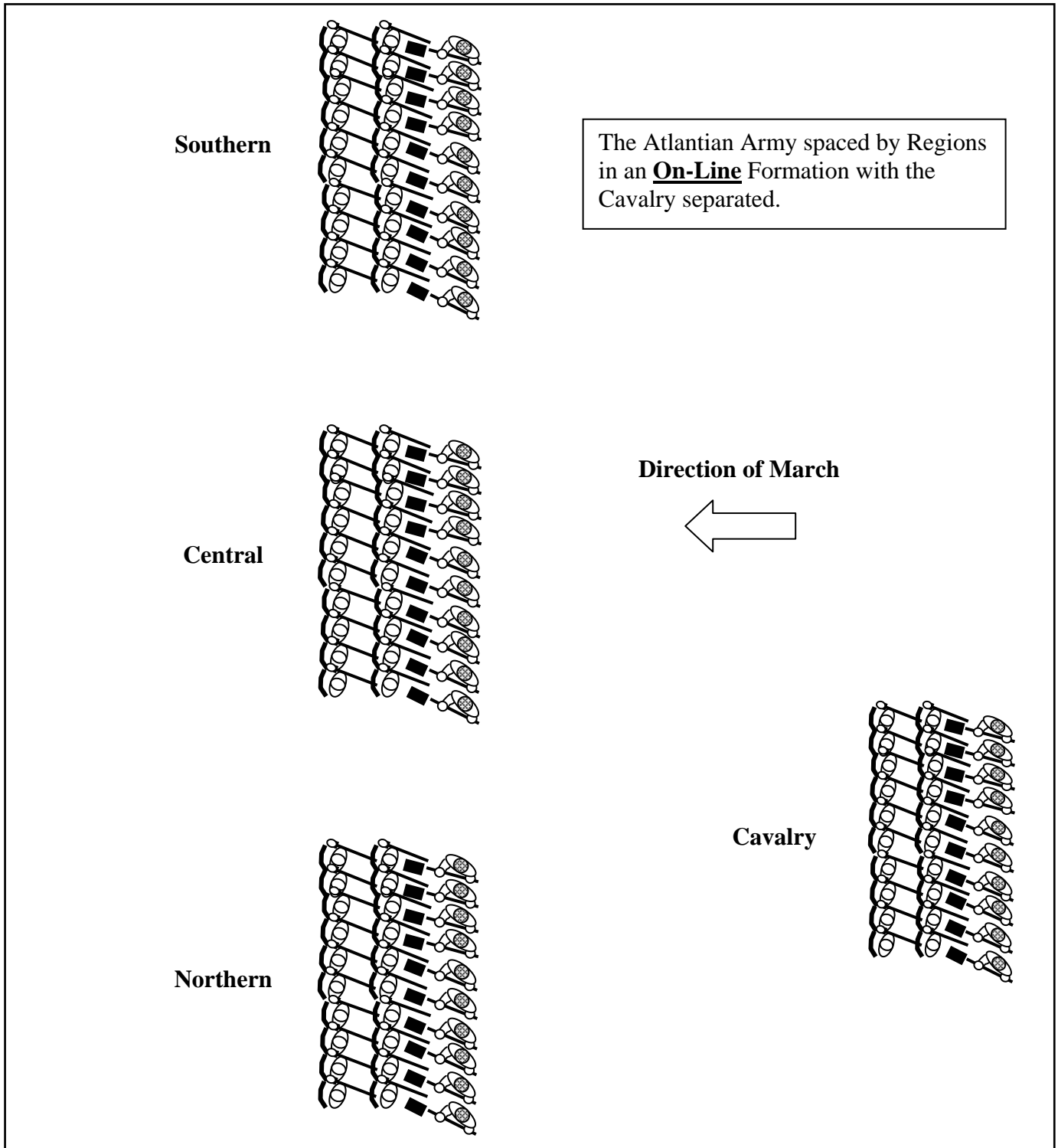


Figure 3-5: On Line (as separate units)

- b. In Column – The Regional Armies standing one behind the other, about 10 feet apart.

**In-Column** Formation – the Atlantian Army spaced by Regions with the Cavalry separated.

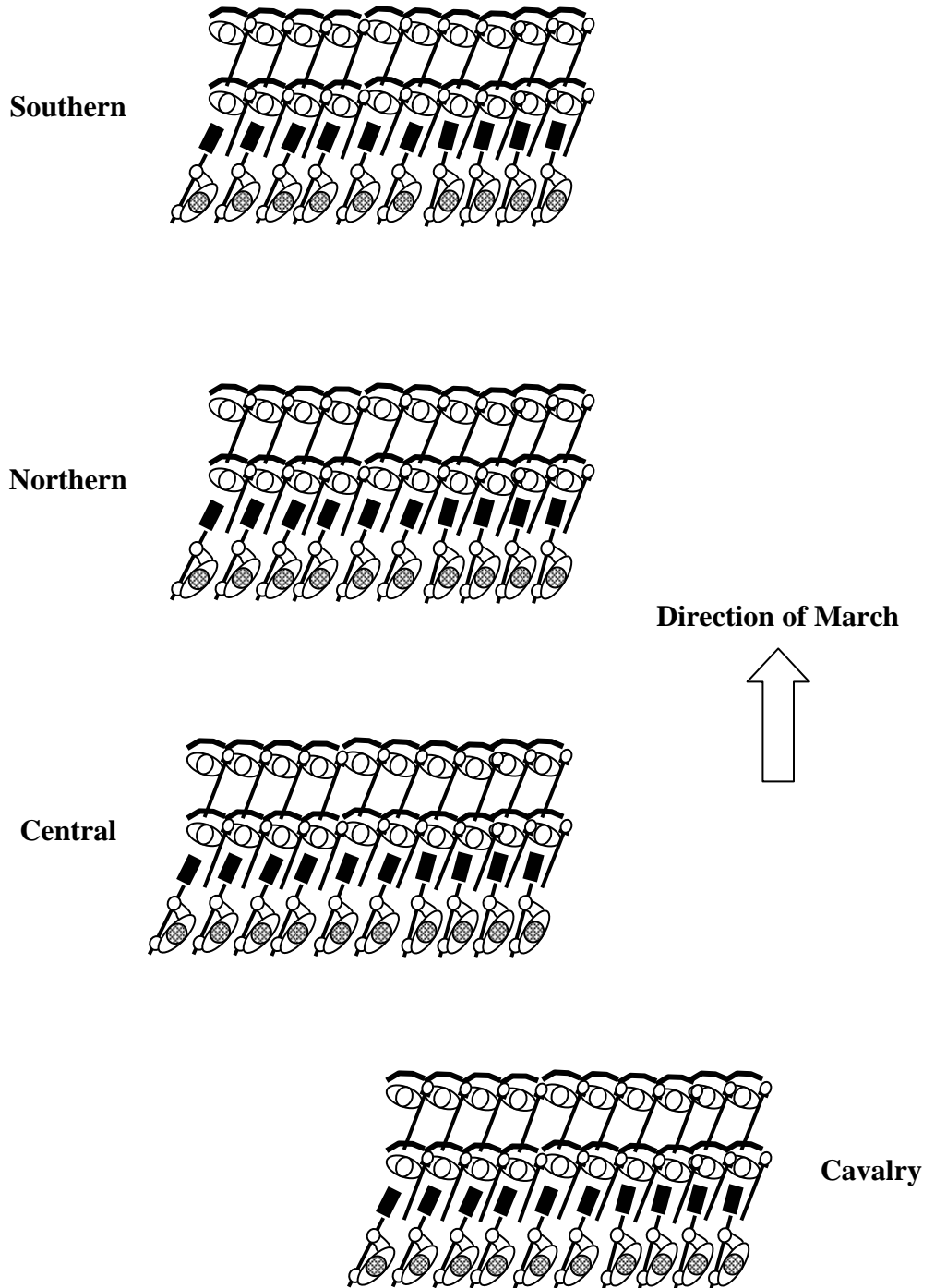


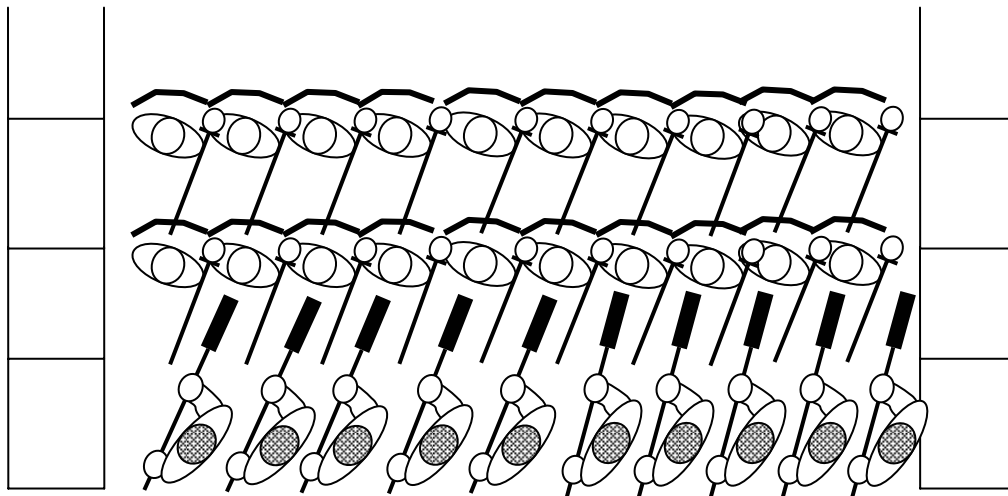
Figure 3-6: In Column (as separate units)

## B. Limited Fronts

A Limited Front is defined as any battle wherein the area to engage the enemy is confined or restricted in some manner. Examples of Limited Fronts include:

- Bridges
- Castles
- Canyons
- Hadrian's Wall

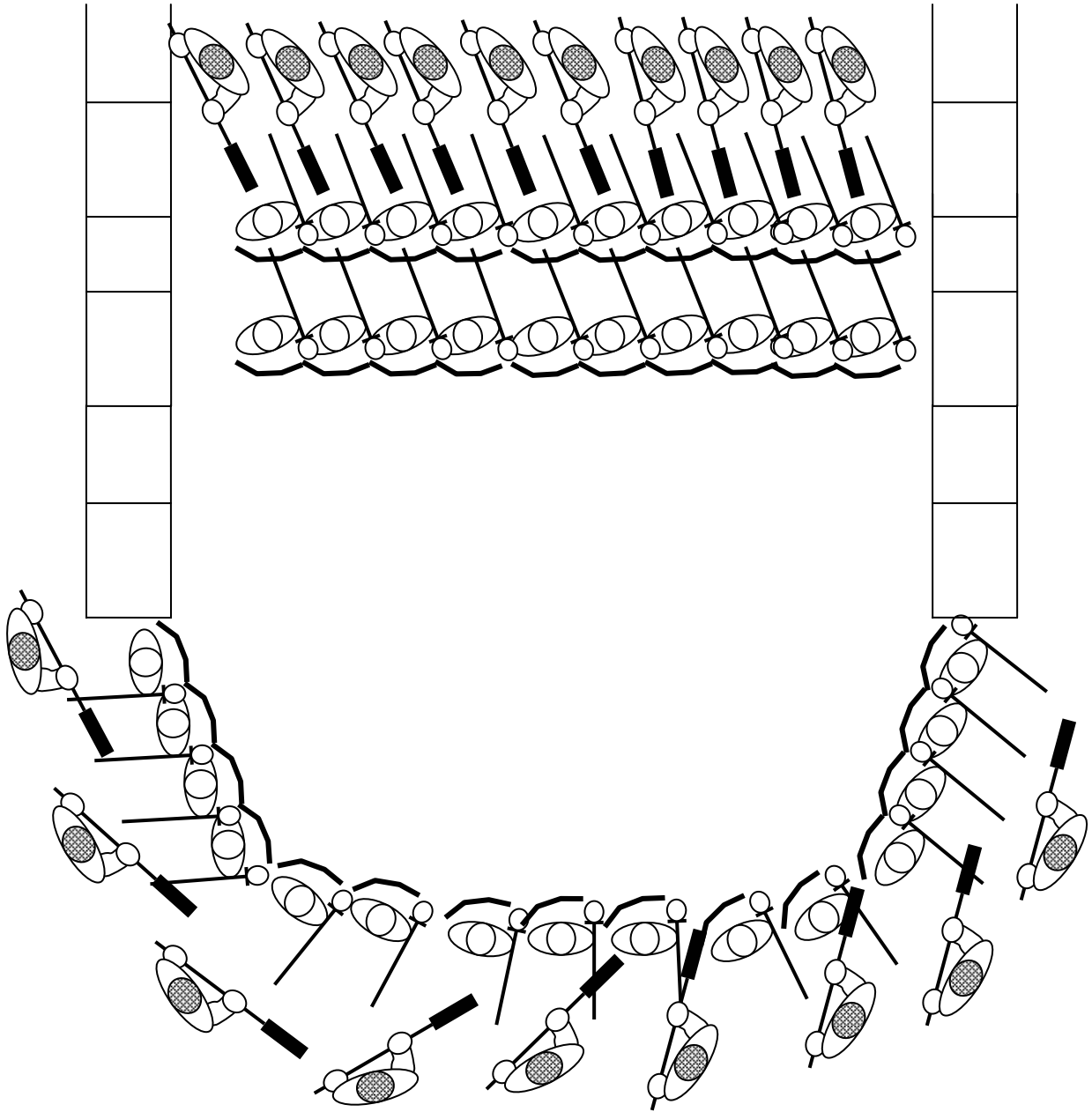
The basic unit configuration for Limited Fronts typically remains two-thirds to one-third. This formation in any Limited Front scenario provides a strong, defensive position and provides extra mass and power for a frontal assault or charge. However, engaging an opposing unit that is using the same formation poses a challenge. The tactics of overcoming this challenge are discussed in Section 6. For Limited Fronts, the basic formation is referred to as Plan A.



*Figure 3-7: Plan A, Basic Formation on a Limited Front*

Plan B modifies the basic unit formation to accommodate circumstances such as facing a larger enemy unit. In Plan B, the shield wall formation is modified into what is called a “killing cup” or “cup”. In a killing cup, the shield wall form a “U” shape with the ends of the shield wall anchored to each end of the limited engagement area, as depicted below.

The purpose of the killing cup is to funnel the enemy into a contained area, giving our forces three sides from which to attack. The integrity of the shield wall in a cup is crucial to the success or failure of this formation. The depth of the cup is dictated by the width of the engagement area and the number of shieldmen available. As a general rule, the deeper the cup, the better.



*Figure 3-8: Plan B, Killing Cup*

In Figure 3-7, only a single line of shields is shown. The use of a single-layer formation is very likely, because the spears and polearms need room to work. The second line of shields is stationed 5 to 10 feet behind the spears, prepared to move forward and support the front line in case of a charge by the opposition. Additional tactics and techniques are explored in Section 6.

### **C. Pennsic Woods Battle**

The Woods Battle at Pennsic is best described as a modified game of “Capture the Flag” with resurrections and a time limit of 1 to 2 hours. Typically, three staffs with banners are placed in the approximate center of the woods, evenly spaced across the width of the field. The objective of the battle is to capture and maintain control of two of the three banners by the end of the time limit. Whoever has control of at least two banners at the end of the battle wins.

Prior to the start of the battle, Atlantia usually forms up as Regional Armies In-Column to conserve the amount of space needed to enter into the woods. This formation allows other units to form on our flanks and enter the woods at the same time. Usually, each of the three Regional Armies is designated to go to the Left, Right or Middle. Once the cannon sounds to start the battle, it’s a sprint to get as many people into the woods as possible.

For those individuals who have never fought in the woods, a position in the second rank of a shield wall (or deeper) is recommended. Less-experienced fighters gain confidence and awareness of surroundings by repeatedly following those who have navigated the woods at previous Pennsics. Learning the layout of the woods as quickly as possible helps fighters understand the areas of responsibility for each Regional Army.

Banner teams sprint into the woods to find and secure the banners ahead of the regional armies. These teams usually consist of faster-than-average fighters. Anyone wishing to volunteer should consult with his Regional Commander.

After resurrecting and re-entering the woods, fighters should encounter a “Traffic Cop” along the main route. This individual performs the duty of directing resurrected fighters toward units needing support. Often, fighters rejoining the battle are diverted to areas and units other than originally assigned. The Pennsic woods battle is a great example of how resurrection battles stress unit integrity. Repeatedly, during the course of the battle, Atlantians rally and reform the Regional Armies. (Tactics and techniques for re-entering a battle after resurrecting are discussed in Section 6.)

Ten-man skirmish teams are responsible for forming protective zones around any banners held by Atlantia. Skirmish teams spend the majority of the battle acting as the last line of defense for a given banner team. Skirmish and banner teams do not see much action but perform a necessary duty.

## **4. COMMANDS AND DEFINITIONS**

Before the start of the battle, the Regional Commanders communicate the plan from the Warlord to the subcommanders who, in turn, convey those orders to their units.

The following commands and their definitions are the basic commands used by the Atlantian Army and should be common knowledge to all fighters. The execution of these commands is discussed in Section 5, Movement.

**A. Hats and Bats/Form Ranks**

“Hats and Bats” is the command used to notify everyone that the battle will begin shortly. Once this command is given, every fighter is expected to armor fully, grab weapons and/or shield, and begin getting into unit formation. “Form Ranks” or “Form Up” is used before the beginning of the battle to set the formations and prepare the army for battle.

**B. Advance or Forward**

“Advance” or “Forward” is used to move a unit from one location to another in a straight line.

**C. Stay the Line vs. Hold**

“Stay the Line” is used to stop a unit’s movement. Similar commands are “Stop” and “Steady.”

“Hold” is a safety command used to stop all combat (see Section 5).

**D. Wheel**

“Wheel” is used to change the direction of a unit (left or right) while maintaining the same unit configuration.

**E. Turn**

“Turn” is used for an immediate change of a unit’s direction by pivoting either left or right, causing a modification in the configuration of the unit.

**F. Guide/Slide**

“Guide” or “Slide” is used to modify the direction (left or right) of a unit when a wheel or turn is too drastic or unnecessary for the situation. This command is generally used to change the angle of the unit’s forward motion while maintaining unit configuration.

**G. Charge**

“Charge” is used to engage the enemy in an immediate frontal assault.

**H. Pulse Charge**

The “Pulse Charge” command is used to engage the enemy in an immediate frontal assault for a short period of time. This command is quietly passed through the ranks as “Get ready for a Pulse Charge.” To conceal the fact that the engagement will be brief, the command to execute a Pulse Charge is “Charge.” This keeps the enemy from knowing whether the charge is a full frontal assault or a brief engagement.

**I. Rally**

The command “Rally” is given to reform the unit(s) after a Charge.

**J. Fall Back**

The command “Fall Back” is given to disengage a unit from the enemy or to create distance from the enemy.

**5. MOVEMENT**

Now that the commands have been identified and defined, this section describes the execution of these commands. Each command and its method of execution should be practiced at local fighter practices or even by individuals to enhance proficiency. Proficiency builds confidence. Confidence creates a psychological advantage over opposing forces that have not trained to a standard.

**A. Hats and Bats/Form Ranks**

These are preparatory commands that do not require movement in combat.

**B. Advance or Forward**

These interchangeable commands are used in two ways:

1. Mass Movement (Marching) is unit movement over large distances, such as across the open field to engage the enemy.
2. Step Movement is unit movement over a short distance for a specific purpose, such as maneuvering spearmen to within killing range of the enemy.

Traditionally, a unit starts forward with the shield-side foot and begins marching. If the shield is in the left hand, for example, the left foot moves first. Beginning with the shield foot maintains the integrity of the shield wall. Leading with the weapon-side foot could cause the shield to rotate out of position, thereby creating gaps for the enemy to exploit. Although the unit steps as one, individuals within the unit must maintain awareness of surroundings and remain alert for commands.

*“Atlantia, prepare to advance by step! Ready, step!”*

It is at this point that the entire unit steps forward with the shield-side foot, sliding the back foot forward to maintain balance and control.

**C. Stay the Line, Steady, Stop**

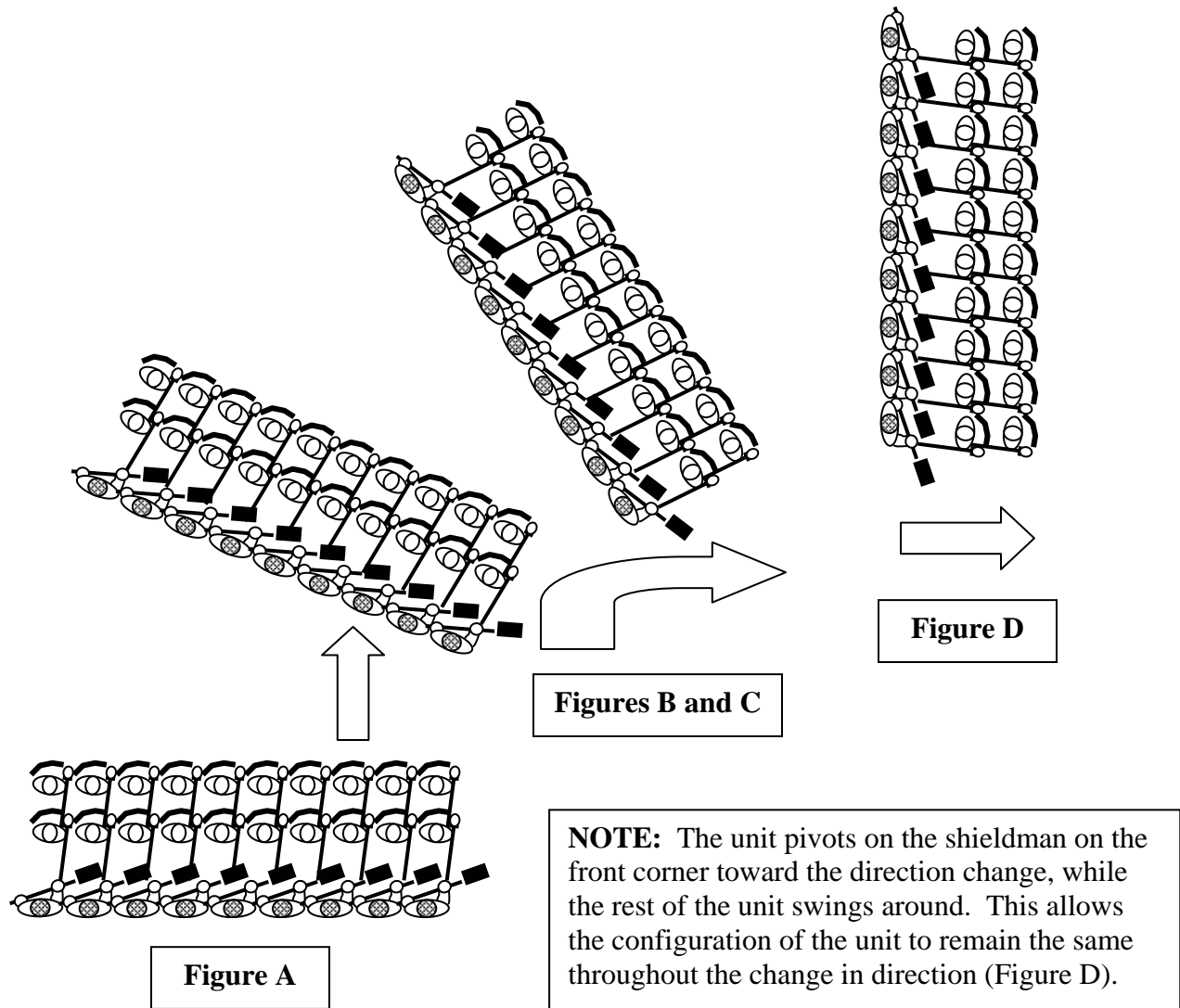
Coordinated movement is vital to unit cohesion. A synchronized stop, signaled by one of these three commands, prevents the enemy from exploiting any momentary gaps in the shield wall.

**NOTE:** The command “Hold!” is distinctly different from those listed above in that all combat stops. If the command “Hold” is improperly used in place of “Stay the Line,” “Steady,” or “Stop,” it is likely to interrupt all combat. The use of the command “Halt” is also discouraged, because it sounds too much like “Hold.”

**D. Wheel**

The command “Wheel” is used to change the direction of a unit (left or right) while maintaining the configuration of the unit. This is the preferred method of changing a unit’s direction.

In this diagram, the advancing unit (Figure A) Wheels to the right (Figures B and C).



*Figure 5-1: Wheel*



**E. Turn**

When a “Turn” command is executed, every member of a given unit turns 90 degrees (either left or right) and then moves forward. The “Turn” command is different from a “Wheel” in that, once completed, it changes the configuration of the unit. This maneuver is used only when an immediate change of direction is needed and not enough time or space is available for the unit to wheel into position.

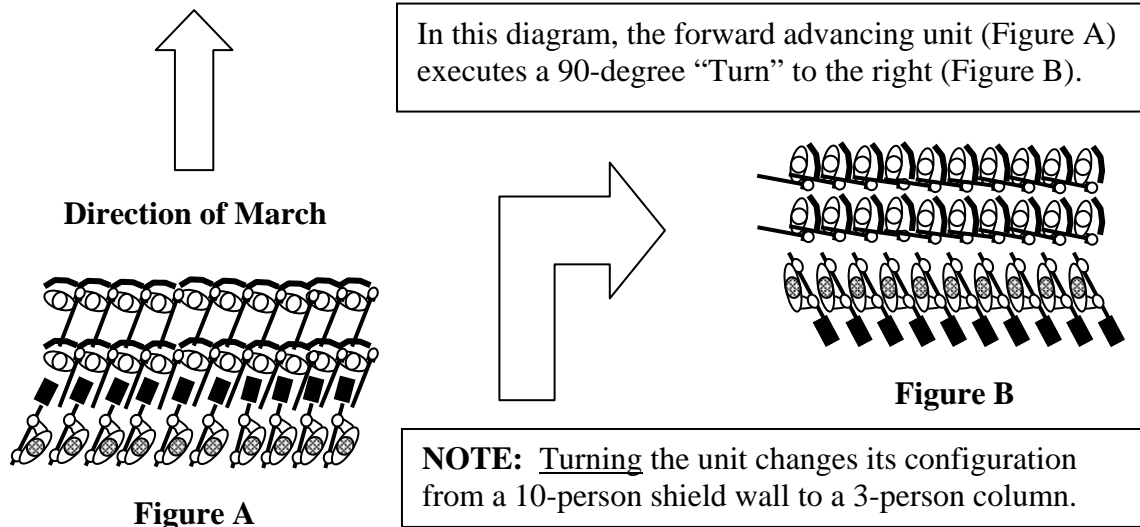


Figure 5-2: Turn

**F. Guide/Slide**

The objective of executing a Guide/Slide is to advance while angling toward one side. The unit keeps its shields facing the enemy but takes an angled step forward, achieving lateral placement and forward movement while maintaining defense. This maneuver adjusts the direction of the shield wall without exposing a flank to the enemy.

In this diagram, the advancing unit (Figure A) makes a 25 to 45 degree Guide to the right (Figure B).

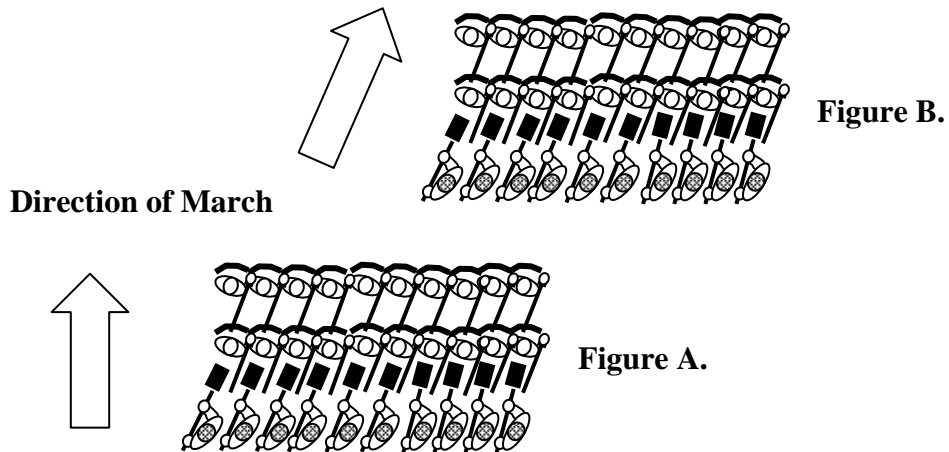


Figure 5-3: Guide/Slide

**G. Charge**

The execution of a “Charge” is very like the way an offensive line in football engages or charges into the defensive line. A well-executed Charge destroys the integrity of an enemy unit by smashing into and through its ranks. This creates opportunities for the spears and polearms to kill as many of the enemy as possible. This technique is further explored in Section 6.

**H. Pulse Charge**

The initial execution of a “Pulse Charge” engages the enemy like a charge. However, the engagement lasts for a short period of time, usually no more than 3 seconds. This technique is further discussed in Section 6.

**I. Rally**

A “Rally” cry follows a unit maneuver, such as a charge, that has degraded the unit’s integrity. The first unit member to successfully charge through the enemy’s ranks alive initiates the Rally command. Upon hearing this command and identifying it as Atlantian or Allied, the individual members of a unit repeat the command, safely disengage, and join the reforming unit. This technique is addressed further in Section 6.

*Chaos is your friend. Charge through the enemy to create chaos.  
Rally and charge again to create more chaos.*

**J. Fall Back**

Executing the command “Fall Back” is the reverse of advancing forward by step. A fighter steps backward with the weapon-side foot first, sliding the shield-side foot to maintain defensive stance. Remaining on-guard and alert is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the shield wall and the unit as a whole.

**6. BASIC TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES**

None of the tactics or techniques discussed below can be employed effectively without practice. Train as you fight; fight as you train. A highly effective fighting force requires the willingness of each fighter to drill in individual techniques and unit tactics at local and regional practices. There is no substitute for training and practice.

**A. Charging**

Charging is a basic tactic used by both individuals and units to disrupt the enemy’s ability to engage effectively in combat. During the initial execution of a charge, the lowest center of gravity wins. Shieldmen at the forefront of a charge perform the following steps:

1. A charging fighter has a maximum of three running steps before making contact with the enemy. To avoid excessive force, a charging unit must break stride prior to these last three steps.
2. Just before contact, the charging fighter lowers the hips (and, therefore, the center of gravity) by bending *at the knees*. Bending over at the waist disturbs the center of gravity and increases the potential for back injury.
3. Upon contact, the charging fighter with the lower center of gravity gains leverage by driving up and through the enemy from the hips. This causes an enemy combatant to lose balance. The charging unit can then more easily maneuver the enemy out of position and disrupt unit integrity.
4. A charging unit must make contact with the enemy shield-on-shield or shield-on-weapon. Direct body contact with a haft or a shield is illegal.
5. The advancing unit must charge through the enemy. The forward momentum of a charge does not stop at the initial point of contact.

### **B. Pulse Charging**

A Pulse Charge is executed exactly as described directly above, with two exceptions.

1. A pulse-charging unit does not break *through* the enemy shield wall.
2. A Pulse Charge lasts only a short period of time, after which the unit must fall back and reestablish unit formation.

The purpose of this maneuver is to create a tactical advantage in a Limited Front scenario. Because the enemy forces are concentrated in a small area, it is not practical to charge through the enemy lines. The Pulse Charge compacts the first two to three enemy ranks, limiting the opponent's ability to counterattack while creating opportunities for Atlantian ranged weapons to attack.

### **C. Rallying**

Having successfully charged through, a unit must reform in order to maintain momentum and control and to keep the enemy forces from re-forming. Any member of the unit can call a Rally. Typically, the first person to survive charging through the enemy ranks yells for the unit to Rally.

The quickest way to Rally is to begin by reforming Triads. Once three fighters Rally a Triad, they should be looking to link up with other Triads thereby reforming the unit as a whole.

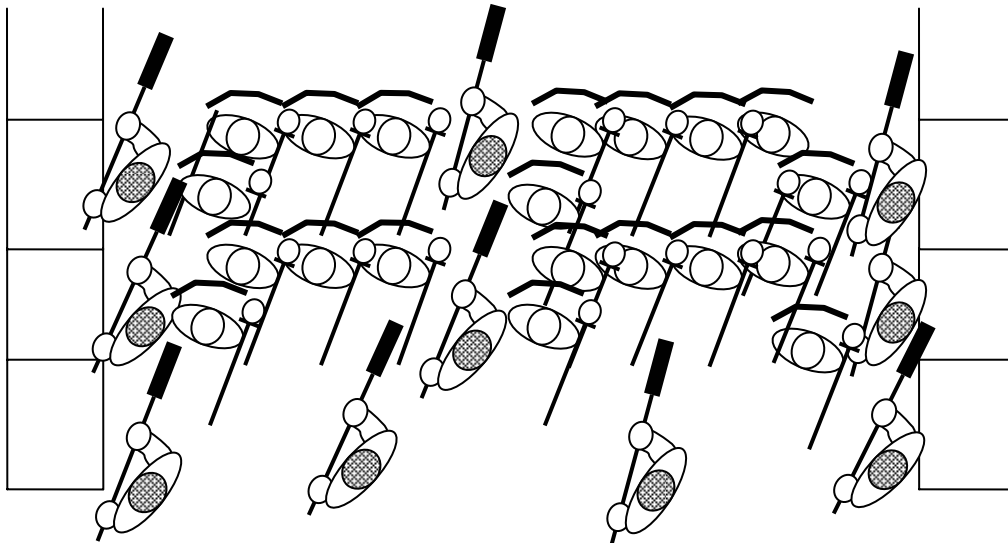
A Rally, while simple in its execution, can be hazardous. Upon hearing the practiced rally call, it is incumbent upon each fighter to fight through or disengage from any separate combat resulting from the charge. Upon safely disengaging, the fighters run to the rally point and assume their original positions within the unit. If that is not possible or practical, each fighter takes the first available position commensurate with that

fighter's overall purpose (e.g., shields to the front, spears to the back). The goal of a Rally is to reform the unit into a basic configuration as fast as possible, followed by another charge. The key to a rally is speed. The faster a unit can reform, the faster it can continue the battle.

#### D. Creating Alleys in Limited Fronts

As depicted in Figure 3-6, the Plan A (basic) formation in a limited front scenario often leads to a static battle. At this point, the spears and polearms are brought forward and are given enough room to engage the enemy unit effectively. The basic method for getting the range weapons to the front rank is the creation of alleys. As depicted below, the far end shieldmen in the first and second ranks of the formation step back and behind the adjacent shieldman. Additionally, a third alley can be created in the middle of the shield wall in the same manner. The shieldmen creating the center alley must maintain a defensive posture to minimize opportunities for enemy range weapons to exploit the gap.

In this depiction, the shieldmen have created alleys for the spears/polearms to move forward to engage the enemy shield wall.



*Figure 6-1: Creating Alleys*

#### E. Resurrecting

It is likely that in a resurrection battle, unit cohesion will be lost within moments after first contact with the enemy. Fighters who are killed during a resurrection battle and are unsure what to do should WAIT and link up with a more experienced fighter or fighters from the same unit. Remember: Alone is dead! Keep with the unit as much as possible. If none of the members of a fighter's unit is available, he should find any member of the Atlantian army. This rule also holds true for any battle in which a fighter becomes separated from the unit.

There are two basic methods for re-entering a resurrection battle:

- Resurrect and get back into the fight as fast as possible.
- Wait a few minutes after resurrecting to find fighters from the same Region and form a small unit.

Either one of these methods is acceptable. Every Atlantian fighter is expected to be in the battle until the very end and not at resurrection point.

*“Heroes are made in the last five minutes.”*

– Duchess Padraigin O’hEachach, Queen at Pennsic XXXIII

Seek the counsel of your Regional Commander or Subcommander for additional guidance.

### F. Envelopment

The defining characteristic of an Envelopment is “overwhelming force at the point of contact.” A unit’s ability to run around the end of an enemy line is crucial to the success of this maneuver. Once executed, the end of the enemy’s line is flanked by four Atlantians. This maneuver turns the enemy’s shield wall into a column.

A less-experienced unit should exercise caution against becoming “stuck” at the corner of an enemy’s shield wall. This situation is depicted below. In Figure 6-3, the enemy unit attempts an envelopment maneuver by trying to slide around the Atlantian flank. However, the lead fighter gets stuck in front of the Atlantian line instead of stepping around the end. The momentum of the remaining fighters is disrupted. As a result, only one or two enemy fighters are within striking range of the Atlantian line.

The larger, outlined arrow is the direction of movement of the enemy line. The smaller, dotted arrows indicate the intended target and who can actually reach him.

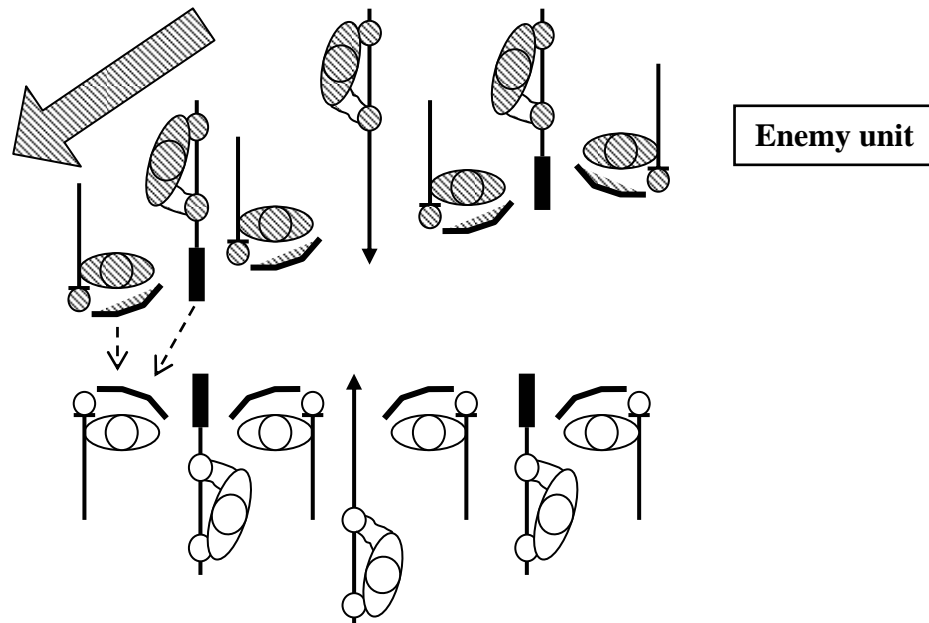
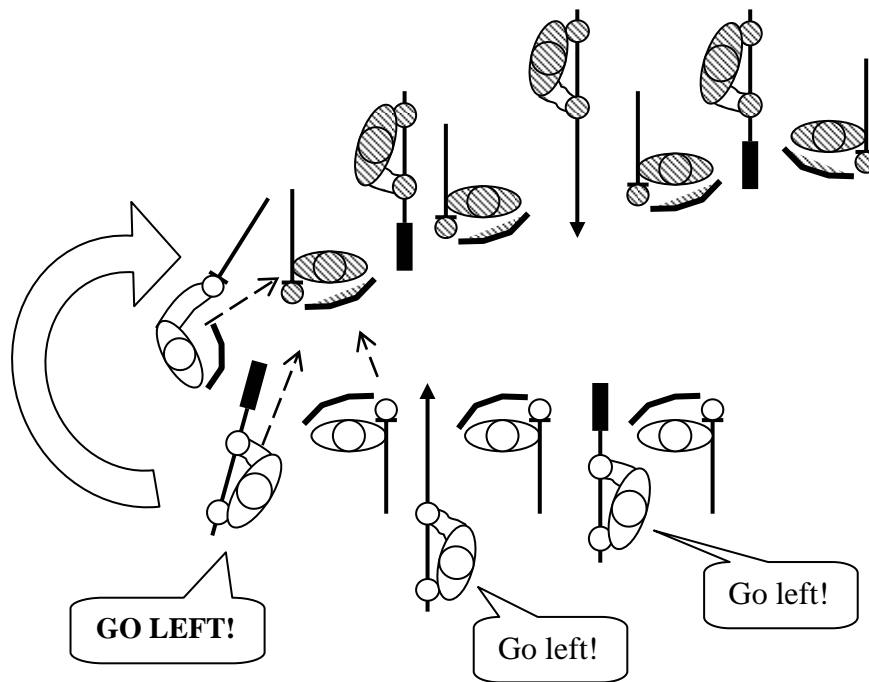


Figure 6-2: Attempting an Envelopment and Getting “Stuck”

To take advantage of this situation, the Atlantian unit commander can call “Go left,” turning the situation into an envelopment opportunity. As with every command, each member of the unit should echo the command, reinforcing unit integrity. The left-flank triad envelopes, pins, and kills the closest opposing shield and continues the envelopment until the enemy is destroyed.

Atlantia turns the enemy’s intended right envelopment into a successful left envelopment.



*Figure 6-3: Go Left!*

In the following variation, the polearm slides aggressively left from behind his shields to lead the envelopment. Ideally, the polearm is fighting left-hand high, and the anchor shield is also left-handed. These fighters would have the best angles and range for attacking the unprotected sides of the enemy unit.

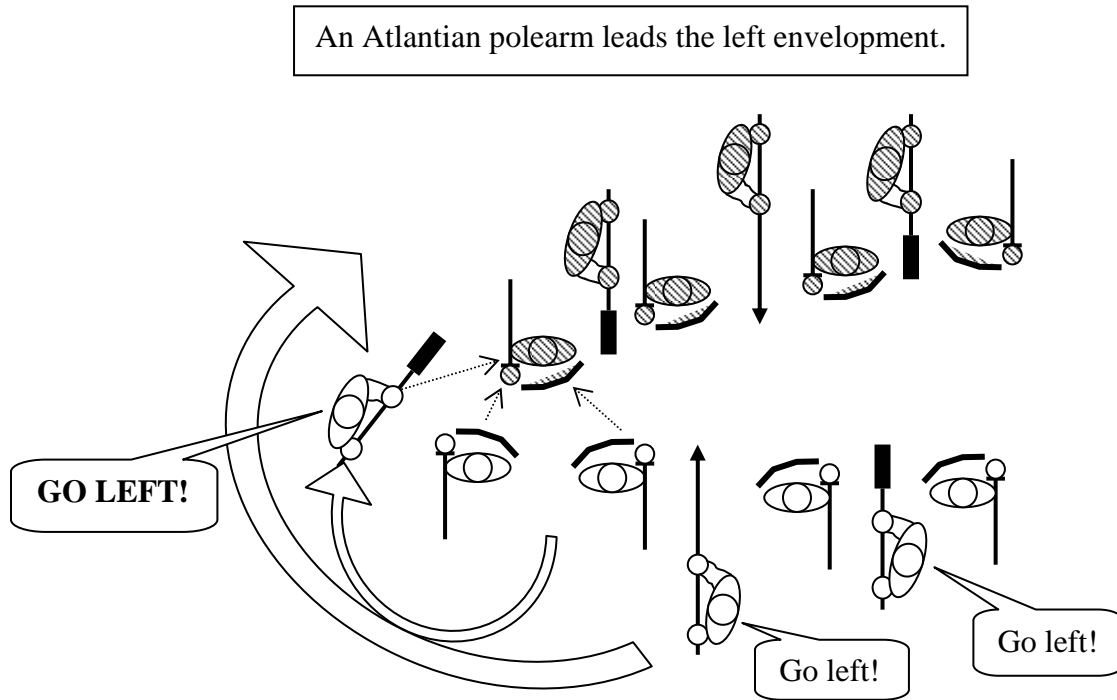


Figure 6-4: Polearm Variation

Regardless of specific unit configuration, Atlantia envelops the enemy by “capping” the end of its line. It is crucial to follow an envelopment with a charge through the enemy ranks, destroying the enemy unit’s integrity.

**G. Triad Tactics**

1. V-Attack

It is very difficult to stop a series of blows coming from opposite directions. Depicting a letter V, two fighters advance on an opponent, spreading apart enough that the target has trouble tracking what both are doing, but not so far that the target can safely ignore one of the two. Atlantian fighters attack constantly as they advance so that the second blow strikes an enemy as the first lands, overwhelming the enemy’s defense.

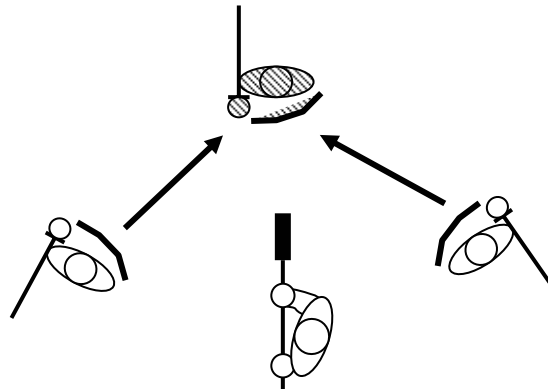


Figure 6-5: V-Attack

## 2. High/Low Attack

Attacking two separate areas of an opponent stretches the opponent's defense. One attacker should throw mostly blows to the lower area of the body while the other throws mostly high blows. Fighters should time the blows a heartbeat apart, so that the opponent is responding to the first as the second lands. The third team member should then be able to pick his shot.

## 3. Multidimensional Attack

Utilize both V and High/Low attacks for multidimensional combinations, such as high-right from one team member and low-left from another. Attackers should vary the types of blows thrown to avoid predictability. Spread the target's defense in all directions, and it will break more quickly. This requires communicating a plan of attack within the triad. Eventually, a veteran triad requires little to no communication during the course of the battle. The most aggressive fighter throws a blow and the other fighters throw the proper follow-on blows to take maximum advantage of the anticipated shift in the target's defense. Practice will make this second nature.

## 4. Mutual Defense

A triad increases survivability by dividing defensive responsibility. Everyone is responsible for his own defense, but he assists his teammates as well. A polearm's position within the triad is his greatest defense and allows him to concentrate on blocking blows to his shields' heads. He is responsible for high-center defense. The shields are responsible for low-center and flank defense. The dotted lines in Figure 6-5 depict these zones of defensive responsibility.

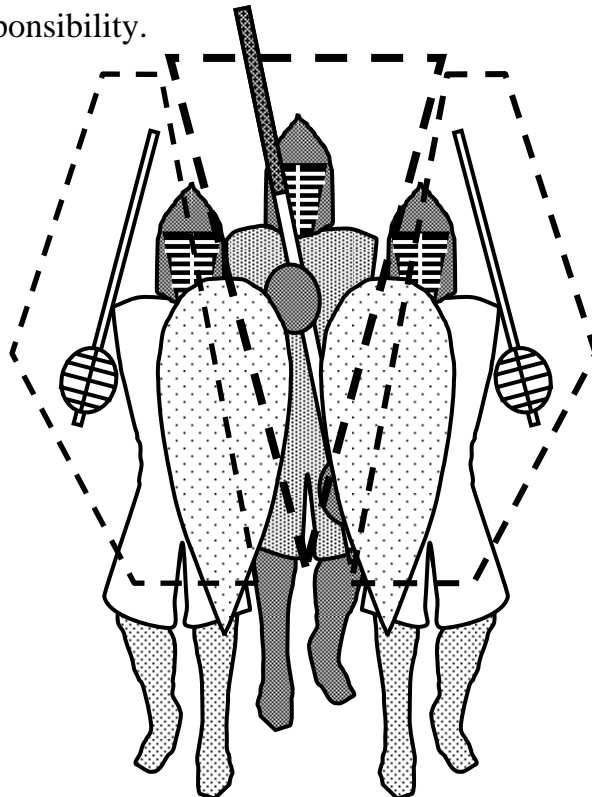


Figure 6-6: Zones of Defensive Responsibility



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