

Expanding Sniper School Programs

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The United States Army Infantry Center has expanded the training capability and student load capacity of the U.S. Army Sniper School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Using the Total Army Training System (TATS) model as a guide, the National Guard Sniper School at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, is now a training institution that will be able to award trained snipers the additional skill identifier (ASI) of B4. Jointly, Regular Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard instructors will be able to coach and mentor soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines in the art and science of sniping.

What does this mean for senior company and battalion commanders in infantry units? The answers begin with the perspective of a joint unit design process that starts at the top of U.S. Army training and combat organization.

This initiative will significantly affect training options for the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Forces Command (FORSCOM), National Guard Bureau, and Army Reserve units whose missions require sniper-trained personnel. The integration of the professional experience of the active and the reserve components, along with their doctrinal collaboration, will strengthen the Army's sniper program. The accreditation process of the National Guard Sniper School began in January 2000, and the number of classes per year is expected to double to meet the needs of the National Guard. Furthermore, the school will be open to active and reserve component units. After accreditation, the number of classes per year is expected to double in an attempt to meet the needs of the National Guard. Furthermore, the National Guard Sniper School will be open to

both active and reserve component units.

Any potential candidate who thinks the Camp Robinson site will have an easier program of instruction should reconsider. For every hour of training conducted at the Fort Benning School, almost two hours of training are being conducted at Camp Robinson.

The time difference between training sites is necessary to maintain performance standards. There is almost a five-day difference between the curricula at the two training sites, with the site in Arkansas managing the same program of instruction in less time. The National Guard Sniper School is more intensive due to the need to comply with Training and Doctrine Command and TATS Regulation standards, which are delineated in the program of instruction approved by the Course Convening Authority. The National Guard Sniper School will be the only sniper school outside of Fort Benning to award a Department of the Army ASI. The reason for this is to ensure that the sniper standards are maintained at a high level of

achievement for the sniper candidate.

A sniper graduate can negotiate 300 meters through enemy observed territory, fire two rounds that neutralize enemy targets, and withdraw undetected. This ASI standard is strictly enforced and is the key to enhancing tactical training programs in Infantry units. For this reason, the sniper graduate is a very effective force multiplier in combat and in training the force.

For the infantry commander at company or battalion level who is familiar with the force multiplying capability of a fully trained sniper, with respect to basic and advanced marksmanship, this can be invaluable in development of his training strategy. With the increase of operational tempo, both in and outside the continental United States, and the continued draw-down in material, human, and financial resources the TASS accreditation of the National Guard Sniper School becomes a significant "Force XXI" asset. For the sniper candidate, these assets present an arsenal of knowledge and performance based skills to impart to his fellow soldiers.



Sniper skills can be exploited in company and battalion-level infantry training programs to increase marksmanship readiness. Tactically, sniper assets represent an ideal resource for force protection, neutralization of critical targets, and real-time information gathering, just to name a few practical applications. For the infantry commander, tactical success during enemy contact arguably rests on the accurate and sustained marksmanship capability of his soldiers. The sniper can enhance this capability by aiding the commander with the implementation of "Train the Trainer" programs in the finer points of basic marksmanship as this capability applies to offensive and defensive maneuvers.

The National Guard Sniper School offers experience in "Train the Trainer" programs that translate to sustainment training exercises that increase tactical knowledge and performance. These exercises reinforce the tactical capabilities of snipers, squad leaders, and soldiers through the development of either opportunity or scheduled company training. The areas of training include target detection and selection, small-arms weapon capability and range estimation, advanced movement and camouflage techniques, and finally reconnaissance and information gathering. With regard to these tactical skills, the Fort Benning and Camp Robinson sniper schools train soldiers to a significant degree beyond the basic knowledge and performance standards expected of conventional soldiers. But the Camp Robinson school brings more training experience in the area of sustainment training because of the way the institution must train its sniper candidates.

Among infantry trainers, it is popular to think of performance skills as the only noteworthy measure of combat training, but this may not always be the case. A preliminary study of sustainment exercises conducted by the Directorate of Operations and Training, Training Development Department, in September-October 2000, has suggested that the *knowledge* aspects of such training are more perishable than the *performance* aspects. That is, soldiers will forget the finer points of marks-

manship faster than they will lose their ability to perform the basic *tasks* of marksmanship

Given the Infantry's emphasis on psychomotor reinforcement—rehearsals, battle drills, physical fitness—the validity of this observation merits attention. But there is a more interesting suggestion that Infantry trainers should know: For the rifleman or sniper, at the basic or advanced level of marksmanship, *knowledge* reinforcement is a critical factor for *performance* enhancement. Given the current drawdown in training resources and increase in deployment operational tempo, this is a significant observation with meaningful implications for company level infantry training: With the correct approach to information training and transference to performance exercises, training the force will be easier and the knowledge better retained.

A study conducted by the Army Research Institute (ARI) early in 2001 dealt with information training and transference with regard to training effects on sniper performance, using the M24A weapon system. ARI studies on advanced rifle marksmanship have been going on since the 1970s, this was their first look at sniper training. Using a random sample of 108 snipers in competition at Camp Robinson in 2000, an interesting relationship between performance score and a training group was revealed.

The mean scores of (National Guard/Reserve) inexperienced contenders (less than two competitions or two years of experience, informally trained and in civilian jobs unrelated to advanced marksmanship) whose team mates were experienced contenders (more than two competitions and more than two years of sniper experience, and formally trained) were significantly higher than those of inexperienced contenders who did not meet the stated pairing criteria. With a baseline score of 617.00 points (minimum standard of sniper marksmanship skills) the 21 competitors studied had the inexperienced competitors teamed with experienced at $m = 742.93$ points, $n = 15$ and the inexperienced group not meeting the criteria at $m = 537.66$.

This 40 percent difference in scoring suggests a strong relationship between inexperienced and experienced pairing regarding sniper marksmanship sustainment training. What does this mean with regard to learning the art of sniping under these competitive conditions? It means that there is a lot of learning going on in the training of sniper skills. It is also evident that these skills will enhance the fundamentals of marksmanship, to a significant degree, in any other marksmanship training.

Infantry commanders and trainers who are looking for better results in tactical training involving snipers, may want to include that knowledge in their mission essential task list (METL) training. The integration of that knowledge into training exercises involving marksmanship, range-card preparation, defense-position construction, and reconnaissance strategies to locate enemy positions will improve the proficiency of soldiers in those areas. Including the expertise of the sniper in the wargaming of platoon and company training preparation will motivate the infantry soldier to learn more about his own craft. Moreover, since planning is learning, it will increase the knowledge base of the trainers involved with constructing more effective and efficient instructional strategies. The result will be higher standards for individual and collective tasks at the squad, company, and battalion levels.

At every level where this training will affect combat effectiveness, the argument evolves from the concept of the sniper trained infantryman as a force multiplier. Infantry soldiers don't have to attend the resident courses of these additional skill programs of instruction to learn how to use these skills to enhance their performance and further master their trade. It is up to the company commander, first sergeant, training NCO, platoon sergeant, and squad leader to use the knowledge of the qualified sniper. His inclusion in training development will make training more effective and efficient before individual and collective tasks are tested at the company field training exercise or battalion ARTEPs.

The relevance of sniper input has

merit when company command abilities are evaluated—namely at major training facilities such as the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and the Maneuver Training Center (CMTC). Additionally, given the argument of time and cost effectiveness, logic dictates that sustainment training for the sniper is the cornerstone of building a strong foundation for “Train the Trainer” programs that enhance tactical knowledge and performance. The tool is there and it is paid for—it should be applied and adjusted to fit the needs of the unit it serves in the context of integrating and transferring information. A successful integration and transfer of information from the National Guard Sniper Program of Instruction to the gaining proponent units in the National Guard and Reserve has some history that Regular Army could adapt to FORSCOM unit training.

Working with the guidance and direction of Dr. Gene Fober, Troy State University Instructor and Army Research Institute scientist at Fort Benning, I was able to develop and implement an effective survey questionnaire. Although the results of the survey are still being analyzed, two important facts have been determined from the initial case studies: First, 11 states in the National Guard have “Train the Trainer” sniper programs that are both organized and effective. This observation provides a possible model resource for units with sniper personnel in need of a training program. Second, between 1999 and 2000, 12 competitors, six of whom were not sniper school trained, increased their marksmanship skills through competition more than 25 percent (mean score in 1999 was 622.75 and in 2000, 796). The events scored are the same events on which sniper candidates are evaluated for DA school and gaining-unit marksmanship qualifications.

The competition is sponsored by the Marksmanship Training Center, which is the commanding unit for the National

Guard Sniper School. The school’s staff and sniper instructors design and run the competition, which is the most grueling in the country. This competition is also part of the sustainment process for the National Guard Sniper School. The effectiveness of this process is still being measured and is expected to result in a final study by the middle of Fiscal Year 2002, by the Army Research Institute. But it is already evident that National Guard snipers are mastering the art of training their own U.S. Army snipers.

School candidates, non-B4 qualified, compete in multiple state, regional, and national competitions. In these competitions, they act as sniper observers for the primary sniper in the team and many of them attend or will attend the resident sniper course. The program of instruction is broken into two phases with an average of 9 to 12 months between phases. These candidates spend an average of 14.5 hours a month in individual and unit training, and it is no wonder the graduation rate is significantly above the TRADOC standard of 65 percent. Since 1992 the Marksmanship Training Center (MTC) and NGSS have held these competitions, and the recent case studies suggest that they are critical to the success of the NGSS and the graduates of the school establishing “Train the Trainer” programs. Although these competitions focus on performance, programs are being developed to respond to the need to sustain knowledge skills for sniper sustainment and information transfer initiatives that result from “Train the Trainer” programs.

The MTC is planning to move the National Guard Sniper School program of instruction into the fourth stage of Total Army Training System development—distance learning. With the help of instructional designers, the knowledge aspects of sniper training will be fitted to interactive-multimedia tools (CD-ROM and HTML) to enhance performance. The Professional Education

Center, the umbrella organization for the MTC and the NGSS, already has an extensive distance-learning program for non-combat arms education. This initiative will begin some time in early Fiscal Year 2002 with the products being tested later in the same year. Because of the joint nature of the Camp Robinson and Fort Benning sniper communities, this initiative can be evaluated for assimilation into the Regular Army. Design and development of a procedural/conditional training tool is being based on the Course Management Plan information found in the sustainment portion of the document. Testing of the training device will begin in the summer of 2001 as an advanced research project for Troy State University. The device will be ready to present, as a prototype to the National Guard Training Center, by January 2002.

The Force XXI and Army Training XXI programs validate this innovative approach. Although the media for information transfer have not reached FORSCOM soldiers, there is great potential with this National Guard initiative for battalion and company-level training. The potential lies with future lessons learned during the continued development of the Total Army Training System Model for the sniper communities at Fort Benning and Camp Robinson. A potential model for sustainment sniper training exists and should be monitored at levels of infantry command. The merit of such efforts will extend a small but significant quality to training the force in the 21st century.

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