SNIPER

TRAINING AND

EMPLOYMENT

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

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SNIPER TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

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PREFACE

This circular provides doctrine for the tactical employment of the infantry sniper. It also provides the information needed to train and equip snipers and to plan their missions and operations. It is intended for use by commanders, staffs, instructors, and soldiers at training posts, Army schools, and units.

The proponent of this publication is HQ, TRADOC. Submit changes for improving this publication on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) and forward to the Commandant, US Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-IN-2B, Fort Benning, GA 31805-5585.

Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine gender is used, both men and women are included.
A sniper has special abilities, training, and equipment. His job is to deliver discriminatory, highly accurate rifle fire against enemy targets which, because of range, size, location, fleeting nature, or visibility, cannot be engaged successfully by the rifleman. Sniping requires the development of basic infantry skills to a high degree of perfection. A sniper's training incorporates a wide variety of subjects designed to increase his value as a force multiplier and ensure his survival on the battlefield. The art of sniping requires learning and repetitiously practicing these skills until mastered. A sniper must be highly trained in long-range rifle marksmanship and fieldcraft skills to ensure maximum probability of effective engagements and minimum risk of detection. Perfection must be reached before a sniper takes part in combat operations.

1-l. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The term "sniper" originated in the 19th century with the British Army in India where the snipe was a favorite game fowl. The snipe is small and fast, and an extremely difficult target. The successful snipe hunter was an expert shot and proficient in other arts of the hunter. Therefore, the term Sniper* came to signify one who possessed all the skills of a successful snipe hunter. However, the proficiency of the military sniper evolved into an art as advancements in weapons, equipment, and techniques were made.

The use of sharpshooters (or snipers) can be traced in military history from the Revolutionary War. During the American Civil War, General Hiram Berdan was an exponent of the art and helped perfect the techniques-used by snipers.

b. In World War I, the British Army encountered expert German marksmen equipped with special rifles and telescopic sights. The term "sniper" was applied and popularized. German snipers forced the British Army to employ the same techniques, and under the leadership of Major Hesketh-Pritchard, a sniper course (the first Army School of Sniping, Observing, and Scouting) was organized. By the end of the war, the British were able to beat the Germans at their own game.

C. After World War I, the emphasis on sniping decreased—in except in Soviet Russia. In 1930, Russia began
training and equipping snipers. By World War II, they had carefully integrated sniper tactics into their tactical doctrine so that their snipers could operate as a well-drilled team. Each man knew exactly where to move and what to do.

d. During World War II, the US Army armed unit marksman with an Ml, M1C, or M1903 Springfield rifle to conduct sniper activity. The results and effects differed between commanders and units. A specific lesson learned in the employment of snipers was that a sniper is a weapon of opportunity -- a typical rifleman cannot be arbitrarily assigned the sniper mission. Every marksman is not a sniper, but every sniper is a marksman.

e. Combat in Korea, using US Army and Marine Corps units, again reflected a lack of command appreciation for the techniques of employment and capabilities of snipers. American units, equipped with a new sniper rifle (the M1D with MS4 telescopic sight), seldom relied upon snipers, although countersniping and interdiction by sniper fire was used in some instances. Recommendations resulting from the Korean war included the need for centralized sniper schools, a flexible sniper organization, use of skilled personnel, and the need to train commanders how to use a sniper's capabilities correctly. As a result, the United States Army Infantry School was tasked with the mission of organizing a sniper school. This mission was undertaken in coordination with the United States Army Marksmanship Training Unit during 1955 and 1956. The program reiterated the lessons learned:

1. The best active protection against enemy snipers is a trained sniper.

2. The skills required of a trained sniper must be superior to the average rifleman.

3. A sniper must be a skilled shooter with a specialized weapon.

4. A sniper must be well-trained in the combat skills of the individual soldier.

5. Unstructured, incomplete training and the lack of doctrine inhibit the use of snipers.

6. Education of commanders is vital to ensure the proper use of a sniper.
This program was short-lived because of the lack of understanding and appreciation throughout the Army for the value of a sniper. With the adoption of the M14 service rifle, no provision was made for an M14 sniper rifle. The designation of a sniper in the rifle squad was discontinued. The sniper training program became optional.

f. The conflict in Vietnam revived the need for snipers. Enemy forces in that conflict demonstrated the effectiveness of sniper employment techniques under varying tactical conditions. The US Army conducted division-level sniper training courses and educated commanders at all levels on the use of snipers.

g. During operation "Urgent Fury" in 1983, the US Army Rangers employed snipers in Grenada. Target reductions were successful against enemy mortar positions at ranges up to 800 meters. The reduction of fires from these positions was critical to the mission's success and illustrates the continuing value of sniper employment.

1-2. MISSION

The primary mission of a sniper in combat is to support combat operations by delivering precise long-range fire on selected targets. By this, the sniper creates casualties among enemy troops, slows enemy movement, frightens enemy soldiers, lowers morale, and adds confusion to their operations. The secondary mission of the sniper is that of collecting and reporting battlefield information.

a. A well-trained sniper, combined with the inherent accuracy of his rifle and ammunition, is a versatile supporting arm available to an infantry commander. The importance of the sniper cannot be measured simply by the number of casualties he inflicts upon the enemy. Realization of the sniper's presence instills fear in enemy troop elements and influences their decisions and actions. A sniper enhances a unit's firepower and augments the varied means for destruction and harassment of the enemy. Whether a sniper is organic or attached, he will provide that unit with extra supporting fire. The sniper's role is unique in that it is the sole means by which a unit can engage point targets at distances beyond the effective range of the service rifle. This role becomes more significant when the target is entrenched or positioned among civilians, or during riot control missions. The fires of automatic weapons in such operations can result in the wounding or killing of noncombatants.
b. Snipers are employed in all levels of conflict. This includes conventional offensive and defensive combat in which precision fire is delivered at long ranges. It also includes combat patrols, ambushes, countersniper operations, forward observation elements, military operations on urbanized terrain, and retrograde operations in which snipers are part of forces left in contact or as stay-behind forces. Chapter 5 discusses sniper employment techniques in detail.

1-3. ORGANIZATION

In light infantry divisions, the sniper element is comprised of six battalion scouts organized into three 2-man teams. They may perform dual missions, depending on the need. In the mechanized infantry battalions, the sniper element is comprised of two riflemen (one team) located at each rifle company headquarters. The commander designates missions and priorities of targets for the team and may attach or place the team under the operational control of a company or platoon. In some specialized units, snipers may be organized according to the needs of the tactical situation.

a. Sniper teams should be centrally controlled by the commander or the sniper employment officer. The SE0 is responsible for the command and control of snipers assigned to the unit. In light infantry units, the SE0 will be the scout platoon leader or the platoon sergeant. In heavy or mechanized units, the SE0 will be the company commander or the executive officer. The duties and responsibilities of the SE0 are:

(1) Advising the unit commander on the employment of snipers.
(2) Issuing orders to the team leaders.
(3) Assigning missions and types of employment.
(4) Coordinating between the sniper team and unit commander.
(5) Briefing the unit commander and team leaders.
(6) Debriefing the unit commander and team leaders.
(7) Training of the teams.
b. The sniper team leader is responsible for the day to day activities of the sniper team. His responsibilities include:

(1) Assuming the responsibilities of the SEO that pertain to the team in the SEO's absence.

(2) Training the team.

(3) Issuing necessary orders to the team.

(4) Preparing for missions.

(5) Controlling the team during missions.

c. Snipers work and train in two-man teams. One man's primary duty is that of the sniper, while the other serves as the observer. The sniper's weapon is the sniper weapon system. The observer has the standard service rifle, which gives the team greater suppressive fire and protection. When mounted with a night observation device, the night capability of the team is enhanced.

1-4. PERSONNEL SELECTION

Candidates for sniper training require careful screening. Commanders must screen the individual's records to determine his potential aptitude as a sniper. The rigorous training program and the increased personal risk in combat require high motivation and the ability to learn a variety of skills. Aspiring snipers must have an excellent personal record.

a. The following are the basic guidelines to use when screening sniper candidates:

(1) Marksmanship. The sniper trainee must be an expert marksman. Repeated annual qualification as expert is necessary. Successful participation in the annual competition-in-arms program and an extensive hunting background also indicate good sniper potential.

(2) Physical condition. The sniper, often employed in extended operations with very little sleep, food, or water, must be in outstanding physical condition. Good health means better reflexes, better muscular control, and greater stamina. The self-confidence and control that come from athletics, especially team sports, are definite assets to a sniper trainee.
(3) **Vision.** Eyesight is the sniper's prime tool. Therefore, a sniper must have 20/20 vision or vision that is correctable to 20/20. However, wearing glasses could become a liability if they are lost or damaged. Color blindness is also considered a liability to the sniper, due to his inability to detect concealed targets that blend in with the natural surroundings.

(4) **Smoking.** A sniper should be a nonsmoker. Smoke or an unsuppressed smoker's cough can betray the sniper's position, and even though he may not smoke on a mission, refrainment may cause nervousness and irritation, which lower his efficiency.

(5) **Mental condition.** When commanders screen sniper candidates, they should look for traits that would indicate the candidate has the right qualities to be a sniper. The commander must determine if the candidate will pull the trigger at the right time and place. Some traits to look for are reliability, initiative, loyalty, discipline, and emotional stability. A psychological evaluation of the candidate can aid the commander in the selection process.

(6) **Intelligence.** Trainees must be personnel of high intelligence. A sniper's duties require a wide variety of skills. He must learn --

- Ballistics.
- Ammunition types and capabilities.
- Adjustment of optical devices.
- Radio operation and procedures.
- Observation and adjustment of mortar and artillery fire.
- Land navigation skills.
- Military intelligence collecting and reporting.
- Identification of Threat uniforms/equipment.

b. In sniper team operations involving prolonged independent employment, the sniper must also display effective decisiveness, self-reliance, good judgment, and common sense. This requires two other important qualifications; they are--
(1) Emotional balance. The sniper must be capable of calmly and deliberately killing targets that may not pose an immediate threat to him. It is much easier to kill in self-defense or in the defense of others than it is to kill without apparent provocation. The sniper must not be susceptible to emotions such as anxiety or remorse. Candidates whose motivation toward sniper training rests mainly in the desire for prestige may not be capable of the cold rationality that the sniper's job requires.

(2) Fieldcraft. The sniper must be familiar with and comfortable in a field environment. An extensive background in the outdoors and knowledge of natural occurrences in the outdoors will assist the sniper in many of his tasks. Individuals with such a background will often have great potential as a sniper.
CHAPTER 2
EQUIPMENT

This chapter describes the equipment necessary for the sniper to effectively perform his mission. He carries only what is essential to successfully complete his mission. Sniper equipment may be classified as individual, team, and special.

Section I. SNIPER RIFLES

A sniper's mission requires a durable rifle with the capability of long-range precision fire. The current US Army sniper weapon system is the M21. It is being replaced by the M24 sniper weapon system.

2-l. M21 SNIPER WEAPON SYSTEM

The National Match M14 rifle (Figure 2-l) and its scope make up the M21 sniper weapon system. The rifle is accurized IAW United States Army Marksmanship Training Unit specifications and has the same basic design and operation as the standard M14 rifle (FM 23-E), except for specially selected and hand-fitted parts.

a. Differences. Significant differences are as follows:

(1) The barrels are gauged and selected to ensure correct specification tolerances. Bores are not chromium plated.

(2) The stock is walnut and impregnated with an epoxy.

(3) The receiver is individually custom fitted to the stock with a fiberglass compound.

(4) The firing mechanism is reworked and polished to provide for a crisp hammer release. Trigger weight is between 4.5 to 4.75 pounds.

(5) The suppressor is fitted and reamed to improve accuracy and eliminate any misalignment.

(6) The gas cylinder and piston are reworked and polished to improve operation and reduce carbon buildup.

(7) The gas cylinder and lower band are permanently attached to each other.

2-l
(8) Other parts are carefully selected, fitted, and assembled.

Figure 2-1. National Match M14 rifle.

b. Inspection. If the sniper discovers a deficiency while inspecting the rifle, he will report it to the unit armorer. The following areas should be inspected:

(1) Check the appearance and completeness of all parts. Shiny surfaces should be treated.

(2) Check the flash suppressor for misalignment, burrs, or evidence of bullet tipping. The suppressor should be tight on the barrel.

(3) Check the front sight to ensure that it is tight, that the blade is square, and that all edges and corners are sharp.

(4) Check the gas cylinder to ensure it fits tightly on the barrel. The gas plug should be firmly tightened.

(5) Check the forward band on the stock to ensure it does not bind against the gas cylinder front band.

(6) Check the handguard. It should not bind against the receiver, the top of the stock, or the operating rod.

(7) Check the firing mechanism to ensure the weapon will not fire with the safety "on," and that it has a smooth, crisp trigger pull when the safety is "off."

(8) Check the rear sight tension by turning the aperture up to the "10" position and then pressing down on top of the aperture with a thumb. If the aperture can be pushed down, the tension must be readjusted.

(9) Check the stock for splits or cracks.
c. Care and Maintenance. Extreme care has been used in building this sniper rifle. A similar degree of attention must be devoted to its daily care and maintenance.

(1) The rifle should not be disassembled by the sniper for normal cleaning and lubrication. Disassembly should be performed only by the armorer during his scheduled inspections or repair, and it will be thoroughly cleaned and lubricated at that time.

(2) The following materials are required for cleaning the rifle:

- Cleaning rod (7.62-mm, 3-piece brass, or 1-piece coated type).
- Lubricating oil.
- Bore cleaner.
- Weapon grease.
- Patches.
- Bore brush.
- Shaving brush.
- Toothbrush.
- Cleaning rags.

(3) The recommended procedure for cleaning and lubricating the rifle is as follows:

- Wipe off old oil, grease, and external dirt from the weapon.
- Clean the bore out by placing the weapon upside down on a table or in a weapon cradle. Then push a bore brush dipped in bore cleaner completely through the bore and pull it back out. Repeat this four or five times.
- Clean the chamber and bolt face with bore cleaner and a chamber brush or toothbrush.
- Clean the chamber, receiver, other interior areas, and the flash suppressor with a rag or patches.
Wipe the bore out by pushing clean patches through the bore until they come out of the bore clean.

Wipe off the chamber and interior surfaces with patches until clean.

With the bolt and gas piston to the rear, place one drop of bore cleaner in between the rear band of the gas system and the lower side of the barrel. Do not put bore cleaner in the gas port!

Lubricate the rifle by placing a light coat of grease on the operating rod handle track, camming surfaces in the hump of the operating rod, the bolt's locking lug track, and between the front band lip of the gas system and the metal band on the lower front of the stock.

Place a light coat of oil on all exterior metal parts.

d. Rear Sights. The M21 is equipped with National Match rear sights (Figure 2-2). The pinion assembly adjusts the elevation of the aperture. By turning it clockwise, it will raise the point of impact. Turning it counterclockwise will lower the point of impact. Each click of the pinion is 1 MOA (minute of angle) (see Appendix D). The hooded aperture is also adjustable and provides .5 MOA changes in elevation. Rotating the aperture so that the indication notch is at the top will raise the point of impact .5 MOA. Rotating the indication notch to the bottom will lower the strike of the round. The windage knob adjusts the lateral movement of the rear sight. Turning the knob clockwise will move the point of impact to the right and turning it counterclockwise will move the point of impact to the left. Each click of windage is .5 MOA.

Figure 2-2. National Match rear sight.
2-2. M24 SNIPER WEAPON SYSTEM

The components of the M24 system (Figure 2-3) are:

- System case.
- Bolt action rifle.
- M3A, fixed 10x scope.
- Scope case.
- Detachable iron sights (front and rear).
- Deployment case.
- Optional bipod.
- Cleaning kit.
- Soft rifle case.
- Operator's manual.

Figure 2-3. M24 sniper weapon system.
a. Rifle. The M24 is a 7.62-mm, bolt action, 5-shot repeating rifle. The rifle was designed primarily for prone shooting, but can be fired from other positions. Components of this rifle are:

0 Kevlar stock with adjustable shoulder stock.
0 Rock 5R barrel.
0 Model 40x long action with special trigger guard and floor plate assembly that allows conversion to a magnum caliber.
0 Modified model 700 trigger.

(1) The safety. The safety is located on the right rear side of the receiver and provides protection against accidental discharge under normal usage when properly engaged.

(a) To engage the safety, place it in the "S" position (Figure 2-4).

(b) Always place the safety in the position before handling, loading, or unloading the weapon.

(c) When the weapon is ready to be fired, place the safety in the "F" position (Figure 2-4).

Figure 2-4. Safety.
(2) **Bolt assembly.** The bolt assembly locks the round into the chamber and extracts the round from the chamber.

(a) To remove the bolt from the receiver, place the safety in the "S" position, raise the bolt handle and pull it back until it stops. Then, push the bolt stop release up (Figure 2-5) and pull the bolt from the receiver.

![BOLT STOP RELEASE](image)

**Figure 2-5.** Bolt stop release.

(b) To replace the bolt, place the safety in the "S" position, align the lugs on the bolt assembly with the receiver (Figure 2-6), slide the bolt all the way into the receiver, and then push the bolt handle down.

![BOLT LUGS](image)

**Figure 2-6.** Bolt alignment.
(3) Trigger assembly. Pulling the trigger fires the rifle when the safety is in the "F" position. The operator may adjust the trigger pull -force from a minimum of 2 pounds to a maximum of 8 pounds. This is done using the 1/16-inch allen wrench provided in the deployment kit. Turning the trigger adjustment screw (Figure 2-7) clockwise will increase the force needed to pull the trigger. Turning it counterclockwise will decrease the force needed. This is the only trigger adjustment the sniper should make.

Figure 2-7. Trigger adjustment.

b. Inspection. The M24 weapon is designed to be repaired by its user. Deficiencies that cannot be repaired by the sniper will require manufacturer warranty work. Refer to TM 9-1005-306-10 that is furnished with each weapon system. The sniper must be completely familiar with this TM. The following areas should be checked when inspecting the M24:

(1) Check the appearance and completeness of all parts.

(2) Check the bolt to ensure it locks, unlocks, and moves smoothly.

(3) Check the safety to ensure it can be positively placed into "S" or "F" position easily without being too hard or moving too freely.

(4) Check the trigger to ensure the weapon will not fire when the safety is in the "S" position, and that it