

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*The sniper has special abilities, training and equipment. His job is to deliver discriminatory highly accurate rifle fire against enemy targets, which cannot be engaged successfully by the rifleman because of range, size, location, fleeting nature, or visibility. 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 to 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 field craft skills to ensure maximum effective engagements with minimum risk.*

#### 1-1. 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 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 M16 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 in urbanized terrain, and retrograde operations in which snipers are part of forces left in contact or as stay-behind forces.

## **1-2. ORGANIZATION**

In light infantry divisions, the sniper element is composed of six battalion personnel organized into three 2-man teams. 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. They may perform dual missions, depending on the need. In the mechanized infantry battalions, the sniper element is composed of two riflemen (one team) located in a rifle squad. 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 SEO is responsible for the command and control of snipers assigned to the unit. In light infantry units, the SEO will be the reconnaissance platoon leader or the platoon sergeant. In heavy or mechanized units, the SEO may be the company commander or the executive officer. The duties and responsibilities of the SEO areas follows:

- (1) To advise the unit commander on the employment of snipers.
- (2) To issue orders to the team leader.
- (3) To assign missions and types of employment.
- (4) To coordinate between the sniper team and unit commander.
- (5) To brief the unit commander and team leaders.
- (6) To debrief the unit commander and team leaders.
- (7) To train the teams.

b. Snipers work and train in 2-man teams. One sniper's primary duty is that of the sniper and team leader while the other sniper serves as the observer. The sniper team leader is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the sniper team. His responsibilities areas follows:

- (1) To assume the responsibilities of the SEO that pertain to the team in the SEO'S absence.

- (2) To train the team.
- (3) To issue necessary orders to the team.
- (4) To prepare for missions.
- (5) To control the team during missions.

c. The sniper's weapon is the sniper weapon system. The observer has the M16 rifle and an M203, which gives the team greater suppressive fire and protection. Night capability is enhanced by using night observation devices.

### 1-3. PERSONNEL SELECTION CRITERIA

Candidates for sniper training require careful screening. Commanders must screen the individual's records for 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 basic guidelines used to screen sniper candidates are as follows:

(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 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 correctable to 20/20. However, wearing glasses could become a liability if glasses 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.** The sniper should not be a smoker or use smokeless tobacco. Smoke or an unsuppressed smoker's cough can betray the sniper's position. Even though a sniper may not smoke or use smokeless tobacco on a mission, his refrainment may cause nervousness and irritation, which lowers his efficiency.

(5) **Mental condition.** When commanders screen sniper candidates, they should look for traits that 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.** A sniper's duties require a wide variety of skills. He must learn the following:

- 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 and equipment.

b. In sniper team operations involving prolonged independent employment, the sniper must be self-reliant, display good judgment and common sense. This requires two other important qualifications: emotional balance and field craft.

(1) **Emotional balance.** The sniper must be able to calmly and deliberately kill 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) **Field craft.** 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.

c. Commander involvement in personnel selection is critical. To ensure his candidate's successful completion of sniper training and contribution of his talents to his unit's mission, the commander ensures that the sniper candidate meets the following prerequisites before attending the US Army Sniper School:

- Male.
- PFC to SFC (waiverable for MSG and above).
- Active duty or ARNG and USAR.
- Good performance record.

- No history of alcohol or drug abuse.
- A volunteer (with commander recommendation).
- Vision of 20/20 or correctable to 20/20.
- No record of disciplinary action.
- Expert marksman with M16A1 or M16A2 rifle.
- Minimum of one-year retrainability.
- Career management field 11.
- Pass APFT (70 percent, each event).

#### **1-4. SNIPER AND OBSERVER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each member of the sniper team has specific responsibilities. Only through repeated practice can the team begin to function properly. Responsibilities of team members areas follows:

a. The sniper—

- Builds a steady, comfortable position.
- Locates and identifies the designated target.
- Estimates the range to the target.
- Dials in the proper elevation and windage to engage the target.
- Notifies the observer of readiness to fire.
- Takes aim at the designated target.
- Controls breathing at natural respiratory pause.
- Executes proper trigger control.
- Follows through.
- Makes an accurate and timely shot call.
- Prepares to fire subsequent shots, if necessary.

b. The observer—

- Properly positions himself.
- Selects an appropriate target.
- Assists in range estimation.
- Calculates the effect of existing weather conditions on ballistics.
- Reports sight adjustment data to the sniper.
- Uses the M49 observation telescope for shot observation.
- Critiques performance.

### **1-5. TEAM FIRING TECHNIQUES**

A sniper team must be able to move and survive in a combat environment. The sniper team's mission is to deliver precision fire. This calls for a coordinated team effort. Together, the sniper and observer—

- Determine the effects of weather on ballistics.
- Calculate the range to the target.
- Make necessary sight changes.
- Observe bullet impact.
- Critique performance before any subsequent shots.