

APPENDIX E

SNIPER EMPLOYMENT

The sniper plays an important role in the infantry battalion. Snipers give the commander accurate, discriminate, long-range, small-arms fire. These fires are best used against key targets that, due to their range, size, or location; visibility; security and stealth requirements; collateral damage; intensity of conflict; or rules of engagement; cannot be destroyed by other available weapon systems. Also, the individual techniques snipers use enable them to gather detailed, critical information about the enemy. However, gathering information is a secondary role, (TC23-14 describes some individual techniques.) The effect of a sniper is measured by more than the casualties he causes or targets he destroys. Commanders know the effect snipers have on enemy activities, morale, and decisions. The presence of snipers hinders enemy movement, creates continuous personal fear, causes confusion, disrupts enemy operations and preparations, and compels the enemy to divert forces to deal with the snipers. (TC 23-14 addresses individual sniper equipment, marksmanship, field techniques, and training.)

E-1. SNIPER TEAMS

Snipers are employed in two-man teams; each team consists of one sniper and one observer. Normally, the observer carries an M16 rifle, the sniper carries the sniper weapon system, and each has a side arm. Snipers should avoid sustained battles. During long periods of observation, team members help each other with range estimation, round adjustment, and security.

a. Sniper teams should be centrally controlled by the commander or task organized to companies. Once they are deployed, snipers must be able to operate independently, as required. Therefore they must understand the commander's intent, his concept of the operation, and the purpose for their assigned tasks. This allows them to exercise initiative, within the framework of the commander's intent and to support the commander's concept and achievement of the unit's mission. To ensure clear fields of fire and observation, the teams must be able to choose their own positions once they are on the ground. Snipers are effective only in areas that offer good fields of fire and observation.

The number of sniper teams participating in an operation depends on their availability, on the expected duration of the mission, and on the enemy's strength.

b. Sniper teams should move with a security element (squad/platoon) when possible. This allows the sniper teams to reach their areas of operation faster and safer than if they went alone. The security element also protects the snipers during operations. When moving with a security element, snipers follow these guidelines:

(1) The leader of the security element leads the sniper team.

(2) Sniper's must appear to be an integral part of the security element. To do so, the sniper weapon system is carried in line with and close to the body to hide its outline and barrel length. Sniper-unique equipment (optics, ghillie suits) is also concealed from view. The uniform is the same as that of element members, and proper intervals and positions in the element formation are maintained.

c. History has proven that commanders must be educated as to the proper use of a sniper.

If commanders know the abilities and limitations of a sniper, the sniper can contribute significantly to the fight. Commanders should consider carefully all the factors of METT-T when conducting their estimate of the situation.

(1) **Mission.** The sniper's primary mission is to support combat operations by delivering precise rifle fire from concealed positions. The mission assigned to a sniper team for a particular operation consists of the task(s) the commander wants the sniper team to accomplish and the reason (purpose) for it/them. The commander must decide how he wants his sniper team to affect the battlefield. Then he must assign missions to achieve this effect. The commander should be sure to prioritize targets so snipers can avoid involvement in sustained engagements. Regardless of the method used, the sniper team must be free to change targets to support the commander's intent.

(a) The commander may describe the effect or result he expects and allow the sniper team to select key targets. Whether the commander does this depends on the snipers' skills and on how well he trusts them.

(b) The commander may assign specific types of targets. For example, if he wants to disrupt the defensive preparations of the enemy, he may task snipers to kill operators of bulldozers and other engineer equipment. He may task them to disable vehicles carrying supplies. Or, he may task them to engage soldiers digging enemy defensive positions.

(c) The commander may also assign specific targets. These can include leaders, command and control operators, ATGM gunners, armored-vehicle commanders, or crew-served weapons crews. In cases where large crowds pose a threat to US forces, selected individuals can be singled out by snipers. In populated areas where casualties should be kept low, the snipers can be assigned to kill enemy snipers.

(2) **Enemy.** The commander must consider the characteristics, capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and disposition of the enemy. Is the enemy force heavy or light, rested or tired, disciplined or not? Is it motorized infantry or towed artillery? Is it well-supplied or severely short of supplies? Is it patrolling aggressively or is security lax? Is it positioned in assembly areas

or dug in? The answers to such questions help the commander determine the enemy's susceptibility and reaction to effective sniper operations. Naturally, a well-rested, well-led, well-supplied, and aggressive enemy with armored protection poses a greater threat to snipers than one who is tired, poorly led, poorly supplied, lax, and unprotected. Also, the commander needs to know if enemy snipers are present and if they are effective; they can pose a significant danger to his own snipers. Also, the enemy's DEW capability should be considered. Since snipers use optical devices, they are particularly vulnerable to this threat.

(3) **Terrain.** The terrain in the sniper's area of operations and the terrain he must travel to reach it must be evaluated. The commander must consider the time and effort snipers will expend getting into position. He must also consider the effect of weather on the sniper and on his visibility. The snipers will need good firing positions. They prefer positions at least 300 meters from their target area. Operating at this distance allows them to avoid effective fire from enemy rifles, yet they retain much of the 800-meter to 1,000-meter effective range of the sniper rifle. To be most effective, snipers need areas of operations with adequate observation and fields of fire.

(4) **Troops.** The commander must decide how many sniper teams to use for the operation. This depends on their availability; the duration of the operation; the expected opposition; and the number and difficulty of tasks, targets, or both assigned to snipers. The snipers' level of training and physical conditioning must also be considered. Commanders must remember the effect of these human factors on sniper operations.

(5) **Time.** Commanders must consider how long the snipers will have to achieve the expected result. Time must be allocated for snipers to plan, coordinate, prepare, rehearse, move, and then to establish positions. Commanders must know the increased risk snipers are forced to accept when they lack adequate time for planning or for other preparations such as moving to the area of operations. The amount of time a sniper team can remain in a position without losing effectiveness due to eye fatigue, muscle strain, or cramps depends mostly on the type of position.

Snipers can usually remain in an expedient position for 6 hours before they must be relieved. They can remain in belly positions or semipermanent hides for up to 48 hours before they must be relieved. Mission duration times average 24 hours. (TC 23-14 provides guidance on sniper position considerations, construction, preparation and occupation.) Movement factors for snipers moving with a security element are the same as for any infantry force. When snipers are moving alone in the area of operations, they move slowly, their movement can be measured in feet and inches. The sniper team is the best source for determining an accurate time estimate for a particular movement.

E-2. OFFENSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Offensive operations carry the fight to the enemy to destroy his capability and will to fight. By killing enemy targets that threaten the success of the attack, the sniper can play a major role in offensive operations.

a. **Offensive Operations.** During offensive operations, snipers perform the following tasks:

- (1) Kill enemy snipers.
- (2) Overwatch movement of friendly forces and suppress enemy targets that threaten the moving forces.
- (3) Place precision fire on enemy crew-served weapons teams and into exposed bunker apertures.
- (4) Place precision fire on enemy leaders, drivers or armored-vehicle commanders, FOs, or other designated personnel.
- (5) Place precision fire on small, isolated, by-passed forces.
- (6) Place precision fire on targets threatening a counterattack or fleeing.
- (7) Help screen a flank using supplemental fires.
- (8) Dominate key terrain by controlling access with fires.

b. **Movement to Contact.** During a movement to contact, snipers move with the lead element. They can be employed 24 to 48 hours before the unit's movement to do the following:

- (1) To select positions.
- (2) To gather information about the enemy.
- (3) To dominate key terrain, preventing enemy surprise attacks.

c. **Mounted Attack.** During a mounted attack, the sniper's role is limited by fast movement. However, when the unit dismounts, snipers can be employed to support the assault.

d. **Raid.** During a raid, sniper teams can be employed with either the security element or the support element—

- (1) To cover avenues of approach and escape that lead in and out of the objective.
- (2) To cover friendly routes of withdrawal to the rally point.
- (3) To provide long-range fires on the objective.

e. **Consolidation.** After consolidation, snipers may displace forward to new positions. These positions need not be on the objective. However, the snipers must be able to place precision fire on bypassed enemy positions, enemy counterattack forces, or other enemy positions that could degrade the unit's ability to exploit the success of the attack.

E-3. ACTIONS AGAINST FORTIFIED AREAS

Assaulting forces usually encounter fortified positions prepared by the defending force. These can range from field-expedient, hasty positions, produced with locally available materials, to elaborate steel and concrete emplacements complete with turrets, underground tunnels, and crew quarters. Field-expedient positions are those most often encountered. However, elaborate positions should be expected when the enemy has significant time to prepare his defense. He may have fortified weapons emplacements or bunkers, protected shelters, reinforced natural or constructed caves, entrenchments, and other obstacles.

a. The enemy will try to locate these positions so they are mutually supporting and arrayed in depth across the width of his sector. He will also try to increase his advantages by covering and concealing positions and by preparing fire plans and counterattack contingencies. Because of this, fortified areas should be bypassed and contained by a smaller force.

b. The sniper's precision-fire and observation capabilities are invaluable in the assault of a fortified area. Pinpoint targets

invisible to the naked eye are readily detected and destroyed by precision rifle fire. The snipers' role during the assault of a fortified position is to deliver precision fire against the embrasures, air vents, and doorways of key enemy positions; against observation posts; and against exposed personnel. The commander must plan the order in which sniper targets should be destroyed. This destruction should systematically reduce the enemy's defenses by destroying the ability of enemy positions to support each other. Once these positions are isolated, they can be more easily reduced. Therefore, the commander must decide where he will try to penetrate the enemy's fortified positions; then, he must employ his snipers against those locations. Snipers can provide continuous fire support for both assaulting units and other nearby units when operating from positions near the breach point on the flanks. Their fires add to the effectiveness of the entire unit; snipers can be used when other precision weapons, such as the TOWs, cannot be used for various reasons.

c. The sniper team plans based on information available. The enemy information needed includes the following:

- (1) Extent of and exact locations of individual and underground fortifications.
- (2) Fields of fire, directions of fire, locations and number of embrasures, and types of weapons systems in the fortifications.
- (3) Locations of entrances, exits, and air vents in each emplacement.
- (4) Locations and types of existing and reinforcing obstacles.
- (5) Locations of weak spots in the enemy's defense.

E-4. DEFENSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Snipers may effectively enhance or augment any unit's defensive fire plan. After analyzing the terrain, the sniper team should recommend options to the commander.

a. **Primary Positions.** Snipers are generally positioned to observe or control one or more avenues of approach into the defensive position. Due to the types of weapons systems available, snipers may be used against secondary avenues of approach. They can be used to increase all-round security and to allow the commander to concentrate his combat power against the

most likely enemy avenue of approach. Snipers may support the battalion by providing precise long-range fires to complement those of the M249 machine gun and extra optics for target-acquisition. This arrangement best utilizes the unit's weapon systems. Snipers may be used in an economy-of-force role to cover a dismounted enemy avenue of approach into positions the battalion cannot cover.

b. **Alternate and Supplementary Positions.** Snipers establish alternate and supplementary positions for all-round security. Positions near the FEBA are vulnerable to concentrated attacks, enemy artillery, and obscurants. If multiple teams are used, they can be positioned for surveillance and mutual fire support. If possible, these teams should establish positions in depth for continuous support during the fight. The sniper's rate of fire neither increases nor decreases as the enemy approaches. Specific targets are systematically and deliberately shot; accuracy is more important than speed.

c. **Overwatch.** Snipers can be placed to overwatch key obstacles or terrain such as river-crossing sites, bridges, minefield that canalize the enemy directly into engagement areas, and so on. Snipers are mainly used where weapons systems are less effective due to security requirements or terrain. Even though the commander has access to weapons systems with greater ranges and optical capabilities than those of the snipers' weapons, he may be unable to use these for any of several reasons. They might present too large a firing signature, be difficult to conceal well, create too much noise, or be needed more in other areas. The sniper's weapons lack these problems. Therefore, the sniper team provides the commander with greater observation and killing ranges than do other soldiers.

d. **Counterreconnaissance.** Snipers can be used as an integral part of the counterreconnaissance effort. They can help acquire or destroy targets, or both. They can augment the counterreconnaissance element by occupying concealed positions for long periods. They can also observe, direct indirect fires (to maintain their security), and engage targets. Selective long-range sniper fires are difficult for the enemy to detect. A few well-placed shots can disrupt enemy reconnaissance efforts, force him to

deploy into combat formations, and deceive him as to the location of the main battle area. The sniper's stealth skills counter the skills of enemy reconnaissance elements. Snipers can be used where scout or rifle platoon mobility is unnecessary, freeing the scouts and riflemen to cover other sectors. Snipers can also be used to direct ground maneuver elements toward detected targets. This also helps maintain their security so they can be used against successive echelons of attacking enemy.

e. **Strongpoint.** Snipers should be tasked to support any unit defending a strongpoint. The sniper team's characteristics enable it to independently harass and observe the enemy in support of the force in the strongpoint, either from inside or outside the strongpoint.

f. **Reverse-Slope Defense.** Snipers can provide effective long-range fires from positions forward of the topographical crest or on the counterslope if the unit is occupying a reverse-slope defense.

g. **Tasks.** The sniper team can perform the following tasks during defensive operations:

- (1) Cover enemy obstacles, mine fields, and demolitions.
- (2) Perform counterreconnaissance (kill enemy reconnaissance elements).
- (3) Engage enemy OPs, armored-vehicle commanders exposed in turrets, and ATGM teams.
- (4) Damage enemy vehicle optics to degrade movement.
- (5) Suppress enemy crew-served weapons.
- (6) Disrupt enemy follow-on units with long-range small-arms fire.

E-5. RETROGRADE EMPLOYMENT

The sniper team must know the concept, intent, and scheme of maneuver. Key information the sniper team must have includes the withdrawal times, conditions, or both; priorities for withdrawals; routes; support positions; rally points; and locations of obstacles. Both engagement and disengagement criteria must be planned and coordinated to ensure snipers achieve the desired effect without compromising their positions. (Chapter 5 discusses retrograde operations.)

a. **Role.** Snipers can help the delaying force cause the enemy to deploy prematurely during

retrograde operations. To do so, the snipers inflict casualties with accurate, long-range, small-arms fire. When the enemy receives effective small-arms fire from unknown positions, he is likely to assume he is near an enemy position (most likely one with ATGMs) and he will begin to maneuver to a position of advantage against the perceived threat. Thus, using a sniper team, the commander can achieve the same effect that he could with another infantry unit. The snipers' stealth also gives them a better chance of infiltrating out of positions close to the enemy.

b. **Transportation.** Delaying forces risk being bypassed or overtaken by attacking enemy forces during retrograde operations. Commanders may provide transportation to move snipers to successive positions. Vehicles must remain in defilade positions to the rear of the sniper position; or, they must occupy different positions away from the sniper's area of operations so as not to compromise the snipers. In either case, a linkup point, egress routes, and conditions for executing the linkup must be fully coordinated. Commanders may also provide communications assets to the sniper team to simplify control and movement.

c. **Positioning Considerations.** Snipers, as well as other units, may find themselves behind the enemy's front; therefore, they must be prepared to infiltrate back to friendly positions. Their infiltration plans must be fully coordinated to prevent fratricide when they try to reenter a friendly position. When planning successive positions, the commander must realize that the sniper team may be unavailable to him if its members are destroyed or are having trouble disengaging from an enemy force. In view of this, the commander must consider carefully how and where he wants snipers to contribute to the operation. Planning too many positions for the sniper team in a fast-paced retrograde is sure to result in failure.

d. **Tasks.** The sniper team may perform any of the following tasks in a retrograde operation:

- (1) Delay the enemy by inflicting casualties.
- (2) Observe avenues of approach.
- (3) Cover key obstacles with precision fire.
- (4) Direct artillery fire against large enemy formations.

E-6. MOUT EMPLOYMENT

The value of the sniper to a unit operating in an urban area depends on several factors. These factors include the type of operation, the level of conflict, and the rules of engagement. Where ROE allow severe destruction, other weapons systems available to a mechanized force have greater destructive effect than the snipers. However, the snipers can still contribute to the fight. Where the ROE prohibit collateral damage, snipers may be the commander's most valuable tool.

a. **Terrain.** Sniper effectiveness depends in part on the terrain. Control is degraded by the characteristics of an urban area. To provide timely and effective support, the sniper must have a clear picture of the scheme of maneuver and commander's intent.

(1) **Observation and fields of fire.** These are clearly defined by roadways, but surveillance is limited by rooftops, windows, and doorways; each of these require constant observation. Also, the effects of smoke from military obscurants and burning buildings can degrade what appeared to be an excellent vantage point. The requirement for all-round defense must be met because the enemy can fire from many directions and because his infiltration attempts must be countered.

(2) **Cover and concealment.** These are excellent for both attackers and defenders. However, the defender has a decisive advantage; the attacker normally must expose himself during movement through the area.

(3) **Avenues of approach.** Those that remain inside buildings are best. Movement there is less easily detected than movement through the streets. The sniper must know of ALL avenues of approach and must be prepared to engage targets that appear on any of them.

b. **Positions.** Snipers should be positioned in buildings of masonry construction, ideally. These buildings should offer long-range fields of fire and all-round observation. The sniper has a distinct advantage because he need not move with or be positioned with lead elements. The sniper may occupy a higher position to the rear or flanks and some distance away from the supported element. By operating far from the other elements, the sniper avoids decisive engagement but remains close enough to kill

distant targets that threaten the unit. Snipers should *not* be placed in obvious positions, such as church steeples and rooftops, since the enemy often observes these and targets them for destruction. Indirect fires can generally penetrate rooftops and cause casualties in top floors of buildings. Also, snipers should be positioned in locations free of heavy traffic; these areas invite enemy observation as well.

c. **Multiple Positions.** Snipers should operate throughout the area of operations, moving with and supporting the companies as necessary. Some teams may operate independently from other forces. These teams search for targets of opportunity, especially for enemy snipers. The team may occupy multiple positions. A single position may afford adequate observation for the entire team, but at the cost of increasing the risk of detection by the enemy. Separate positions must maintain mutual support. Alternate and supplementary positions should also be established in urban areas.

d. **Tasks.** The sniper team may perform any of the following tasks in a MOUT operation:

- (1) Kill enemy snipers (countersniper fire).
- (2) Kill targets of opportunity. These targets may be prioritized by the commander. For example, enemy snipers first, then leaders, vehicle commanders, radio men, sappers, and machine gun crews, in that order.
- (3) Deny enemy access to certain areas or avenues of approach (controlling key terrain).
- (4) Provide fire support for barricades and other obstacles.
- (5) Maintain surveillance of flank and rear avenues of approach (screening).
- (6) Support local counterattacks with precision fire.
- (7) Prevent enemy observation by killing or suppressing reconnaissance elements and enemy systems with optics.

E-7. LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Snipers can be valuable to commanders in low-intensity conflicts. Collateral damage and civilian casualties are normally restricted by the ROE. Key people who pose a threat to friendly forces often hide among civilians. A friendly force overmatching sniper can selectively kill or wound these targets more easily than can the

infantry on the ground. He can look down on the crowd, use his optics to scan continuously, and employ precision fire to eliminate (killer wound) the identified threat. The unit's other weapon systems (Dragons and TOWs) are used from the ground or from the upper floors of buildings to supplement the sniper's surveillance effort. However, after identifying the target, soldiers using Dragons and TOWs would still need time to guide a precision weapon or maneuver unit to the target to deal with it. The sniper rifle is the only system that can both identify and engage a target with precision.

E-8. RIVER CROSSINGS

The observation and precision-fire capabilities of sniper teams enable them to cover the initial stages of a river crossing. Snipers are normally employed in general support of the battalion both before and during the crossing.

a. **Planning.** Snipers should be positioned as early as possible, preferably as part of the reconnaissance force. Their movement across the river must also be planned in advance. Their means of crossing and the locations of their subsequent positions must be coordinated. They displace once friendly elements reach the far side.

b. **Support Before Crossing.** Snipers assume positions across the total width of the crossing area (if possible) before the crossing. Their main task is to observe. They should be located as far above or below possible crossing sites as is consistent with observation and fields of fire. Snipers report all sightings of enemy positions and activity immediately. They provide the only stealthy observation capability available to the commander. This stealth prevents the enemy from learning what type of unit is trying to cross, and so on. Snipers supplement normal reconnaissance assets.

c. **Support During Crossing.** Snipers provide support during the crossing. They continue to observe and suppress enemy OPs and other key targets that might be overlooked by heavier supporting elements. Snipers continue close-in suppressive fire up to the moment elements reach the far side and begin moving to establish the bridgehead line.

d. **Support After Crossing.** Snipers are placed with elements controlling an air assault or boat crossing. The snipers expand the capability

of the inserted force to engage threatening targets at long ranges. Their priority of engagement is the same as that for the remainder of the inserted force. Once on the far side, snipers may be used to screen the flank or rear of the inserted force; to infiltrate and destroy key targets, such as a demolition guard or fortified emplacements; or to man OPs well to the front of the inserted force. This increases both early warning time and the ability of the inserted force to disrupt enemy counterattack forces. This also confuses the enemy as to the type, strength, and location of the opposing force.

E-9. PATROLLING

The effective employment of sniper teams with any size or type patrol is limited only by the terrain and by the patrol leader's ingenuity. Snipers must know all aspects of patrolling.

a. **Reconnaissance Patrol.** Snipers normally remain with the security element during reconnaissance patrols. They provide long-range protection for the reconnaissance element. If the terrain permits, the long-range accuracy of the sniper's rifle permits the reconnaissance element to patrol farther away from the security element yet remain within effective support range. To prevent compromise of the reconnaissance element's position, snipers only fire in self-defense or when ordered by the patrol leader. Normally, the only appropriate time to fire at a target of opportunity is when extraction or departure from the position is imminent and firing will not endanger the success of the patrol.

b. **Combat Patrols.** Two of the combat patrols in which snipers may be used include raids and ambushes

(1) **Raids.** Sniper employment on a raid is influenced by the time of day the raid is to be conducted and the size of the patrol. When maximum firepower is needed and the size of the patrol must be limited, snipers may be excluded. If long-range precision fire is needed and patrol size permits, sniper teams may be attached to the security element. If appropriate, the sniper team may be attached to the support element to help provide long-range supporting fires. When attached to the security element, the sniper team helps observe, helps prevent enemy escape from the objective area, and helps cover the

withdrawal of the assault force to the rally point. When the element withdraws from the rally point, the sniper team may be left behind to delay and harass enemy counteraction or pursuit.

(2) **Ambush.** Snipers are positioned during ambushes in areas that afford observation and fields of fire into terrain features the enemy might use for cover after the ambush has begun. The long range of the sniper rifle allows the sniper team to be positioned away from the main

body. Sniper fires are coordinated into the fire plan. Once the signal to initiate fires is given, snipers add their fires to that of the rest of the patrols. Snipers shoot leaders, radio operators, and crew-served weapons teams. If the enemy is mounted, every effort is made to kill drivers of his lead and trail vehicles to block the road, prevent escape, and create confusion. Snipers may remain in position to cover the withdrawal of the patrol.