



# Getting the Shot

## **MILITARY SNIPER TRAINING**

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Imagine a lone military sniper, operating in stealth and stalking a target through the scope of his weapon—waiting for the perfect moment to take that perfect shot. He shoots and hits the target with laser-like precision. But how does he do it? How does the military prepare him to perform these amazing feats with his weapon?

### **How SNIPER SCHOOLS TRAIN SOLDIERS**

At the USMC Scout Sniper Instructor School—which primarily trains Marines, but also takes students from other branches of the military as needed—three sniper training courses are offered to servicemembers.

The scout sniper basic course is used to train infantry Marines. This intensive course lasts about three months. During that time, trainees learn all of the basics that they need to know to become a successful scout sniper.

“When they’re finished with their training, soldiers have the ability to engage man-sized targets out to 1,000 yards—at a known distance or an unknown distance,” said Captain Andrew Rozic, the officer in charge of the school. “They also have the ability to determine the range to a target, and then engage that target with the accepted degree of accuracy, which is 80 percent.”

The scout sniper team leaders course is designed for Marines who are already scout snipers and wish to pursue a leadership role that includes skills like mission planning. In addition, students in this five-and-a-half week course learn advanced sniping techniques to enhance their shooting abilities.

The scout sniper unit leaders course is for first and second lieutenants who want to learn about the leadership of scout sniper platoons.

In order to conduct the training, the school uses technology such as a handheld weather station, which is designed to measure variables that affect a sniper’s ability to make a shot—like wind speed, humidity, barometric pressure and temperature. In addition, the school uses special computers for ballistic solutions, laser rangefinders and standard military radios for communications.

Similarly, the U.S. Army Sniper School and the Maneuver Center of Excellence conduct training to prepare soldiers for the demands of working as a sniper. In order to do this, they offer hands-on training based on the Army Learning Model 2015. In the school’s course, which is five weeks long, students learn skills such as target detection and stalking, moving target engagement and rapid target techniques. In addition, trainees learn how to properly maintain the Army’s suite of sniper weapon systems.

One important tool that is used in the Army’s Sniper School training is a ballistic calculator, which, according to Captain Dan Wilcox, Battalion Operations Officer, 2d Battalion 29th Infantry Regiment, 197th Infantry BDE (former Sniper Company Commander), is so important to a trainee’s understanding of sniping that it’s the first piece of equipment that a student sniper receives upon arriving at the school.

“The calculator uses a predictive algorithm that accounts for the variables of temperature, barometric pressure, altitude, height of the line of sight over the line of bore, bullet weight,

bullet diameter, ballistic coefficient, rifling twist rate, muzzle velocity, and the zero range,” he said. “Once calculated, this information generates ballistic data for the sniper.”

## **BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY IN SNIPER TRAINING**

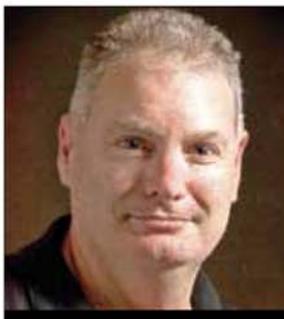
When it comes to making that perfect shot, it all boils down to a sniper and his weapon. But getting the sniper to that point depends on successful training—and the role that different technologies, like simulators, play in that training.

**Cost.** Training snipers can be an expensive proposition, but thanks to the use of simulation technologies, the military is able to save money on several essential components related to sniper training.

“One of the issues with sniper training is the cost factor because snipers are a very small group of the infantry battalion—an infantry battalion will generally only have four to six snipers,” said Allen Priest, director of training and technology integration at Meggitt Training Systems. “Since they’re a very small training liability within an infantry battalion or an infantry brigade, [it’s not a good cost-to-use ratio] to go out and purchase a million dollar system to train them.”

In order to save money on the expense of sniper training, the military will use simulation technology, like Meggitt’s Engagement Skills Trainer and Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer. These products are designed to be adapted to the military’s existing systems in order to help them create scenarios that teach trainees the skills that they need to complete their missions—whether for individual soldiers or for a team of sniper trainees.

By using these products, the military not only saves money on bullets and replacing weapons that get worn



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down by constant use, but they save on the overall cost of everything else involved in the training process.

“Not only is it the cost of ammunition, but it’s the cost of running the range, having personnel out at the range, transporting the ammunition to the range, transporting people to the range,” said Priest.

**Practicing complex missions.** Knowing how to operate a weapon is not enough; in order to be a successful sniper, soldiers must also know how to use their weapons in different circumstances and environments. In order to accomplish this, the military will use simulation products that can reproduce the terrain of a certain geographical location so that snipers can practice their shooting skills before they arrive in these areas.

“If you’re practicing mission sets and you want to practice mission sets in a region of Afghanistan, for example, more than likely we have that terrain databased and modeled,” said Gregg Owens, vice president of Laser Shot Inc. “You can actually set and practice on the same terrain that you’re going to be going to fight in.”

The products that Laser Shot sells to the military include the Long Range Precision Shooting Simulator (LRPSS) and the Crosshair Down Range Virtual Targetry System. By using the LRPSS system, sniper trainees can practice with human-sized target avatars that are programmed into tactical scenarios. Through this product, snipers can learn skills like long-range marksmanship, how to recognize targets, and how to anticipate human movements. Similarly, the Crosshair Down

Range Virtual Targetry System is used for spotter training, engaging targets at long-range distances, engaging moving targets, and rules of engagement training exercises.

Enhancing decision-making skills. Snipers are trained to pinpoint the exact moment when a shot should be taken. In order to make that perfect shot, they must learn decision-making skills that tell them when to pull the trigger and when to hold back.

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