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CHAPTER 6  
**SNIPER AND COUNTERSNIPER  
TACTICS, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCEDURES**

*Snipers have always played a large role in urban combat. They have been used to disrupt operations, inflict casualties, and tie down large numbers of troops searching for them. The lethality and accuracy of modern weapons, the three-dimensional aspect of urban battlefields, and the many alleyways, corridors, and rear exits available to a sniper make him a serious threat. Commanders and leaders at all levels must be aware of the value of employing snipers and the threat posed by enemy snipers. They must understand the effects a sniper can have on unit operations, and the steps by which he can be countered and his threat minimized. In this chapter, the term sniper is used to describe a trained sniper team or a single rifleman firing carefully aimed shots from short to long range.*

**Section I. EMPLOYMENT OF SNIPERS**

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 (ROE). Where ROE allow destruction, the snipers may not be needed since other weapons systems available to a combined arms force have greater destructive effect. However, they can contribute to the fight. Where the ROE prohibit collateral damage, snipers may be the commander's most valuable tool. (See FM 7-20, FM 71-2, and TC 23-14 for more information.)

**6-1. SNIPER CAPABILITIES**

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 commander's concept of operation and intent.

a. Snipers should be positioned in buildings of masonry construction. These buildings should also offer long-range fields of fire and all-round observation. The sniper has an advantage because he does not have to move with, or be positioned with, lead elements. He may occupy a higher position that is to the rear or flanks and some distance away from the element he is supporting. By operating far from the other elements, a sniper avoids decisive engagement but remains close enough to kill distant targets threatening 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. Snipers should not be positioned where there is heavy traffic because these areas invite enemy observation.

b. Snipers should operate throughout the area of operations, moving with and supporting the units as necessary. Some teams may operate independent of other forces and search for targets of opportunity, especially enemy snipers. The team may occupy multiple positions. A single position may not afford adequate observation for the entire team without increasing the risk of enemy detection. Separate positions must maintain mutual support.

- c. Snipers may be assigned tasks such as:
- Killing enemy snipers (countersniper fire).
  - Killing/destroying targets of opportunity. These targets may be prioritized by the commander and might include enemy snipers, key leaders, vehicle commanders, radio operators, sappers, and direct fire support/crew-served weapons crews, forward observers, radio telephone operators, protected equipment.
  - Destroying key pieces of equipment or materials.
  - Denying enemy access to certain areas or avenues of approach (controlling key terrain).
  - Providing fire support for barricades and other obstacles.
  - Maintaining surveillance of flank and rear avenues of approach (screening).
  - Supporting local counterattacks with precision fire.
  - Perform observation of key facility to gather intelligence.
  - Perform observation to enhance general security measures.
  - Call for and adjust indirect fires.

## **6-2. EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

The characteristics of urban areas and the nature of urban warfare impact on both the effectiveness of the sniper weapons system and how the system may be employed. The sniper must consider the location of the target in relation to his position, whether he or the target is inside or outside the building. The sniper must also consider the structural configuration of the buildings in his area of operation. The basic classes of structures encountered in an urban area are concrete, masonry, and wood. However, any one building may include a combination of these materials. All buildings offer the sniper concealment, though the degree of protection varies with the materials used.

a. **Selecting Positions and Targets.** Commanders will provide the sniper with the general area of operation (building or group of buildings) in which to position himself, but the sniper selects the best position for his specific engagements. Sniper positions should cover:

- Obstacles.
- Roofs.
- Friendly routes.
- Likely avenues of approach.
- Gaps in the final protective fires.
- Dead space.
- Other areas that may provide the enemy an advantage.

The sniper also selects numerous alternate and supplementary positions to cover his areas of responsibility. The sniper should think three-dimensionally. Because the urban environment poses a three-dimensional battle space, the sniper should anticipate the threat from any direction at any time.

b. **Offensive Missions.** Offensive operations carry the fight to the enemy to destroy his capability and will to fight. The sniper can prove to be a key combat multiplier by neutralizing enemy targets that threaten the success of the attack. During offensive operations snipers—

- Conduct countersniper operations.
- Overwatch movement of friendly forces and suppress enemy targets that threaten the moving forces.
- Place precision fire on enemy crew-served weapons teams and into exposed apertures of bunkers.
- Place precision fire on enemy leaders, armored vehicle drivers or commanders, FOs, RATELOs, or other designated personnel.
- Place precision fire on small, isolated, bypassed elements.
- Place precision fire on enemy forces that are withdrawing or threatening a counterattack.
- Assist in screening a flank using supplemental fires.
- Dominate key terrain by controlling access with fires.

(1) To increase security and surprise, snipers must move covertly into position in an objective area long before the main attack forces arrive. Once the assault begins, snipers may need to reposition due to masking of fires by friendly forces. A detailed evaluation must be made when determining where and how the snipers would be most beneficial to the mission.

(2) Upon consolidation of forces on the objective area, the snipers may be displaced forward to new positions for security. These positions may not necessarily be on the objective. From these positions the snipers conduct observation and provide early warning to the friendly unit. They also provide precision fire against bypassed enemy positions, enemy counterattacks, or other enemy positions that could impede the unit's ability to exploit the success of the mission.

c. **Defensive Operations.** When employed properly, snipers can effectively enhance a commander's defensive fire plan. After analyzing the terrain, snipers should provide the commander with recommendations for their employment. Snipers can perform the following tasks during defensive operations:

- Cover obstacles, minefields, roadblocks and pre-positioned demolitions.
- Perform counterreconnaissance (terminate enemy reconnaissance efforts).
- Engage enemy OPs, exposed armored vehicle commanders and AT weapons teams.
- Engage enemy vehicles' optics to degrade vision and disrupt movement.
- Engage enemy crew-served weapons.
- Disrupt follow-on units with long-range precision fire.

(1) Snipers should be positioned to cover one or more avenues of approach into the defensive position. They can be used to enhance security, allowing the commander to concentrate his combat power against the most likely enemy avenue of approach. Snipers, with their optics for target acquisition and their long-range engagement capability, compliment the unit's machine guns. Snipers may also be used in an economy-of-force role to cover a dismounted enemy avenue of approach into positions the unit cannot cover.

(2) Multiple sniper teams can be positioned for surveillance and mutual support. If possible, they 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 engaged—accuracy is never sacrificed for speed.

(3) When supporting a strongpoint defense, the sniper teams should be positioned outside the defensive position to allow for freedom of movement. Their primary mission is to conduct observation tasks or independent harassing engagements against enemy reconnaissance elements or induce the enemy to move into a predetermined engagement area.

d. **Stability and Support Operations.** Snipers are employed in stability and support operations during peacekeeping missions, which include, but are not limited to, urban guerrilla warfare and hostage situations.

(1) **Urban Guerrilla Warfare.** The primary role of the sniper in an urban guerrilla environment is to dominate the area of operations by delivery of selective, aimed fire against specific targets as authorized by local commanders. Usually this authorization comes only when such targets are about to employ firearms or other lethal weapons against the peacekeeping force or innocent civilians. The sniper's other role, almost as important as his primary role, is the gathering and reporting of intelligence. Some of the specific tasks a sniper may be required to accomplish are:

- Engage dissidents/urban guerrillas involved in hijackings, kidnappings, hostage takings, and so on.
- Engage urban guerrilla snipers as opportunity targets or as part of a deliberate clearance operation.
- Covertly occupy concealed positions to observe selected areas.
- Record and report suspicious activity.
- Provide protection for other elements of the peacekeeping force, including firemen, repair crews, and so on.

(2) **Hostage Situations.** Hostage situations will usually be delegated to special purpose units unless the tactical situation does not allow it. Snipers and their commanders must understand that even a well-placed shot may not always result in the instantaneous incapacitation of a terrorist. Even the best sniper armed with the best weapon and bullet combination cannot guarantee the desired results. An instantly fatal shot may not prevent the death of a hostage when muscle spasms in the terrorist's body trigger his weapon. As a rule, the sniper should be employed only when all other means of resolving the situation have been exhausted.

(a) **Command and Control.** Once the decision has been made by the local commander to employ the sniper, all command and control of his actions should pass to the sniper team leader. At no time should the sniper receive the command to fire from someone not in command. He should be given clearance to fire, and then he and his team leader decide when to engage the target. If more than one sniper team is used to engage one or more targets, it is imperative that the same rules of engagement apply to all the teams. However, communication between snipers will still be necessary. A *landline* or TA-312 phone loop, which is similar to a gun loop, can be used to communicate to all snipers. Landlines, however, do not allow for fluid mobility so radio communications is preferred.

(b) **Position Selection.** Generally, the selection of a firing position for a hostage situation is not much different from selecting a firing position for any other form of combat. The same principles and techniques apply. Remember, the terrain and the situation will dictate the sniper's selection of firing positions. Although the sniper is used as a last resort in a hostage situation, he should be positioned as early as possible. This will enable him to precisely determine the ranges to selected targets, positively identify

hostages and terrorists within the target area, and select alternate firing positions for use should the situation change.

e. **Infiltration and Exfiltration.** One method the sniper may use when infiltrating an urban area is through the outskirts of the city or town. The outskirts are primarily residential and may not be heavily defended by enemy forces. Its defenders may be a series of antitank and antiaircraft positions, security elements covering main approaches, or positions blocking main avenues into the city center. Strongpoints and reserves are normally deeper in the city.

(1) As part of a larger force, the sniper moves with stealth along secondary streets, using the cover and concealment of back alleys and buildings. The sniper can assist the larger units in seizing key terrain and isolating enemy positions, allowing follow-on forces to enter the urban area. After the initial force has seized a foothold into the city the sniper teams may infiltrate and move into their areas of operation.

(2) Mortar and artillery fire may be used to suppress enemy observation and mask any sounds that may be made by an infiltrating element. Infiltration should be conducted during times of limited visibility and through areas that are free of civilians and domestic animals.

(3) Sniper teams may infiltrate into the city as part of a larger force during an airborne or air assault operation.

(4) When a sniper is conducting exfiltration from his area of operation, care must be taken to avoid detection. As with infiltration, stealth and use of all available cover and concealment must be maintained. Exfiltration should be conducted during hours of limited visibility to aid in avoiding detection. Special care must be taken to cover tracks as well.

(5) As operations in a specific area continue, sniper teams should vary the methods of infiltration and exfiltration in order to avoid the possibility of compromise.

### 6-3. COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SNIPER

Operations in urban terrain require detailed intelligence. The commander (and or S2) should provide the sniper with the following materials and information for planning the operation:

a. **Tactical Maps and Aerial Photos.** Although tactical maps may not show all the man-made objects with enough detail for planning tactical operations in the urban area, they do provide a good representation of the surrounding terrain. Tactical maps should be supplemented with vertical and oblique aerial photographs.

b. **Civil Government and Local Military Information.** Considerable current information on practically all details of a city can be obtained from civil governments and local military forces:

- Large-scale city maps.
- Diagrams of underground sewer, utility, and transportation systems.
- Information on key public buildings and key personnel rosters.
- Information on the size and density of the population.
- Information on police and security capabilities.
- Information on civil defense, air-raid shelters, and fire-fighting capabilities.
- Information on utility systems, medical facilities, and multimedia and communications facilities.

c. **Clear Task and Purpose.** The mission assigned to a sniper team for a certain operation consist of the tasks that the commander wants the sniper team to accomplish, and the purpose (reason) for accomplishing the mission. The commander must decide how he wants his snipers to influence the urban battlefield. Then he must assign missions and tasks to achieve this effect. The commander must be sure to provide a prioritized target list so the sniper teams can plan effectively, and avoid involvement in sustained engagements.

(1) The commander may describe the effects or results he expects and allow the snipers to select key targets.

(2) The commander may prescribe specific types of targets. For example, if he wants to disrupt an enemy's defensive preparation he may task snipers to engage equipment operators and vehicle drivers. Or he may task them to engage soldiers preparing individual positions.

(3) The commander can also assign specific or key targets. These may include leaders, radio operators, ATGM gunners, armored vehicle commanders, or crew-served weapons crews.

## **Section II. COUNTERING THE URBAN SNIPER**

In many host nations the "specially trained sniper" and the "trained marksman" are former rifle competitors, some of which may be Olympic-grade shooters. In Serbia one of the most successful snipers was a former Olympic contender. The shooters-snipers must not be underestimated, especially in regards to the range at which they can engage a target and obtain a hit.

### **6-4. TYPES OF ENEMY SNIPERS AND THEIR CAPABILITIES**

The three general types of snipers are the specially trained and equipped individual, the trained marksman, and the civilian irregular. Each has different characteristics of operation and may be used to accomplish different purposes. Countermeasures effective against one type may be less effective against another.

a. **Specially Trained Sniper.** The most dangerous sniper is the individual who has been specially selected, trained, and equipped with a modern scope-mounted sniper rifle. These individuals are expert shots and are trained to select key individuals as their targets. They can hit at great range (sometimes out to 1,000 meters) and are skilled in avoiding detection. They are normally members of an organized, armed force and wear a standard uniform that may be modified to provide better camouflage. Their actions are carefully integrated into the overall plan of operation. This sniper is the most difficult to counter effectively. Until recently, there were not many potential adversaries of the US that could produce significant numbers of such individuals. Many armies in the world now have a renewed interest in snipers. More and more sniper training is taking place, with an increase of high-power rifles that are available at a reasonable cost on the world arms market. US forces can expect to see more and more trained snipers with improved weapons systems during future urban operations. Some of these may be equipped with rifles and night observation equipment that are among the best in the world. The US Army and its Western allies already have a relatively large number of this type sniper, as do several states of the former Soviet Union, and the Peoples Republic of China.

b. **Trained Marksman.** A trained marksman is a common sniper often found in urban combat. This sniper is a trained soldier, equipped with a standard issue weapon, who is an above-average shot. He normally has fair to good field craft skills and is difficult to detect in the urban environment. He may be employed singly or in teams to create confusion among friendly forces, cause casualties, or harass and disrupt the tempo of operations. He is often used by the enemy in an economy-of-force role as a rear guard or covering force, while the main enemy force withdraws. He may also be placed on the perimeter of a defended urban area to provide early warning of the approach of friendly forces and to disrupt and cause them to deploy early. The trained marksman is a dangerous foe. He can be found in fairly large numbers in the armies of many potential adversaries. He is normally a member of an organized, armed force and wears a standard uniform. He may, however, be a guerrilla fighter, in which case he may not wear a recognizable uniform but will normally carry his arms openly.

c. **Armed Irregular.** The third general type of sniper is the armed irregular. He may have little or no formal military training but may have experience in urban combat. He may or may not wear any distinguishing uniform and may even appear to be merely another of the thousands of noncombatants found in a large urban area. He may or may not carry his weapon openly and may go to great lengths to avoid identification as a sniper. His fires are normally not accurate, and he seldom deliberately targets specific individuals. His actions are not normally integrated into an overall enemy plan, although his attacks may be loosely coordinated with others in his general area. Although this type of sniper has the least ability to cause heavy losses among US forces, he has high value as an element of harassment, and in some stability and support situations he may achieve results far out of proportion to his actual ability to cause casualties.

d. **Range of Sniper Attacks.** The typical range for a sniper attack is 300 to 600 meters with medium-caliber rifles. Shots from 800 to 1,000 meters are the exception. Heavy sniper rifles (caliber .50, 12.7-mm, 14.5-mm, and 15-mm) with ranges of 1,200 to 1,500 meters are now available around the world. These heavy sniper rifles were originally intended as antimateriel weapons for stand-off attack against high-value targets, such as radar control vans, missiles, parked aircraft, and bulk fuel and ammunition storage sites. They are only marginally accurate enough for long-range shots against individual personnel. It is their ability to shoot through all but the heaviest shielding material, and their devastating effects, that make them valuable psychological weapons. The ability to shoot through common urban building materials makes these large weapons valuable as countersniper tools.

e. **Equipment Trends.** Several other equipment trends will result in a greater threat to US forces from urban snipers in the future.

(1) The quality and quantity of night observation devices sold on the world market is increasing daily. In the near future, even trained marksmen may be equipped with devices to allow accurate fires at night.

(2) The use of simple, direct-view optical sights on military rifles is increasing. Although not in the accuracy class of true sniper weapons, these sights make the trained marksman a much more dangerous foe. This is especially true within the shorter ranges (less than 200 meters) normally associated with combat in urban areas.

(3) Many armies are now buying simple but effective devices to either silence or suppress the muzzle blast of sniper weapons. These devices inhibit the task of

determining the location of a sniper. Although many of these devices significantly reduce the maximum effective range of the weapon, snipers can be very effective at less than 200 meters with these devices attached.

(4) The employment of heavy sniper rifles, such as the .50 caliber, has increased.

(5) The use of laser detection devices to detect, damage, degrade, or prevent the use of snipers has increased.

#### **6-5. THE LAW OF LAND WARFARE APPLIED TO SNIPERS**

Historically, units that suffered heavy and continual casualties from urban sniper fire and were frustrated by their inability to strike back effectively often have become enraged. Such units may overreact and violate the laws of land warfare concerning the treatment of captured snipers. This tendency is magnified if the unit has been under the intense stress of urban combat for an extended time. It is vital that commanders and leaders at all levels understand the law of land warfare and also understand the psychological pressures of urban warfare. It requires strong leadership and great moral strength to prevent soldiers from releasing their anger and frustration on captured snipers or civilians suspected of sniping at them.

a. The law of land warfare is not restricted to declared wars. It applies in all cases of armed conflict, such as many situations in stability and support operations. These laws and the legal orders of their superiors bind all US soldiers. Under the law, it is forbidden to kill, wound, or harm an enemy who, having laid down his arms or having no means of defense, has surrendered. A sniper who has been captured, or who has surrendered, must not be harmed. It does not matter how many friendly casualties he has caused or how long he waits before he surrenders.

b. Any sniper who wears the uniform of a belligerent, carries his arms openly, and conducts himself in accordance with the law and customs of warfare should be treated as a prisoner of war, not a criminal. An armed irregular who is part of an organized resistance movement, obeys the orders of a designated commander, carries his weapon openly, and obeys the laws and customs of war should also be accorded such treatment. A civilian who snipes at US forces without meeting these criteria can be detained by the military and tried by the appropriate court. Under no circumstances should a captured person be mistreated or killed in retaliation for sniping, regardless of how many casualties he may have caused.

c. In some stability and support situations, the ROE and the mandate under which the US forces are operating may severely restrict how much lethal counterforce can be used against snipers. Three principles govern the legal use of lethal force. The commander must—

- Make every effort to avoid causing unnecessary suffering.
- Use the minimum force necessary to accomplish the task at hand.
- Apply the type and degree of force using the rule of general proportionality.

d. ROE result from the law of war stretched over the situational template of a particular mission. It would violate the law of war, as well as most ROE, to respond to sniper fire with *massive, indiscriminate* return fire into an urban area if another less destructive tactic or weapon could be employed without greatly increasing risk to US forces. Whatever the situation, commanders and leaders must understand the ROE and ensure their soldiers follow them.



## 6-6. SNIPER AWARENESS

The first step in countering snipers is for commanders, leaders, and staff officers at all levels to be aware of the sniper threat. Although snipers may be more prevalent in some situations than in others, a sniper threat always exists in urban areas to some degree. Plans to counter the sniper threat and protect the friendly force from snipers must be integrated into the operation during the early stages of planning. Tactics and techniques must be taught to soldiers before they encounter sniper fire.


a. A careful METT-TC analysis and consultation with personnel familiar with the area may reveal the extent of the sniper threat. This is especially important during stability and support operations. Information on the local sniper threat may be obtained from:

- Host nation military, government, or police officials.
- US Embassy personnel.
- Allied special operations forces (SOF) or other allied forces.
- US SOF operating in the area.
- UN officials or other UN forces in the area.
- Nongovernment agency officials.
- Local militia members.
- Local civilians, including children.

b. Coordination with US snipers can identify specific areas and situations where enemy snipers may be operating and help the commander decide on countermeasures to be employed. In addition to the school-trained snipers assigned to the infantry battalion, there are several other sources of sniper expertise. Some examples of expert US snipers are:

- US SOF snipers such as special forces (SF) and rangers, sea-air-land teams (SEALs), and the US Army Sniper School.
- US law enforcement officials such as police special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or the Secret Service. (These are usually available only during domestic stability and support operations.)

## 6-7. PLANNING SNIPER COUNTERMEASURES

When planning sniper countermeasures, the commander and staff answers three basic questions. Their answers suggest the set of countersniper TTP  best fits the METT-TC conditions under which the unit is operating. Consideration of these questions assists the commander and staff in eliminating the TTP that are inappropriate to the situation.

a. **“What does the US commander want to accomplish, and which ROE govern his operations?”** If the commander’s intent is to conduct combat operations, and if the ROE allow him to do this with the full range of his available firepower, he can either suppress and bypass the sniper or use the principle of fix and maneuver. He can use firepower to suppress and fix the sniper in position while maneuvering forces either to avoid the sniper and continue the mission or to close with and eliminate him.

(1) If the ROE limit the application of force, or the use of such force would create a large number of civilian casualties, the commander may be limited in his initial response to a sniper attack. In many stability and support situations, the key to success is

perseverance, restraint, and the use of minimum or appropriate force. The unlimited use of firepower in an urban area may undermine the legitimacy of the US force and work against the commander's ultimate intent.

(2) The right of self-defense is never denied US forces, but it may be limited. This is a difficult concept for soldiers to grasp, especially if they are taking fire from snipers. The time to explain it is *before* enemy contact, not *during*. Leaders must keep the commander's ultimate intent in mind when they plan and execute sniper countermeasures.

b. **“What does the enemy want to accomplish with his snipers, and what capabilities does he have to accomplish it?”** Enemy snipers may be striving for several goals:

(1) Defeat US forces. At the small-unit tactical level, this is possible for the specially trained sniper and possibly for the marksman.

(2) Force US forces to deploy, delaying them, breaking up their tactical tempo, and allowing the enemy to seize the initiative. Unless US forces react aggressively and counter the sniper's effects quickly, this goal is possible for all snipers.

(3) Harass US forces, exhausting them, and lowering morale. All snipers can do this, but most often the marksman and the irregular are used for this purpose.

(4) Kill a specific individual. This task is almost always assigned to a specially trained sniper. His target may be specific individuals by their function such as military officers, RATELOs, or armored vehicle commanders. During stability and support operations, the target may be political or community leaders, or classes of individuals such as members of the media, international aid workers, policemen, or civilians living in a contested area.

(5) Cause US casualties for political effect. As the information age progresses, potential adversaries will become more and more adept at manipulating the attitudes of the American public to turn them against US efforts in stability and support situations. One way to do this has been to cause US military casualties, regardless of their tactical effect, knowing the world media will transmit images to discourage Americans and lessen their support. The commander must determine the level of sniper to be countered and the type of weapons, ammunition, tactics, and night vision equipment available to the enemy. This information can be used to assess the expected range and lethality of enemy snipers, and will aid in identifying patterns to counter. It will also be useful to assess passive protective measures such as the likely effectiveness of body armor, light vehicle armor kits, screens, shields, and so forth.

c. **“What are the rules of engagement?”** There are three basic levels of ROE against snipers. The commander can modify each depending on the local situation.

(1) US troops use minimum force. This is common in many stability and support situations, especially during aid to domestic authorities, peacekeeping, noncombatant evacuations, and humanitarian relief.

(2) US troops use an equal or reasonable response to force used against them. This may be the situation in more violent peace enforcement operations.

(3) US troops use overwhelming force. This is the normal situation during combat in urban areas when the enemy poses a significant threat to US forces.

## 6-8. COUNTERSNIPER TACTICS, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCEDURES

Countersniper TTP by US forces involve two types of actions: *active* countermeasures and *passive* countermeasures. Each has its place, depending on the METT-TC conditions under which the unit is operating. Most sniper countermeasures are not new TTP for well-trained combat troops. They are simply common sense actions taken routinely while in a combat area to limit exposure to fire, conceal positions, move tactically, and respond to enemy contact. Some countermeasures are not routine and require additional training emphasis. No matter which TTP are employed, successful countersniper measures present leaders with a challenge to maintain unit discipline. The sniper has the initiative. Units must not implement countermeasures halfheartedly. To do so invites casualties from snipers who can wait hours for the moment a unit's guard is down.

a. **Active Countermeasures.** Active countermeasures either detect and destroy the sniper before he can fire, or engage and neutralize him after he fires. Active countermeasures include the use of the following:

(1) **Observation Posts and Aerial Observers.** Observers can maintain a constant surveillance over potential sniper positions and detect snipers as they attempt to move into position for a shot. Once detected, snipers can be easily neutralized or forced to withdraw.

(a) Observation posts should have access to powerful spotting telescopes, medium-power binoculars, and night observation devices (thermal, if possible). Constantly scanning an area for the minute movements made by a well-trained sniper is exhausting. Therefore, personnel on OP duty should rotate frequently. However, a person who is intimately familiar with the area being scanned is most likely to notice a subtle change.

(b) As military and commercial lasers become more and more common, these devices may be used against US forces manning observation posts. Observers should be equipped with laser protective glasses, especially when using direct-view optical devices. Laser protective glasses, binoculars with laser filters, and indirect-view optics protect observers from most available laser systems.

(c) Aerial observers can operate from any of several platforms. The modernized OH-58, with its sophisticated night vision capability, and the AC 130 have excellent capabilities to detect individual snipers around US positions. Any of several unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), with their extended loiter time and video/night vision capability, can also be used effectively.

(2) **Patrols.** Constant reconnaissance and security patrols around a unit's position hinder a sniper's getting into a firing position undetected. Small patrols are usually more effective.

(a) Like US sniper teams, enemy sniper teams are small and depend on stealth to approach a target along covered and concealed routes. Normally, they move to a hide or "shoot" position and remain there for long periods. These sniper teams are most effective when they have good fields of fire from 300 to 600 meters. At ranges of less than 300 meters, the sniper's movements and firing signature are more easily detected. A moving sniper who has been discovered by a small security patrol is at a great disadvantage. He lacks the firepower to fight a long engagement and is normally far from support or assistance.

(b) Small night security patrols using night vision devices can be very effective. Reconnaissance patrols should move by covered and concealed routes to good

observation points, stop, observe, then move to another position. The patrol routes must vary, and a reaction force or supporting weapons must be ready if the patrol makes contact. Military working dogs and trained handlers can be useful in detecting enemy snipers. Dogs can quickly search large buildings for hidden enemy and can detect personnel at long range if downwind.

(c) In addition to reconnaissance patrols, small combat patrols are also effective. A variation of the ambush patrol is the stay-behind ambush. A small ambush element moves as part of a larger patrol and occupies its position without being observed. It then observes its kill zone, which may be very large if the element has a sniper team with it, and engages enemy snipers as they attempt to move into position.

(3) **United States Snipers.** US snipers can be most effective as a counter to enemy snipers. Not only do they have expert knowledge of sniping and likely enemy hiding places, they can normally engage enemy marksmen and irregulars at a greater range than the enemy sniper can engage US forces. Their precision fires are also much less likely to cause civilian casualties than fires from other weapons. The commander must carefully consider whether the use of these scarce resources in such a purely defensive, reactive role is the best way to employ them. They may be more valuable inflicting casualties on enemy forces. In some stability and support operation situations, SOF sniper teams may be available. These highly trained teams are often equipped with special, long-range sniper weapons that can be used to dominate large areas around US forces.

(4) **Unit Weapons.** If an enemy sniper engages a unit, it may be authorized to respond with fire from all its light weapons. In an urban area, the direction of enemy fire, especially from a single rifle shot, is often difficult to determine. If a unit can determine the general location of a sniper, it should return suppressive fire while maneuvering to engage the sniper from close range. This is not always successful because a well-trained sniper often has a route of withdrawal already chosen. Massive return of fire and immediate maneuver can be effective against short-range sniper fires, if the ROE permit this response. In high-intensity urban combat, they are often the best immediate responses. Exploding fragmentation rounds, such as 40-mm grenades from the M203 grenade launcher, are the most effective suppressors.

(5) **Overmatching Fire From Selected Weapons.** The use of overmatching return fires against snipers can be very effective in high-intensity or precision urban combat. The 25-mm cannon on the BFV is a powerful and accurate weapon that can penetrate deep into buildings with its APDS rounds. Fires from caliber .50 machine guns were effective against snipers during combat in Panama in 1989. Units reported the snipers seemed to be intimidated into inaction by the immediate return of heavy machine gun fire. In Somalia, immediate heavy fires from MK 19 automatic grenade launchers were often effective at stopping sniper fires from armed irregulars. Light or medium antitank weapons are also effective. Because of their accuracy, guided munitions such as the TOW, Hellfire, Dragon, or Javelin have the added advantage of limiting collateral damage. Tank cannon can also be used to respond to sniper fire, although the danger of collateral damage is greater because of the extreme penetration of the round.

(6) **Preemptive Fires.** In high-intensity urban combat, preemptive fires can be used against likely sniper positions. This technique is more often used during offensive operations. It uses large amounts of ammunition but can be very effective for short

attacks. Fragmentation fires from artillery, mortars, and grenade launchers are best for suppressing snipers whose position has not yet been detected.

(7) **Projected Smoke or Riot Control Agents.** Projected smoke that builds quickly is a good response to protect a unit from further casualties if engaged by an enemy sniper. It greatly limits his ability to acquire targets. The closer the smoke is placed to the sniper's location, the more effective it is. If the location of the sniper is unknown or cannot be reached by projected smoke, a smoke cloud established near the unit is still effective in reducing the sniper's chances of hitting a target. If the ROE permit, and permission has been granted for the use of riot control agents, they can be used effectively to reduce the sniper threat. Few snipers can deliver long-range, accurate fires while wearing protective masks.

b. **Passive Countermeasures.** Passive countermeasures prevent the sniper from acquiring a clear target or prevent his fires from causing casualties. Many passive countermeasures are not unique to countering enemy snipers. They are common sense actions taken by well-trained infantry units in a combat area to limit exposure and minimize casualties. Passive countersniper measures are rarely successful by themselves. They may be politically and psychologically effective in terms of reducing US casualties and the level of violence, but they are often ultimately counterproductive to the commander's main mission. They tend to isolate US forces, especially during stability and support operations, when a visible presence is often required. They tend to create a siege mentality, and they pass the initiative over to the sniper. Among the most common passive countermeasures are:

(1) **Limit Exposure.** Consider the following when limiting exposure:

- Use covered and concealed routes.
- Avoid open plazas and intersections.
- Stay away from doorways and windows.
- Move along the side of the street, not down the center.
- Move in the shadows.
- Move dispersed, using traveling or bounding overwatch.
- Avoid lighted areas at night.
- Avoid being silhouetted against lights or the skyline.
- Move quickly across open areas that cannot be avoided.
- Remain crouched or prone behind cover or concealment whenever possible.
- If troops are riding in the cargo area of trucks, keep the canvas cargo cover mounted to screen them. (This countermeasure may not be appropriate if there is threat of ambush by enemy forces in addition to snipers.)
- Avoid gathering together in large groups in the open.
- Remain dispersed.
- Avoid wearing obvious badges of rank.
- Avoid exaggerated saluting or standing at attention for officers while in the open.

(2) **Wear Protective Equipment.** The Kevlar helmet and protective vest will not always stop a sniper bullet, but they will significantly reduce the severity of wounds. They should be worn any time soldiers are exposed to potential sniper fire. In situations where dismounted movement across country is not required, request and issue soldiers

special, heavy protective vests that are actually bulletproof. All unit members should wear this protection.

(3) ***Use Armored Vehicles.*** Whenever possible, move around the urban area in a protected vehicle with as little exposure as possible. Avoid open-sided cargo vehicles. Requisition or improvise vehicular armor against small-arms fire for all administrative and logistical vehicles.

(4) ***Erect Screens and Shields.*** Use simple canvas or plastic screens to make a dangerous alleyway or street crossing much safer for foot traffic. Adapt screens on windows to allow vision out while hiding personnel inside. Use moveable concrete barriers to provide protection for personnel at static positions. Use common items, such as rubble-filled 55-gallon drums and sandbags, to provide cover.

(5) ***Deny the Enemy Use of Overwatching Terrain.*** Either occupy such terrain with friendly forces or modify it to make it less useful to an enemy sniper. Pull down likely hiding places. Ensure all actions are in accordance with the laws and customs of war. Clear bushes and rubble. Board or brick up windows. Pile up earth and rubble in front of buildings to block lines of sight for snipers.

(6) ***Use Smoke Hazes or Smoke Screens to Obscure the Sniper's Field of View and Limit the Effectiveness of His Fires.*** A clear atmosphere is required for accurate long-range sniping. Smoke hazes can be maintained over broad areas for long periods without significantly hindering friendly operations. Smoke screens can be created quickly and sustained for short periods so US forces can accomplish their objective.