

From the Editor

IT'S GOING TO BE A CLOSE ONE

Wherever we fight the next war, chances are it will be a close-range proposition. We consider the infantry fight as starting somewhere around 300 yards out and continuing on all the way to—and beyond—the objective itself, but for the rifleman, 300-yard shots will clearly be the exception rather than the rule, with the majority of his engagements being at 100 yards or less. To be sure, we need to train for the longer range opportunities, but every soldier must be able to hit those targets that appear unexpectedly and close-in. This is particularly true for combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) units. Maneuver units in contact with the enemy are totally dependent upon their logistical support in terms of services and virtually all classes of supply, and these CS and CSS units' survivability is essential. Our potential adversaries have long regarded our support base as an easy target, and we must train everyone to fight as infantry. Our Basic Combat Training Brigades are doing a superb job in that direction, and when their graduates finally arrive at their units to work as drivers, fuel handlers, clerks, or in any of the myriad specialties that sustain an Army, we must make sure that their ability to shoot first and accurately is not allowed to languish through disuse.

I realize the importance of snipers, and the devastating effect they will have on an enemy's command and control, crew-served weapons, reconnaissance, and artillery and air forward observers and controllers, and their value will never dissipate. But combat veterans of World War II and Korea—and my own experience in Vietnam—tell me that most engagements have taken place—and will still take place—somewhere shy of 100 yards, with the majority closer than 50 yards. German snipers on the Russian Front in World War II—and their Soviet adversaries—had opportunity for many long shots in open terrain and in the ruined expanse of Stalingrad, but most of their shots were still taken at less than 200 yards. Snipers who faced armor habitually held fire until they could be sure of hitting the driver's 2" by 4" view port, which often meant a shot at 60 yards or less. Japanese snipers frequently fired at ranges of 100-150 yards or less, and the soldier or Marine who spotted one of them knew he had to shoot fast and well.

We have trained to shoot accurately at the longer ranges, and this accuracy certainly carries over to the closer targets. Let us keep that skill of precision shooting, but work on getting those shots off faster. Remember, some of our likely adversaries have not had the advantage of the marksmanship training that we have, but they have Kalashnikovs or comparable weapons, and will attempt to get in as close as they can before being detected. Be ready, and make sure that the men—and women—in your care have the training, the weapons, and above all the will to shoot fast and straight when the time comes. And make no mistake about it: the time will come. The purpose of an Army is to fight and win its nation's wars. Train your soldiers to do that. Watch your lane.

RAE

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