

PATROL HAND SIGNALS

LIGHT INFANTRY TACTICS:FOR SMALL TEAMS

Individual Skill #2: HAND & ARM SIGNALS

While we think of battlefield communications in terms of radio procedure and professional jargon, much of the communication is conducted by waving one's hands about in a spastic series of gestures. This form of communication is known as arm & hand signals.

Such signals are used, typically on patrol and the like, when noise discipline must be maintained. Arm & hand signals are also used over large distances, with most signals being easily recognized as far as a quarter mile (400 m). Finally, over the chaotic roar of battle, arm & hand signals can still be understood. The mistake many leaders make is the belief that after contact is made, arm & hand signals are still the preferred method of communication. Not true. After all, the enemy knows where you are. You have made contact. The best communication at this point involves the use of your voice. You'll need to command your troops quickly and assertively. You do not want your troops watching your stylish delivery of arm & hand signals as much as you need them to be watching their sectors of fire!

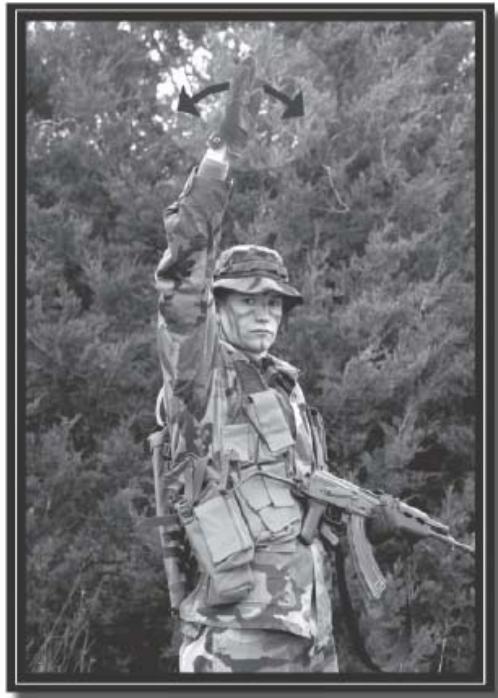
Signals can be given with either the left or right hand, with a few notable exceptions. Also, with the exception of the rally point signal, all hand and arm signals are passed back to the next member of the patrol immediately! This is true even if you know that the next troop has already seen the signal.

What follows are the 28 standard hand and arm

signals. Your team will come up with others that will carry unique meaning to its members.

“I Am Ready/Are You Ready?”

Also known as the “Yoo-hoo!” This signal is used to get the attention of another party or to let another party know that you are ready to move, communicate, assault,

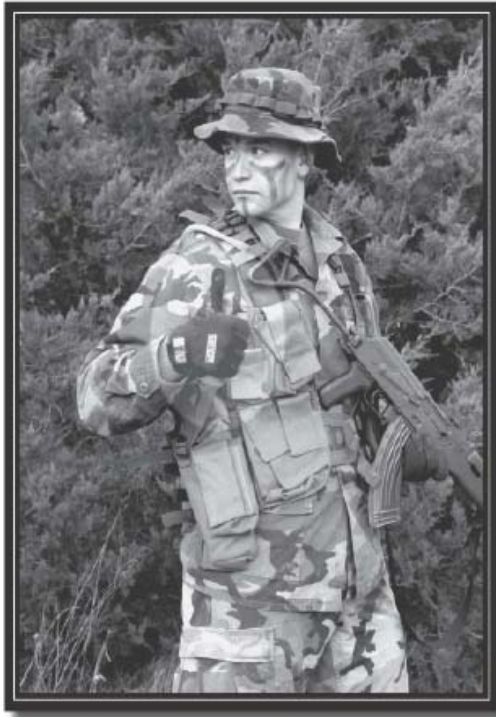


This signal is given by extending your arm above your head and waving it slightly back and forth—just like you do when you see a buddy in the parking lot of the shopping mall.

“I Understand”

Meaning that the troop understood and will comply with the last command, or that he has completed the task

and is ready for the next command. This signal is often simply called the “thumbs up”.



This signal is given by making a fist with the thumb pointed upward. A variation of this hand signal is to point the thumb down, which indicated that the situation is “not good”.

“I Do Not Understand”

Meaning that the troop does not understand the last message, or cannot comply with the last command. Sometimes called the “wave off”.



Formally, this signal is given by shielding your entire face with both hands, palms facing out. Of course, this is ridiculous because you cannot hold your weapon in your hand since, like several other hand and arm signals, it requires the use of both hands! A common variation of this signal is to use only one hand, palm facing out, and wave it left and right to the side of your midsection. Thus, known as the “wave off”.

“Cease Fire/All Clear”

Meaning the firing line must stop shooting *now!*



This signal is given by placing a hand in front of your face, palm out, then wave up and down in front of your face

“Move Out”

Meaning that all members of the patrol should begin movement forward.



This signal is given by raising an arm straight up into the air and letting it fall forward. Often, the arm is only raised up from the elbow and dropped forward. This is due largely to the weight of the LBE and rucksack that seems to constantly pinch and fatigue the shoulders. The signal looks about the same in either case.

“Stop”

Meaning the patrol will come to a halt, but you may continue to move to protective cover. *Do not* confuse this with the hand signal “freeze!” With the “stop” signal, there is no known threat to the patrol.



Give this signal by simply push a flattened palm toward the intended receiver, as if you were politely refusing a caramel-covered snail. If you enjoy the taste of caramel-covered snails.. .well, there is something very wrong with you.

“Freeze!”

Meaning, “DON’T MOVE.” Don’t step forward, speak, or even turn your head to look for cover. This signal indicates that danger is very close; such as an enemy patrol passing by, or that land mines have been spotted. Do not over use this signal. This signal should not be used when you simply want the patrol to stop.



This signal is given by making a quick fist, palm outward. Do not wave the fist about, simply hold your hand level and continue to make it until the intended receiver(s) has understood.

“Get Down”

Meaning that you should lower your profile closer to the ground so that you cannot be seen.



Give this signal by pushing a flattened palm toward the ground. Fairly basic stuff.

“Get Up”

Meaning you should raise your profile and be prepared to



move.

Give this signal by pushing a flattened palm toward the sky.

“Increase Your Interval”

Meaning there needs to be greater space between individuals in the formation. or between formations. This signal is often given when a patrol is passing from heavy vegetation to lighter vegetation, or onto a road.



Formally, this signal is given by placing two hands with palms facing outward, then pushing them apart to increase the space between the hands. An acceptable variation of this signal, due to carrying a weapon, is simply to place one hand against the side of the rifle and pull them apart in the same manner.

“Decrease Your Interval”

Meaning the space between troops needs to be tightened up. This signal is often given as a patrol enters heavier vegetation, or just before passing an obstacle, or before overwhelming an enemy position.



Formally given by pushing two flattened palms together over your head. An acceptable variation is to push one flattened palm to the side of your rifle—assuming you have one.

“Column File Formation”

Meaning that the patrol will form a single line formation, in a follow-the-leader fashion. This is also called the “Ranger file” or “column of ducks”.



This signal is given by raising an arm straight up in the air, then making a backward circle as if you were doing the backstroke with one arm. You'll feel silly at first, but everyone gets this one. It's the exact *opposite* of the signal "move out".

"Wedge Formation"

Meaning the patrol should assume the inverted "V" formation within their fireteams and prepare to attack.



Give this signal by raising straightened arms up slightly from your hips so that your arms form the shape of an upside-down “V”. This can be done with rifle in hand.

“On Line Formation”

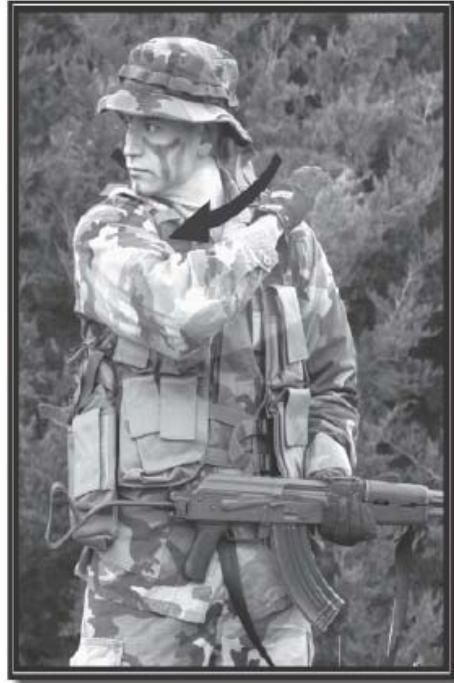
Meaning the entire element should come on line to my immediate left and right. Often given just prior to overwhelming an enemy position, or when making a hasty defensive line.



Give this signal by raising straightened arms up level with your shoulders like you are walking a suspended tight rope. This can also be done with rifle in hand.

“Danger Area”

Meaning that immediately in front of the point man is a dangerous area—typically indicating some type of open or linear clearing.



Give this signal by using a flattened hand back and forth across the neck in a cutting fashion. Again, with all the weight of your gear, this requires much less effort than earlier versions of this signal.

“Patch to the Road”

Meaning that the patrol will cross a linear danger area using the “patch-to-the-road” method, and all troops in the patrol should *close up the intervals* between members to shoulder-to-shoulder.



This signal is given by patting the unit patch twice, rapidly. The patch is located on your upper LEFT arm...just in case you were confused. Be certain that the troop behind you sees this signal. In short, turn your left shoulder towards the intended receiver of this signal.

“Pass Up the Pace Count”

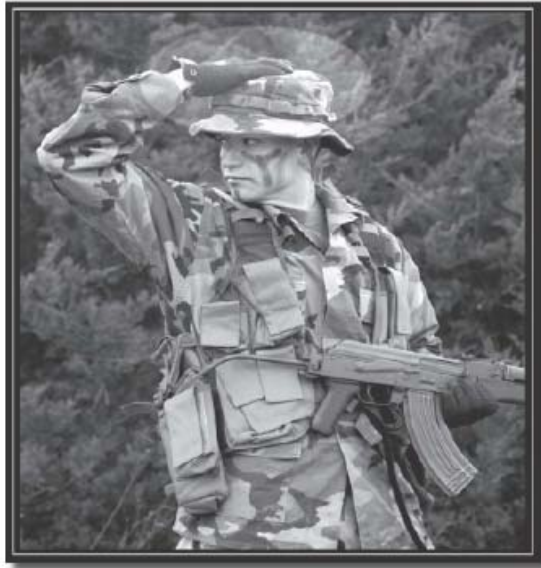
Meaning to pass up information to the patrol leader regarding the calculated distance (meters) that the patrol has traveled.



This signal is given by patting either leg two times just below the knee so that the receiver can see. The information is given by whispering into the ear of the troop in front of you (night) or simply by a show of fingers for every 100 meters walked (daylight).

“Pass Up the Head Count”

Meaning to pass up information regarding a physical count of the members in the patrol. This is done for accountability and security.



This signal is given by patting the *very top* of your head two times. Do not confuse this with patting your forehead—which means something entirely different! The information is given by whispering *your* number into the ear of the troop in front of you (night) or a simple show of your number using fingers (daylight).

“Patrol Leader Forward”

Meaning the designated patrol leader should move up the formation.



Give this signal by patting two times on your *forehead* softly, like several quick salutes from the center of your forehead. Variations of this include tapping your mid-chest several times for the squad or element leader, or your groin several times for a fireteam leader.

“Security Team Forward”

Meaning the designated Security Team should move up the formation.



This signal is given by pointing your index and middle fingers just under your eyes. Be careful not to poke yourself in the eyes. It is very painful and there is no need to get that close to your eyes. We all get the meaning.

“Rally On Me”

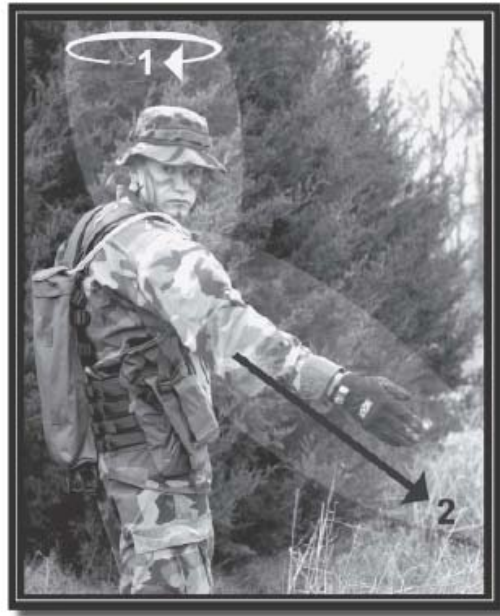
Meaning the entire patrol must come to my position and form a tight circular security.



Give this signal by raising a straightened arm directly above your head and with fingers stiffened, make short circles as if you were trying to draw a hole in the sky.

“Rally Point”

Meaning that this is the location (big tree, big stone, fence, meadow) that the patrol will rally if necessary in the near future. Given after every major terrain feature or 300 meters.



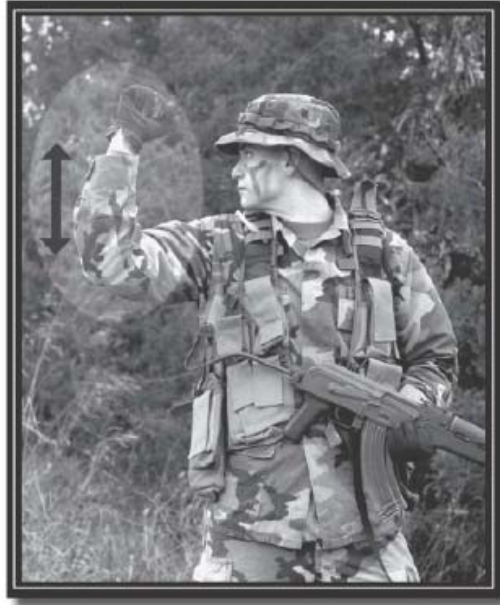
Give this signal by making a short circle directly above your head and then drop your arm dramatically and point to the exact location of the designated rally position.

Note: This is one of those few hand & arm signals that will NOT be passed back down the formation immediately. Only as each troop passes the rally point will they pass this signal back. They MUST get a confirming nod of the head from the receiver to be certain that the message will be passed along in turn.

“Double Time»

Meaning members of the patrol must increase their speed to a slow run. More commonly, this means that members of the patrol must keep up with the pace of the

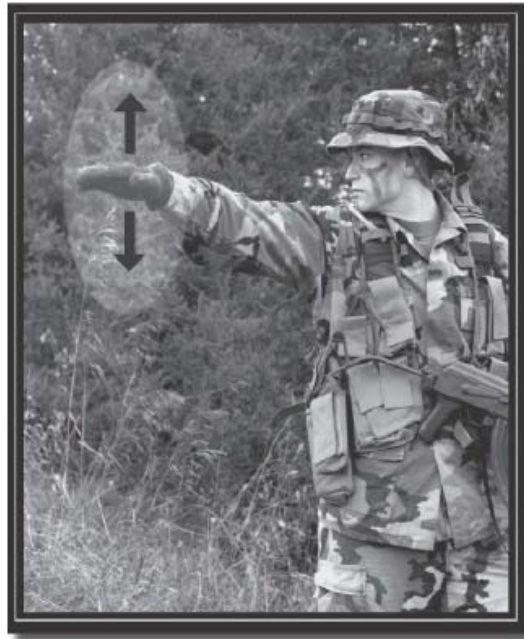
patrol leader.



This signal is given by raising a fist up in the air, with elbow bent, then pulling down in sharp, rapid succession. If it looks like you are pulling the whistle cord of a train or large truck, then you are doing it right.

“Quick Time”

Meaning the patrol should slow down to a walking pace. Almost always given at the end of a period of running.



This signal is given by extending an arm straight out from the shoulder and then waving the hand up and down, palm facing downward.

“Prepare for Action!”

Meaning to expect enemy contact in this (given) direction very soon. Often given when suspicious voices or troop movement is heard.



Give this signal by quickly punching a fist several times in the direction you believe the enemy is coming.

Note: This is NOT an order to begin firing! The source of the noise or movement has not been confirmed in this case. If it had been, the “Enemy in sight” signal would be given.

“Enemy in Sight”

Meaning I have visual contact with the enemy. This signal is ONLY for confirmed visual contact with the enemy.



This signal is given by making a fist with the thumb pointing down and the index finger pointed forward. The hand signal is first shown to members of the patrol, then thrust in the direction of the enemy. An acceptable variation is to raise your rifle above your head—magazine pointed skyward—and point the muzzle toward the enemy. Of course, this is an idiotic maneuver and should only be done when passing this information over a very long distance.

“(Numbers)”

Meaning “1, 2, 3”; or “50, 100, 200” and so on. Since “1” looks the same as “100”, it is the hand signal after the number that determines whether the sender means “1” or “100”. For instance “2” plus a signal for “tank” does not mean “200 tanks”! It means “2 tanks”. Similarly, “1” plus the signal for “meters” would indicate “100 meters”, and

COMBAT TRACKING HAND SIGNALS



Lost the Track: Cupped hand with palm facing up



Possible Sign: Cupped hand that transitions from palm facing down to palm facing up



Track Trap: Fingers extended and touching, hand closing so that thumb and index finger touch, then releasing to open position



Good: Thumb up



Not Good: Thumb down



Direction of Track Line: Arm extended in direction of track line with fingers extended and touching



Flanker Crossover: Arms extended at shoulder level, rotating inward and crossing over in front of face



Conduct 360: Arm moving in a circle



Enemy: Weapon pointed toward enemy



Halt: Arm bent at the elbow, hand raised, fingers extended and touching



Listen: Hand cupped behind ear



Freeze: Arm bent at elbow, hand raised with fingers closed, making a fist



Danger Area: Arm making a slashing motion across chest



Security: Index and middle finger pointing to the eyes



Patrol Leader: Tugging at collar



Rest Break: Making the motion of breaking a stick



Map Check: Pointing to opposite hand that has palm facing up