



Commandant's NOTE

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SNIPER TRAINING PROGRAM

Throughout history, snipers have proved to be an effective and economical combat multiplier. Their primary mission is to support combat operations by delivering precise long-range rifle fire on selected targets that, for various reasons, cannot be engaged successfully by riflemen.

Snipers are used to inflict casualties, slow or deny enemy movement, create confusion, and lower enemy morale. Specific targets for snipers include enemy leaders, command and control operators, antiarmor system gunners, forward observers for indirect fire, vehicle drivers, armored vehicle commanders, weapon crews, and enemy snipers.

A sniper's value in combat cannot be measured, however, solely by the number of casualties he inflicts upon the enemy. A sniper can also have a tremendous psychological effect on enemy forces by his mere presence, instilling fear in the minds of the enemy and influencing his decisions and actions. Too, a sniper's secondary mission is gathering intelligence because of his location on the battlefield, coupled with his fieldcraft training and assigned equipment.

Realizing that modern technology has not diminished the need for snipers, the Army recently renewed its interest in them and is revitalizing its sniper program. The Infantry School has taken the lead in these efforts, and we are committed to providing the best sniper organization, equipment, doctrine, and training possible.

Typically, snipers operate in two-man teams. Under the current force structure, the sniper element in each light infantry battalion is made up of six battalion scouts organized into three of these two-man teams. The teams are to be employed as either scouts

or snipers as the factors of METT-T dictate. In the mechanized infantry battalions, the sniper element consists of two riflemen (one sniper team) in each line company headquarters.

Inherent in this structure is a recognition of the fundamental differences between light and heavy scout platoons in terms of tactical employment. In a light infantry battalion, the sniper's long range rifle complements the other weapons found in the scout platoon. In a mechanized infantry battalion, however, a long range rifle would not be used much in an environment of high-speed vehicles, antiarmor missiles, and automatic cannons that routinely fired beyond the rifle's range. In mechanized units, therefore, the sniper rifle is used to complement the other small arms found at company level and to provide a low-cost combat multiplier, particularly during MOUT, patrolling, and economy of force operations.

Each two-man team carries one sniper weapon system and a standard service rifle with a night sighting device (AN/PVS-4). The current sniper weapon, the M21, will soon be replaced by the M24, with fielding scheduled to begin in April 1988. The M24 is a bolt-action rifle (Remington Model 700) with telescopic and integral sights. This weapon features a 10-power fixed scope (Leupold M3 Ultra) and has a maximum effective range of 800 meters. Although the system does not include accessory sniper equipment, the M49 spotter scope and the AN/GVS-5 laser rangefinder will continue to be authorized for use with it.

The Army's formal sniper doctrine, until recently, consisted solely of TC 23-14, *Sniper Training and Employment*, which was published in 1969. For

some time, we at the Infantry School have been studying this issue in depth and have produced the coordinating draft for a new manual, FM 7-999, The Infantry Sniper; the draft has been distributed to the field for comment. After further study and revision, the completed manual should be available by late 1988.

Our efforts to revitalize the sniper program have also included the establishment of a three-week sniper course at the Infantry School, and we have taken action to establish an additional skill identifier (ASI) to be awarded to course graduates. Although the course is intended for soldiers in the ranks of private first class to sergeant, the School's training strategy is to fill the classes during the first year with mid-level noncommissioned officers (sergeants through sergeants first class/platoon sergeants). Our intent in this is to establish a train-the-trainer program so that our infantry units will have noncommissioned officers who are capable of sustaining sniper training.

The course is designed to train snipers to engage targets successfully at long ranges with precision rifle fire and to meet sniper fieldcraft standards. It emphasizes the sniper weapon system and long range shooting skills, and practice live fire and qualification exercises take up a significant amount of the allotted time. The four marksmanship instructors are Olympic class shooters from the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit (USAMU). The other instructors, who are responsible for fieldcraft instruction and course administration, are high-quality noncommissioned officers from the 29th Infantry. The fieldcraft instruction emphasizes sniper camouflage, concealment, movement, tactics, and employment. The optimum class size of 18 allows for an instructor-to-student ratio of 1:2.

To attend, a soldier must meet the following prerequisites:

- Be a volunteer and have his commander's recommendation.
- Be in good physical condition with visual acuity of 20/200 or better uncorrected, correctable to 20/20.
- Hold MOS 11B, 11M, or 19D, with Skill Level 2 proficiency.
- Have no history of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Have no record of disciplinary action.

We have completed the first few classes, and the results are positive. We believe that the field is sending good students to the course and that the course is meeting its intended outcome. We are working to incorporate hands-on instruction and firing exercises with various Threat sniper systems and to increase our emphasis on limited visibility engagements.

In addition, we are updating mission training plans to incorporate sniper missions into them, and are developing situational training exercises (STXs) to assist units in sustaining their snipers' proficiency. A critical requirement that we are anxiously awaiting is the modification of MILES equipment for use with the sniper weapon system. That equipment will allow units to integrate snipers into their local training and also into their operations at both the Joint Readiness Training Center and the National Training Center. During these operations, our sniper doctrine can then be validated and the sniper payoff more easily recognized.

When trained to standard, a sniper has the potential of being a decisive factor on the modern battlefield. As Chief of Infantry, I am determined to make this capability a reality in every combat infantry battalion.

