

Commandant's Note

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Lethality for the Future... and the Future is Now

Lethality is one of the most critical aspects of the Infantry. The Infantry Soldier's ultimate mission to close with and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver, demands lethality to win this close combat fight. Precision marksmanship is the key to lethality. Our existing qualification standards fail to accurately reflect the basic tactical employment skills, leader commands, and the requisite sense of urgency essential during reloading, changing positions, or fighting from cover on today's battlefield.

We must improve our marksmanship training to increase Soldier lethality. The new rifle marksmanship course of fire — still with 40 rounds — includes: prone unsupported (10 rounds); prone supported (10 rounds); kneeling supported (10 rounds); and standing supported (10 rounds). These four firing positions more accurately replicate combat conditions. Under fire, they can be readily assumed whenever the Soldier receives enemy contact and finds it necessary to deliver aimed fire on an enemy. Each firing position provides a stable platform and body position that maximize cover and concealment from enemy fire.

Our new rifle marksmanship training strategy is tied to an improved integrated weapons training strategy that is designed to evolve with technological enhancements but maintains a train-as-we-fight philosophy. The success of this concept is dependent on six principles, broken down into the following six tables:

Table I — Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction and Evaluation: The foundation upon which the Soldier builds the skill sets to sustain him through becoming a successful and proficient marksman. During this phase, his first line leader instructs and tests him on the basic knowledge, skills, tasks, and actions that govern the use and employment of his weapon system.

Table II — Pre-Live Fire Simulations (Engagement Skills Trainer/Soldier Virtual Trainer): The Soldier learns basic and advanced engagement techniques in a virtual environment using iron sights and some magnified optics. This includes both CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) and night-fire qualification requirements as well.

Table III – Drills: Hands-on training of critical tactical employment skills required of all Soldiers. Also used for concurrent training during live-fire events.

Table IV – Basic Grouping and Zero: Grouping exercises for the primary optic, built upon the skills trained during previous training events. Zeroing exercise includes confirmation at distance using new zero target.

Table V – Practice: Live-fire tactical engagements that include all firing positions, target presentations, and sequences that are more difficult than the test.

Table VI – Qualification: Army-standard demonstration of performance of basic tactical employment of the weapon system using the primary optic.

The changes to qualification standards replicate a course of fire based on combat criteria and are designed to increase Soldier lethality. The number of target exposures (40) remains constant (thus requiring no additional ammunition resources), but the qualification ratings and target exposures change slightly. The qualification ratings are:

- Qualified (23-27)
- Marksman (28-31)
- Sharpshooter (32-35)
- Expert (36-40)

To increase lethality and test Soldiers' improved marksmanship skills, target exposures increased from four to six exposures at 250 meters and from four to five exposures at 300 meters. The employment of four firing positions using four 10-round magazines requires Soldiers to identify and conduct three magazine and firing position changes to better replicate combat conditions. This firing sequence reduces qualification firing times by an average of three to six minutes per iteration over the old qualification course of fire. This provides significant time savings for leaders to utilize in their training schedules.

This new and improved marksmanship training increases Soldier lethality and enhances Soldiers' ability to fight, win, and survive on the battlefield.