

TRAINING NOTES



U.S. Army Sniper School

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The use of sharpshooters or snipers can be traced in U.S. military history back to the Revolutionary War. Most recently, during Operation *Urgent Fury* in Grenada, the Rangers successfully employed sniper teams to engage a Cuban mortar crew. Cuban prisoners who were questioned after the action revealed that the accurate sniper fire of the Rangers was directly responsible for reducing their will to fight.

Snipers are once again recognized as being an effective supporting arm, force multiplier, and economy of force element for an infantry commander. As a result, the Infantry School and the 29th Infantry Regiment have revitalized the School's sniper program and are committed to providing the best possible training and equipment.

These efforts have included the establishment of the U.S. Army Sniper School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The three-week course of instruction offered by the school trains snipers to engage targets successfully with precision rifle fire out to 1,000 meters and to be experts in fieldcraft techniques.

The advanced marksmanship instruction (54 hours) with the M24 sniper weapon emphasizes the weapon system, long range shooting skills, and environ-

mental effects on ballistics. Practice live fire exercises and qualification exercises make up a significant portion of the marksmanship training.

The fieldcraft instruction (120 hours) includes training in concealment, sniper



camouflage, movement, range estimation, observation, and target detection.

Soldiers who graduate from the school are awarded the additional skill identifier (ASI) of B4, and the award is made retroactive to the school's start in July 1987. This is the only school in the Army today that is authorized to award this ASI.

Eleven classes are planned for each year. The optimum class size is 18 students; the maximum is 24. With 18 students, a class has an instructor for every two students. The instructors are highly qualified noncommissioned officers from the 29th Infantry Regiment, and all of them are graduates of both the U.S. Army Sniper School and the U.S. Marine Corps Scout/Sniper School.

The course is both physically and mentally demanding, because the sniper students train an average of 14 hours a day, six days a week. Each training day begins with PT from 0530 to 0645, and students road march to and from the training sites in special camouflage (Ghillie) suits with rucksacks and weapons (9-12 miles daily).

To make sure the students are prepared for this level of activity, cadre members administer a diagnostic Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) during in-processing, and the students must achieve at least 70 points in each event.

Training during the first week is oriented on fieldcraft techniques, sniper patrol orders, and sniper movement techniques. The students also zero their weapons and receive training on marksmanship fundamentals. They spend an average of four hours a night construct-

ing their Ghillie suits, writing their first patrol order, and studying. Cadre members are available to help them.

Throughout the second week, the soldiers participate in a number of evaluated exercises that include their first record fire, concealed movement, and target detection. To facilitate training, the sniper class is divided into two training groups but with the members of each sniper team kept together.

On the eighth day, the training moves out of the classroom to the range and the fieldcraft training sites. The focus of training is now placed on advanced sniper marksmanship as well as sniper fieldcraft.

This training continues through the third and final week, which concludes with an arduous 24-hour sniper team tactical exercise and a final shot exercise. During the tactical exercise, a sniper team is evaluated in a number of areas including sniper patrol order, construction of positions, target reduction, and final shot.

EVALUATION

Sniper students are evaluated in 10 separate areas, beginning the day they report (see table). The evaluation system is based upon a total score of 1,000 points. A student must receive a total of 710 points to graduate and to be awarded the ASI.

A student who fails in any one marksmanship area, including the final shot, is dismissed from the course; a student who fails in two fieldcraft areas is also removed for academic deficiency. Students who demonstrate a weakness in either fieldcraft or marksmanship receive remedial training and, if necessary, remedial testing.

Soldiers are selected by their units to attend the sniper course, and they attend on a temporary duty and return basis. It is imperative that unit commanders become personally involved in the selection process, and that they select only top quality soldiers with a year's retainability in the unit.

A soldier selected must meet the following minimum prerequisites:

GRADED AREA	NUMBER OF EXERCISES	MAXIMUM POINTS	MINIMUM STANDARD
Record Fire 1	1	200	160
Record Fire 2	1	200	160
Final Shot	1	100	50
Final Exam	1	100	70
Operation Order	1	100	70
Team Tactical Exercise	1	100	70
Concealment	5	50	30
Target Detection	5	50	35
Range Estimation	5	50	35
Concealed Movement	5	50	30
Total		1,000 pts	710 pts

- Rank of private first class through sergeant.

- Volunteer with commander's recommendation.

- Good physical condition with corrected vision of 20/20.

- Proficient in MOS 11B, Skill Level 2.

- No history of drug or alcohol abuse.

- No record of disciplinary action.

Students report to Building 4511 in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning between 1200 and 1300 hours the day before the training starts. During in-processing, students are issued TA-50 equipment for the duration of the course, and are issued meal cards.

Billets and meals are provided for all students, who must live in the barracks while they are attending the sniper course. Units are asked to make sure that any of their soldiers who are receiving separate rations are taken off that status during the time they are attending the course.

Each soldier must report with at least the following items:

- One copy of DA Forms 2 and 2-1.

- Five copies of orders.

- Medical records.

- Identification card.

- Two ID tags with chains.

- One U.S. Army PT uniform.

- Four sets of BDUs.

- Two pairs of boots (combat or jungle type).

- One pair of black gloves with inserts.

- One field jacket.

- Two pairs of ear plugs with cases.

- Two padlocks.

- Pocket calculator.

- Sewing kit with canvas-type needle.

- Clip board.

- Two black grease pencils.

- Two black ink pens.

- Two #2 pencils.

- Loose-leaf notebook with paper (8½ by 11).

- Toiletries, underwear, and the like, as needed.

In addition, students may want to bring the following items:

- Map case.

- Ruler.

Camouflage netting for face/weapon veil.

- Bush hat.

- 550 cord.

- Highlighter.

- OD green tape.

- Knife.

- Ranger Handbook.

- Pruning shears.

When properly trained, equipped, and employed, a sniper can be a potentially decisive factor on the modern battlefield. He more than pays his way in combat, because he lives by the sniper motto—"One shot, one kill."

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