



Keeping Military Snipers in the Right Mindset

Military snipers are unique in their employment capabilities. In most combat operations they are in a hide position anywhere from a few feet out to hundreds of meters. This is especially true in the current operations in Iraq & Afghanistan. There are several disciplines the sniper must be expert in or he himself may become a target. The following notes for snipers are standard combat survival tips:

- If the sniper or his hide is detected, he then becomes a sniper target or the objective of the enemy unit that has found him.
- If a sniper is not in a position where he can observe, report, and shoot he is part of the problem not the solution, this is especially true in MOUT or counter IED operations.
- If a sniper can hit at 800 meters why is his hide closer if there are hides further back that provide the same observation and fields of fire.
- Unless there are specific rules of engagement snipers should be “free agents” in determining targets and when those targets should be engaged. Training insures this is successful in all fluid combat operations.
- If the sniper is moving he is no longer camouflaged and may be acquired as a target. No one moves unless covered by someone else.
- Incoming enemy fire has the right of way; all hides should provide cover from direct fire although this is not always possible.
- Snipers report with brevity and then get off the radio.
- The sniper is the best person to determine whether he can hit the target or not, commanders should not over ride the snipers call in a critical situation.
- If you as a sniper “know” you cannot make the shot do not fire it, the attention you may draw could be more than you can handle (what support do you have).
- What range are you at? What zero is on your rifle? What is your adjusted point of aim, Think, Think, and think?
- Where is the sun? How many reflective surfaces do you have exposed? Think.
- Is your hide secure, who is watching your rear?
- Do you know where all friendly’s are in your field of view/fire?
- When firing in close proximity to assaulting troops spotter should be observing down gun target line to insure fratricide does not happen.

What Happens To Snipers Under Extreme Tactical Pressure

When training fails and reason is insufficient to save the day, the warrior reaches deep within, where his fundamental vision of self, god, or the universe, provides the winning edge. But those beliefs must already be there. Combat is not the place to be making major adjustments to your belief system.

Alexander, Groller, and Morris 1990
Bruce K. Siddle – Sharpening The
Warriors Edge 1995

Has your training been enough? Are you confident in all of your combat skills? Can you perform them when enemy soldiers are trying to kill you or find you? The control of your inner self is imperative. The following information is again from Bruce K, Siddle's great book Sharpening the Warriors Edge.

Heart Beat

At 115 beats per minute—Fine motor skills (precision and accuracy skills) deteriorate.

At 145 beats per minute—Complex motor skills begin to deteriorate, and vision begins to narrow.

At 175 beats per minute—auditory exclusion, loss of peripheral vision and depth perception.

At 220 beats per minute—hyper vigilance and irrational behavior.

The answer to lowering the heart rate and maintaining the ability to react in a life threatening combat situation is strict, detailed, repetitive training and personal belief in self and mission.

Tactical Movement Techniques

- Demand absolute sniper cell/team discipline.
- Never quit.
- Never abandon wounded team members.
- Do not delay while in the open, cover or concealment is usually available in both MOUT and field operations.
- The shortest route may not be the safest.
- Select the next covered or concealed position "before" moving to it.
- Have protection for rear and flanks, most especially in a MOUT operation.
- Move as rapidly as the situation or enemy action allows from position to position.
- Maintain tactical dispersion between snipers and security teams.

- Do not move between friendly and enemy fire, hold your position and report your location.
- Strict enforcement of noise and light discipline, use hand signals.
- If you are not the same color as the terrain you are operating in your going to get detected and neutralized.
- Use ear mikes on all radios, keep volumes down.
- Sniper teams must have a positive communications link to CP and security.
- Carry only mission essential equipment.
- The best movement conditions are darkness, rain, snow, or wind. Occasional sandstorms are also good.
- Know team immediate action drills and actions at rally points.
- Be prepared for worst case weather and enemy action (ammo, Batteries).

Military snipers must be prepared to “go the distance”, you will be operating for the most part in enemy controlled or patrolled areas. Decisions and actions may have to be fast, consecutive, and executed under severe duress.

