



## IN OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR

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Operations other than war (OOTW) put U.S. soldiers at risk, and in sometimes ambiguous tactical situations. The success of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations can be threatened by gunmen who ambush, raid, emplace mines and booby traps, or launch sporadic attacks by mortar, rocket, and sniper fire against U.S. and coalition forces. Because these dissidents often mingle with a desperate civilian population in OOTW situations, responding to their attacks with massed firepower is counterproductive.

U.S. snipers, however, have proved themselves useful in such situations and have become essential to force protection. They offer a unique capability that can be used to identify and eliminate specific enemy while causing minimal collateral damage. Countering the efforts of enemy snipers has also assumed a larger role as OOTW situations require more restrictive rules of engagement (ROEs).

U.S. snipers are unparalleled as a means of applying limited but effective combat power. The kill rates achieved by U.S. small arms fire have ranged from 60,000 to 80,000

rounds per casualty in World War II and the Korea War to more than 200,000 per casualty in Vietnam. Although the recent ground combat in Somalia would undoubtedly show a lower ratio, snipers have consistently maintained a rate of less than two rounds per kill over this entire period.

### **U.S. Sniper Operations**

Snipers can actually decrease the level of violence in an OOTW situation by enforcing prohibitions against the deployment of heavy weapons such as machineguns, mortars, antitank and antiaircraft weapons, or armed vehicles. Snipers can enhance security and provide force protection by overwatching diplomatic meetings, patrols, guard posts, checkpoints, convoys, food and water distribution points, and port or airfield operations. They can provide both surveillance and immediate precision counterfire. They can occupy key positions to deny roving bands of gunmen the use of staging areas and avenues of approach. Snipers also provide an effective means of neutralizing enemy sniper operations as part of a coordinated countersniper program.

In countersniper operations, a sniper team is best employed in a secure hide site so it can detect and eliminate enemy snipers as they approach or withdraw. Special operations force (SOF) sniper teams can also provide training, advice, and assistance to countersniper efforts.

A successful countersniper program is more than just the dramatic, life-and-death duel between two skilled shooters. To be effective over the long term, in fact, overmatching is often more effective than mere technological advantages; it is more a result of outthinking the enemy than outshooting him. Although the existing family of U.S. sniper weapons and the associated surveillance equipment draw upon state-of-the-art technology, gaining a truly decisive tactical advantage also requires superior training, planning, and weapon employment.

### **U.S. Sniper Equipment and Employment**

The standard, school-trained sniper team, equipped with current weapons, is an overmatch for most enemy snipers, at both the civilian irregular and dedicated marksman levels. The M24 sniper rifle, firing the 7.62mm NATO round, has the range, accuracy, and fire control to be effective at 600 to 800 meters. The 20-power M49 spotting scope and the AN/GVS-5 and AN/PVS-6 range finders provide an adequate day capability to acquire and hit targets. Problems with re-zeroing, limited range of vision, and bullet-drop compensation usually make the AN/PVS-4 night sight more effective when used on the M16A2 rifle. The thermal weapons sight to be fielded soon will add a night capability that is close to current capabilities.

Enemy snipers are more difficult to engage than the usual targets. A sniper will fire from cover with only part of his head exposed while trying to pick off a fully exposed and unsuspecting target. An overmatching capability therefore requires a weapon and a shooter capable of making head shots at greater ranges than those at which the enemy can make body shots. The level of training given infantry snipers

and the accuracy of the M24's Special Ball ammunition limit it to about 400 meters in a duel of sniper against sniper. The 7.62mm match ammunition is more accurate at short to medium ranges while the Special Ball ammunition is more accurate at longer range. Only commercial match-grade ammunition will fully exploit the accuracy of the M24.

Special operations forces have a family of sniper weapons that were specifically developed to overmatch enemy capabilities and to conduct stand-off attack. The primary SOF sniper weapon is the 7.62 NATO M24 or the Navy SEALs' equivalent version, the M86. Some of these weapons have been chambered to fire the .300 Winchester Magnum (WMG) round, thereby providing a heavier bullet, a flatter trajectory, and longer range (1,000 to 1,200 meters). (There has been some question in the past as to the legality, under the Geneva Accords, of using this commercial ammunition against enemy forces, but the SOF community has obtained a ruling under international law approving the use of match ammunition in countersniper operations.)

A problem that arises with the 7.62mm round fired at long range is that, because of the steep angle-of-fall, a bullet may be deflected by striking the overhanging cover of the enemy's firing port, even with what appears to be a clean shot into the position. The lower maximum ordinate of the .300 WMG is critical in urban environments when shooting through windows, loopholes, and arches. The flatter shooting magnum will reach targets that the 7.62mm cannot. The .300 WMG's heavier bullet (190 grains), higher velocity (approximately 3,000 feet per second), and higher ballistic coefficient result in a shorter time of flight and a flatter trajectory that reduce the effect of wind, ranging errors, and target movement.

In the hands of an exceptionally skilled sniper, the M24 in .300 Winchester Magnum is a superb countersniper weapon with a much greater area coverage than that provided by the 7.62mm round. It is less affected by wind and range errors and offers a higher hit probability than the original M24. It fires Navy .300 WMG match-grade ammunition or commercial match ammunition with minute-of-angle (MOA) accuracy; that is, the system can place five-shot bullet groups within a one-inch circle at 100 yards. The .300 Winchester Magnums are normally employed by exceptional snipers shooting at extreme ranges. Even taking the additional recoil into account, this version makes it much easier for even average snipers to make hits at ranges of 600 to 800 meters.

The SOF community has also obtained a limited number of semiautomatic 7.62mm SR-25s as part of a program to procure a special sniper security rifle. The SR-25 provides a high rate of precision fire (.8 to 1.5 seconds per aimed shot at .5 to 1 MOA) and is equipped with a flash and noise suppressor, a variable-power sniper scope for day use, and the latest night vision sights. A sniper normally carries the weapon with the scope on the low power setting in case of unexpected contact with the enemy at close range. Once the sniper is in position, he uses the high power setting on the scope.

This weapon is extremely accurate. With it, a skilled sniper can eliminate an enemy sniper team of two or three men

before they can effectively react to the sound of the first shot. The combination of an SR-25 and a heavy sniper rifle in a concealed sniper-observer post can overwatch vehicle or foot patrols, guard posts, checkpoints, and roadblocks with absolute authority.

The SR-25 and its scope are built to accept an adapter, which attaches to the day scope and gives it a night vision capability. But a separate SR-25 equipped with a night sight and a suppressor that reduces sound and flash, provides the optimum mix of weapons for night-time engagements.

Additional enhancements include the use of commercial match ammunition, variable (15-power to 45-power) observation scopes, night observation devices, laser range finders, and hand-held thermal viewers for better target acquisition. Together, these will overmatch any opponent. For special

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situations, the SR-25 has a rail on the barrel where an infrared laser aiming device can be securely mounted. This combination can be used to provide excellent heliborne night suppression capability.

The SOF heavy sniper rifles include bolt-action (M87/M88) and semiautomatic (M82A1) .50 caliber sniper rifles that were originally developed as antimateriel weapons. Their effective range during daylight or under artificial illumination is approximately 1,000 to 1,500 meters with a 2-3 MOA accuracy, good enough for use as an antipersonnel sniper weapon. As stand-off antimateriel weapons, they can be used out to 2,000 meters.

The semiautomatic weapons can fire an aimed shot every 2.5 seconds while the bolt-action versions require 8 to 12 seconds per shot. Either weapon can be used to knock out light vehicles, neutralize heavy weapon positions, or conduct countersniper operations. Their range, lethality, and penetration provide an exceptional combat-proven countersniper capability.

For example, in a typical incident during an OOTW situation, an irregular civilian sniper fires several rounds at U.S. personnel and then ducks behind a wall as a hail of return fire from our machineguns and rifles covers the area. Although this fire probably won't hit the gunman behind his cover, it may wound bystanders, much to the delight of the enemy who has thereby created an incident that may undermine the U.S. efforts at restoring peace.

If the U.S. commander has SOF snipers supporting him, however, the result may be dramatically different. The range and "shoot through" capabilities of the heavy sniper rifles make them excellent countersniper weapons. SOF snipers, using heavy sniper rifles firing .50 caliber armor-piercing, or armor-piercing explosive incendiary ammunition would

engage the sniper by actually shooting through the wall or by having the HE round burst at the base of the firing port and spray fragments inside. The gunman himself is now the only casualty. He is shown to be ineffectual against U.S. forces, his companions are discouraged from similar attacks, and there are no non-combatant casualties to exploit.

The use of heavy sniper rifles does, however, require careful consideration of the hazards caused by excessive penetration, misses, and ricochets. Match-grade penetrating and frangible .50 caliber ammunition can significantly improve the effectiveness of these weapons.

The future holds even more advances for U.S. snipers. The SOF is developing an integrated day-night sight and, in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Energy, is working on a sniper scope that automatically compensates for range and wind drift. This program uses technology to address the major factor that contributes to a miss and those areas that require the most training resources to master. The planned development of match-grade .50 caliber and improved 7.62mm sniper ammunition will dramatically increase the effective sniping range of both current and future weapons.

#### **Countersniper Intelligence Assessment**

The first step in establishing an effective countersniper program during OOTW is to make a detailed intelligence assessment of the sniper threat. A sniper trained in the U.S. Army Sniper School or, better yet, the leader of a Special Operations countersniper team (CST), should be used to conduct a vulnerability assessment. Either can do this by mentally putting himself in the place of the enemy sniper. This helps to determine likely targets, hide positions, fields of fire, and routes for infiltration and exfiltration. The CST must be allowed to consult with the unit's intelligence staff and to collect and analyze the essential elements of information on enemy sniper activities.

The U.S. countersniper team identifies the military, political, and psychological objectives that the enemy intends to support with his sniper operations. This will help determine likely targets, target locations, and even times of attack. The team members will then determine the level of sniper likely to be countered—professional, trained marksman, or civilian irregular. They will need to analyze the type of weapons, ammunition, tactics, and night vision equipment available to the enemy and all accounts of recent sniper incidents. Hand-held panoramic photographs from potential targets or low oblique photos from helicopters can be used to identify clear lines of sight and likely sniper positions. This analysis will give the sniper teams an assessment of the expected range and lethality of the opponent and identify patterns to aid in targeting. This information can also be used to assess such passive protective measures as the likely effectiveness of body-armor, light vehicle armor kits, and screens.

The sniper team can assist the intelligence section during the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) by combining all of this information into a sniper operational

template. The commander can then use the IPB products and the assistance of the sniper team to develop both active and passive countersniper measures.

### Countersniper Tactics and Techniques

The typical range for an attack by a trained enemy sniper is around 300 to 600 meters for 7.62mm weapons. Shots from 800 to 1,000 meters are the exception. But heavy sniper rifles (.50 caliber, 12.7mm, 14.5mm, or greater) with ranges of 1,200 to 1,500 meters are now proliferating in armies around the world. Most of these were originally intended as antimateriel weapons for stand-off attack against radar or communication vans, missiles, parked aircraft, or bulk fuel and ammunition storage sites. Although they are only marginally accurate against personnel targets, their ability to shoot through most passive countermeasures and their devastating effects on human beings increase their psychological effectiveness.

The concept behind sniping for harassment or political effect is not limited to the use of rifles. Stand-off attacks with antitank weapons—such as rocket-propelled grenades and direct-lay mortar fire—can be conducted against the same U.S. targets and with the same objectives as traditional sniping attacks. In many OOTW situations, it may be better to respond first with countersniper tactics and techniques instead of counterbattery fires.

Countersniper tactics and techniques are generally classified as either passive or active. Passive countermeasures, while useful, are not the total solution to the problems presented by urban snipers. They may be both politically and psychologically effective at first in terms of reducing casualties and the level of violence, but they are self-defeating in the long run.

Ultimately, passive measures interfere with mission accomplishment, isolate U.S. forces when their visible presence is required, foster a siege mentality, and yield the initiative to the enemy, all of which are the very objectives of the enemy's sniping effort. Along with seizing the initiative comes the certainty of an occasional success to cast doubt on the legitimacy and competency of the U.S. effort.

Ultimately, active countermeasures that exploit the enemy snipers' military and psychological vulnerabilities will have the greatest overall effect. The sniper teams are almost always small. They depend on stealth to approach their target along covered and concealed routes. They move carefully into hide or shooting positions. The positions they seek must provide good but not obvious fields of fire; concealment for both the sniper and the firing signature; cover from direct and indirect counterfire; and easy access to concealed escape routes.

The countersniper teams must analyze past shooting incidents, using their knowledge of sniper tactics and trajectories to identify likely enemy hide positions. The path of the bullet will indicate the direction, and the angle-of-fall can be used to estimate the range. For most conventional snipers, engagements are usually from 300 to 600 meters. At ranges closer than 300 meters, the sniper's movement and firing signature are too easy to detect, and he is vulnerable to

counterfire from conventional small arms.

The Russian-manufactured SVD sniper rifle and similar conventional military sniper weapons commonly found in Third World countries are capable of grouping shots into a two-to-three-inch circle at 100 yards. This limits their effective range to 600 meters. If effective shots are being made from beyond that range, the enemy is either lucky or he is specially trained and equipped. The use of suppressed weapons, extreme stealth, and night vision sights for closer shots is another indication.

An experienced sniper will often shoot past a structure or terrain feature that reflects the sonic shock wave from his bullet. The resulting crack is often mistaken for the sound of the shot and deceives observers as to the source of the fire. Tracing the path of the incoming round back 300 to 600 meters past sound-reflecting features to good firing positions with access to concealed withdrawal routes is difficult, but it will point to likely enemy sniper positions on which to focus active countermeasures.

Enemy snipers must avoid close combat with U.S. infantry while they are moving into or out of position. The sniper team is small, usually no more than three men, and a bolt-action sniper rifle is cumbersome and slow in close quarters combat, and they are very vulnerable to attack by units with overwhelming direct fire.

Their worst fear, however, may be that a better sniper is hunting them. They fear the countersniper who is better trained and who is equipped with a more accurate rifle that has a flatter trajectory and longer range. They are terrified of an observer who is equipped with more powerful, higher-resolution day, night, and thermal surveillance systems. They dread an opponent with better planning, support, coordination, and integration of mutually supporting countersniper teams and patrols. They simply have no defense in such a situation. They must either stop sniping or eventually be killed.

The concept of defeating the enemy sniper by overmatching his capabilities also includes the surveillance and fire control optics (day, night, and thermal sights) and other sensors. These include the sophisticated REMBASS (remotely monitored battlefield sensor system) sensors placed on likely routes or firing positions; airborne infrared scopes on helicopters, remotely piloted vehicles, or AC-130 gunships; or some of the emerging technologies that are capable of detecting and tracing the sniper bullet's trajectory back to the source. Periscopes or night-vision and thermal sights with connecting cable to a video monitor allow continued surveillance with less eye strain and, more important, without exposing the observer to sniper fire. Thermal systems remove the cover of night, along with the concealment offered by camouflage measures and vegetation.

If U.S. forces can see better than the enemy can, or better than the enemy *thinks* they can, he becomes vulnerable to detection and engagement while moving into position. Overmatching weapons include those that have greater range and accuracy than the sniper's and that are capable of shooting through the sniper's cover. The Abrams tank, Bradley

fighting vehicle, Apache helicopter, and AC-130 gunship are, in varying degrees, immune to the sniper's weapons but are themselves able to acquire and hit targets from extreme range. These systems, too, can provide immediate, devastating countersniper fire. The armored vehicles can operate from exposed positions while their long-range sensors and weapons can cover a large area, see through concealment, and shoot through cover. A problem with these powerful weapons in OOTW situations is that even single aimed shots are likely to cause significant collateral damage and possible casualties.

By conducting a vulnerability assessment of likely targets and combining that with the sniper IPB, the countersniper team determines known, likely, and suspected enemy shooting positions and routes, the best locations for ambushes, and the areas to cover with countersniper teams. The countersniper teams overwatch and support ambush patrols. Air and artillery support, along with an armored ground reaction team, should be on stand-by to help patrols or countersniper teams that get into trouble. Checkerboarding the suspected area with ambush and security patrols will maintain contact with the enemy snipers until they are killed or captured.

Any units that come under accurate sniper fire should take cover and use smoke and indirect fire (if authorized). The enemy is prepared for attempts of the unit under fire to maneuver toward him or his flanks. He may have supporting snipers covering his flanks and can inflict serious casualties before withdrawing. If he has fired and the targets are under cover, however, the longer he stays in position the more vulnerable he becomes. Some of the hidden ambush patrols can maneuver to cut off his withdrawal.

Helicopters can provide aerial observation and fire or insert additional patrols or countersniper teams. Snipers can fire effectively from helicopters using low-power or reflex

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optical sights or infrared laser aiming devices and night vision goggles. When the target is detected, the helicopter goes into a pylon turn, orbiting the target. The sniper firing out of the left side of the aircraft can easily acquire and hit the target while offering the enemy a difficult deflection shot.

Flushed and pursued from the ground and air, the enemy sniper will attempt to avoid a close quarters engagement and can be driven into the crosshairs of an overwatching countersniper team.

Countersniper teams provide counterfire on likely enemy sniper positions. These teams are sited in overwatching positions where they are unlikely to be spotted or engaged. Other positions cover routes snipers or raiding parties are likely to take in approaching U.S. targets. Teams employed in hostile or unsecured locations must be either accompanied by

security elements to protect against attack during movement or in position and backed up with supporting fires and reaction forces.

In normal sniper operations, a small sniper team has the initiative and can infiltrate the target area, make the shot, and escape with relative ease. In countersniper operations, however, the team has to cover an area for extended periods of time. The number of positions will be limited and, after a while, will become known to the enemy. Supporting security elements and operational security are essential to prevent the compromise of team positions. Countersniper teams employed with conventional observation post (OP) or security positions will be less effective and more likely to become targets themselves. The enemy expects someone to be in the OP looking for him, and he will maneuver to avoid detection. Dummy sniper positions with decoys that simulate personnel, movement, or firing signatures can be used to draw sniper fire and set up a shot for the countersniper team.

The sniper and the observer must switch roles often to avoid carelessness from eye strain as they check potential target areas over and over. The same teams should work the same area to get a feel for its terrain, people, and rhythms of life. They will be alerted immediately when there is even a subtle change; a hint of movement, the glint of sunlight off optics, a flash, or a wisp of gunsmoke is all they will have.

The observer uses pre-designated reference points to direct the sniper to the target. The target must be verified against the rules of engagement before the shot. Snipers should coordinate fires and engage targets in pairs whenever possible. The security man guards the flank and rear while providing the communications link to notify headquarters and coordinate supporting countersniper teams, ambush patrols, and supporting fires. If the countersniper team's hide position is compromised, it must be abandoned or used as a decoy position.

The intelligence provided by the sniper-observer teams often becomes more important than the counterfire. As fewer of the gunmen who thought it would be good sport to go take a few pot shots at the U.S. forces return, and as their most skilled professionals are eliminated, incidents will decline along with the morale, prestige, and power of the gunmen.

Incidents, both real and manufactured, will be taken to the international press in an effort to embarrass the U.S. forces, psychologically and politically. Training, discipline, and strict adherence to the rules of engagement are essential to ensure the legitimacy of the countersniper program. The enemy can be expected to resort to other forms of attack against U.S. military, civilian aid personnel, or even indigenous civilians to restore their prestige.

The rules of engagement should recognize the control and precision of sniper fire. These rules are intended to limit the level of violence and the number of noncombatant casualties. Countersniper team operations serve the same intent, while also preventing criminal elements from spreading anarchy under the cover of the ROEs.

Close coordination between sniper teams and the supporting or supported units is essential for effective operations and the prevention of fratricide. Infantry snipers will often operate with Special Forces, Rangers, SEALs, U.S. Marine Corps, and even Air Force Special Operations Security Team snipers. The countersniper team's communications must provide immediate access to the command net to clear targets, call for fire support, provide intelligence information, and call for emergency relief or extraction. Additionally, the sniper teams must be linked to hand off targets, coordinate mutual support, overwatch, and protect against enemy counteraction. This is a significant challenge since communication security equipment may not be compatible even in joint U.S. operations, let alone those involving several coalition partners.

SOFs can provide training, advice, and assistance to enhance the employment of infantry snipers as well as to field state-of-the-art countersniper teams. Infantry commanders should forward requests for SOF support to the Corps Special Operations Coordination cell or to the Joint Special Operations Task Force or Theater Special Operations Command.

Some Army infantry units give in to the temptation to request just the SOF sniper equipment, thinking they can do the job themselves. But this equipment is not effective without the associated doctrine, training, and support. While approved for SOF use under the U.S. Special Operations Command acquisition authority, most of the equipment has not been tested, safety certified, or type classified by the Army. SOF support will provide state-of-the-art battlefield capability and assistance in exploiting the full capability of the unit's own snipers.

### **The Human Dimension**

The ambiguity, danger, and frustrations of OOTW pose many leadership challenges. Countersniper operations place additional heavy demands on unit leaders as well as the sniper.

Leaders must fully trust their snipers; they should not second-guess the team's decisions to shoot or not to shoot. There will be incidents, real or manufactured, that the enemy will exploit to undermine the U.S. efforts. He may try to portray the U.S. snipers as out-of-control, sadistic killers of innocent civilians. Any large-scale effort to create a news-media bias against U.S. snipers is an indication that the countersniper team's efforts are succeeding. To continue to be successful, the teams must be given the full support of the chain of command. To do otherwise will damage the morale and confidence of the snipers and make them reluctant to shoot, and this will eliminate the U.S. sniper as effectively as if he were shot by the enemy.

Soldiers in combat for the first time may have difficulty with the stress of a long countersniper mission. Good soldiers, even those who are aggressive and effective in a conventional fire fight, may be unable to adjust to the stress associated with sniping. It is a difficult thing for the average person to look at another human being through a telescope

that clearly shows his facial expressions and then shoot him.

Although most snipers can cope with the stress of combat, severe stress reactions are not uncommon after extended sniper operations. Some snipers may become increasingly reluctant to fire on targets, creating fictitious reasons for not doing so. In rare cases, some may overstep the rules of engagement and take inappropriate shots. The commander must stay alert for such indications and take immediate action. If the case calls for it, the commander can ask for assistance from combat stress management teams.

After a while, some snipers begin to feel the stress of combat. Commanders, chaplains, and other snipers should talk with these soldiers and help them reconcile their feelings. If

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necessary, soldiers who cannot adapt to sniping should be reassigned, without prejudice, to other duties.

The Infantry School and the Special Warfare School have produced an unmatched sniper capability with state-of-the-art equipment and world-class shooters. It falls to unit leaders to master their snipers' capabilities, limitations, employment considerations, support, and training requirements, and to exploit them as an active force protection measure. When you begin taking casualties from enemy snipers, it is too late to ask if there are any school-trained snipers in your unit or to start thinking about their sustainment training.

Sniper sustainment training—as well as training in firing from awkward positions, firing from steep angles, firing from helicopters, and the training of additional observers—are mission essential tasks for units facing possible deployment to OOTW. The effect of properly trained, equipped, and employed sniper teams in OOTW is phenomenal. Snipers will enhance force protection, enforce the ROEs, create a buffer around selected posts and installations, and deny the enemy chances to attack with line-of-sight weapons. Sniper operations will build coalition morale and confidence, create fear and uncertainty among the enemy, and ensure U.S. influence to the maximum range of their weapons and optics.

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