

# British Sniper Training

## The Basic Cadre



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**1<sup>st</sup> Bn The Parachute Regiment Sniper cadre 2001**

## INTRODUCTION

**The word Sniper comes from a play on words by British soldiers in India as early as 1773. Here troops hunted the Snipe, a small, quick bird that was difficult to shoot. Successful shooters were dubbed Snipers. However the true Sniper as we know him today was not a British concept. It was the German Army of WW1 that really capitalised the Sniper's potential. The British Army, sparked by this enemy capability, formed their own Sniper schools and, by war's end, had managed to turn the tables on the Germans.**

**The British Sniper since then has been an on-again/off-again affair. Individuals have been trained in Sniper skills since WW2, but after this basic training little has been done to work on these basic skills. The Balkans rekindled an interest in Sniping and it was as late as 2000 before Bn Commanders were obliged to field Snipers. (Snipers are now an established part of a Bn's Order of Battle.)**

## **CADRE**

**The basic Sniper cadre has changed little since WW2; only weapons and optics have changed. A cadre ideally lasts a minimum of six weeks and is conducted at the Bn level. (This method of training dates back to WW1 where, due to the Armies' size, Instructors were trained in the skills of the Sniper in order to go back to units and train their own Snipers). The final week of the cadre is Badge test week, where Snipers must past a test in all of the basic skills taught.**

## **SKILLS**

**The basic cadre concentrates on what we class as the Seven basic Sniper skills:**

### **Sniper Knowledge**

**Understanding the tasks of a Sniper, Understanding the weapon system, understanding wind & range calculations, etc.. (Too often instructors concentrate on History instead of knowledge of the job.)**

### **Map reading and Air photography**

**A Sniper must be able to navigate, pin-point features from a Map, and read, grid and scale Air photographs. This allows him to plan his task and navigate to and from his area of operations.**

### **Concealment**

**Snipers are taught to conceal themselves in a short period of time with the ability to engage an enemy without detection. This is in case they encounter an enemy on route to their area of operations.**

### **Observation**

**Snipers are taught how to scan, observe, and log what they see. This is so that they can detect minor details that may aid them in spotting their quarry, and develops their ability to collate information for their Bn.**

### **Stalking**

**Snipers are instructed in the art of stalking, route selection, movement, and construction of a fire position. This allows a Sniper to plan his route to a fire position, move to it undetected, eliminate his quarry, and then extract unseen.**

### **Judging Distance**

**Snipers are instructed in various methods and aids to judging distance. This allows them to correctly judge distance to their target prior to taking the shot.**

### **Shooting**

**Snipers are taught and then practice various conventional and unconventional fire positions. This yields a strong probability of a first round kill.**



**A potential Sniper during the cadre's 1<sup>st</sup> Range Day.  
Note L96 (AI Rifle) with new Schmidt & Bender 3-12 variable  
telescopic sight with Mil- Dot reticule & Killflash cover**

## **STANDARDS**

**All stands are conducted as an individual during a basic cadre. This ensures that each potential Sniper has the ability required to operate in the worst-case scenario: alone if his partner becomes a fatality. All potential Snipers must achieve 75% mastery to pass each discipline, and must pass all disciplines.**

**During the badge test Snipers may fail each stand once and be re-tested. If he fails one of the re-tests, he fails the whole test and must spend a minimum of two weeks re-training before re-attempting the whole badge**

**test.**

### **Sniper knowledge**

**This is assessed via a written test that includes range and wind problems for the student to solve (and show how he worked the problem).**

### **Navigation (Map & Air Photo)**

**Must grid & scale an Air photo accurately. He is then taken to an unknown location where he must locate his position from this Air photo. This is followed by 6 problems on the Air photo, then 6 problems on a Map. All bearings must be within 10mils, all grids within 100m, and all distances within 50m.**

**He must also navigate at night over a distance of 8km carrying 40lbs & weapon in 1hr 30 mins.**

### **Concealment**

**The Sniper must conceal himself 150 - 300m from two trained observers and remain undetected after firing a blank round at the observers and having his position pointed out. He must pass this twice in three attempts. (Sniper has 7, 5, & 3 mins to conceal himself.)**

**For the badge test, he has to remain in position for 20 mins and observe three letter boards as well.**

**Procedure followed:**

- Concealment time**
- 20mins Observation**
- Walker moves within 10m of Sniper**
- Walker indicates direction of sniper by pointing**
- Sniper given 10 seconds to fire a shot**
- Sniper has to correctly identify letter boards**

- **Sniper must have correct range and windage on weapon sight**
- **Sniper must be in a good unobstructed fire position (i.e. No stick shot)**

**The Sniper must pass all these criteria to pass the stand. He is up against two trained Snipers who are partially concealed (normally waist-down hidden) and armed with 7x binoculars. The observers only have two attempts to direct the walker onto the Sniper.**



**Example of a Student who failed. He cammed up his weapon yet failed to cam his headdress with natural Cam. His scope ring also requires cam; a draped piece of faceveil pulled taught at an angle works well.**

## **Observation**

**The Sniper must be able to locate 10 military objects between 5 - 300m in 30 minutes using binos and spotting scope, then plot and describe them on a panoramic sketch drawn to a high standard. The panoramic sketch is drawn in a ten-minute time frame and is scored to a possible 20 points: 10 points for accuracy, neatness, and workability; 5 points for correct use of perspective; and 5 points for including a Left/Right of arc bearing, a North pointer, three key ranges, and a scale.**



**Left an example of a sketch from a stand**



**Right an example of a sketch on Ops Kosovo 1999**

**The plotting of objects is scored out of 4 possible points: two points for a correct plot, 1 point for a correct object (e.g. a waterbottle), and 1 point for further description (e.g. Serbian Army, light green box shaped). Students can get points if they draw what they see.**



**Students have an obs kit room of 40 or so items. Items are of foreign origin. They need to get to know these items as these are the ones used on the stands. Only part of these objects will be visible. Criteria: should be visible using Bino's and identifiable using a Spotting Scope. Students are also given handouts of kit like the one here.**

**(Left to right, top to bottom:  
H&K Double Mag Holder; Serbian FFG LRG Beige; Serbian Marker Torch;  
Serbian Respirator; Soviet 7.62 Ammo Box, Sniper Ammo; Serbian Canister for  
Respirator;  
Leather Shotgun Cartridge Belt.)**

**Binoculars used by students are 7x42mm British GS that are self focusing (not ideal due to eyes adjusting to optics). The spotting scope is the Leupold 12-40 variable with mil-dot reticule.**

## **Stalking**

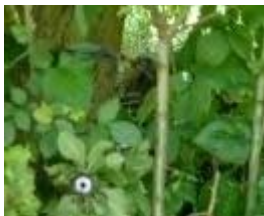
**The Sniper must move undetected over a distance of 1.5-2 km, locate a partially concealed two man OP, move to a position 150-300m from this target, fire two blank rounds while remaining undetected (even after his position is pointed out), and extract from the fire position without being seen.**

### **Sequence of Stalk:**

- **Briefing and planning for 10 mins**
- **Stalk period, time use up to the individual**
- **Sniper moves to fire position and fires first shot when ready**
- **Walker moves within 10m of Sniper**
- **Walker indicates direction of sniper by pointing**
- **Sniper given 10 seconds to fire a second shot**
- **Sniper has to correctly identify a letter board**
- **Sniper must have correct range and windage on weapon sight**
- **Sniper must be in a good unobstructed fire position (i.e. No stick shot)**
- **Sniper must extract undetected from fire position**

**As with the concealment portion, the Sniper must pass all of these parts of the stalk to obtain a pass. Emphasis is placed upon location of the OP (they only have a rough grid of its location).**

**The spotting scope is ideal for this task. (This is what eventually gave British snipers the edge in WW1 - a 20x spotting scope as opposed to enemies armed with binoculars)**



**Left: A good example of a potential Sniper who failed due to the cam on his weapon being the wrong way around. He was 225m from the observers. An addition of a hessian strip over his muzzle would have also helped his concealment. This is done with a loose flap draped over the front, attached by elastic or tape. It lifts on**

**weapon discharge, then re-covers the muzzle. We teach the attachment of a shield of natural cam on the weapon to conceal the Sniper, not ballistically the best option but we are not in the target shooter's realm!**

**Right: A good example of a Sniper who passed using a combination of natural cam, trapped shadow, and an unconventional fire position: the lie-back position. Unconventional positions present an inhuman shape to the observer.**



### **Judging distance**

**The Sniper must judge correctly 8 out of 10 unknown distances within 15% of the correct range using his eyes only. During training the same point is ranged three times, and must be within 15% using eyes, 10% using Binos, and 5% using Mil-dots. However, this is yet to be adopted for the badge test. Students must achieve 8 in each of the three areas. Two objects on the stand are man-sized objects and a key range is given to aid students.**

### **Shooting**

**The Sniper must achieve a 1<sup>st</sup> rd kill on a man sized target at 900m: this is the Army's criteria for a Sniper. This is done via an individual firing between 900m and 300m on a badge test shoot. All practices are timed, many with double exposures. Targets are fig 11 - 1155mm x 450mm, fig 12 , fig 20 moving target, and fig 14 "Huns Head" (still named after WW1 Enemy).**





**Picture showing the British targets used on the badge test**

**The shoot starts at 900m and works down to 300m. Most candidates feel that the hardest parts are the conventional kneeling and sitting positions, which also hold many of the points. These are emphasised because often on Op's it not possible to get into a prone position to take the shot.**



**A good example of a student firing from the sitting position at 800yds**

**The second part of the shoot is done at night using the CWS (Common Weapon Sight, 4x magnification). This can be done using the SA80 to prevent affecting the telescopic sight. Maximum range on the night shoot is 300m due to ambient light effecting quality on the scope. (Its worth noting that using the Simrad on the .338 we obtained hits at 600m with no ambient light.)**



**Good example of a student using an improvised tripod, which was cut 5 mins prior to use. Note the bean-bag sock used with tripod and the Leupold spotting scope. Range is 800 yds.**

**A good example  
of the  
unconventional  
sitting position.**

**Butt of rifle is  
rested on knee,  
stock is locked  
against lower  
leg, Sniper leans  
back. So long as  
crosshair is on  
target and the  
shadow around  
the sight picture  
is even it will  
produce good  
results.**

**(Chuck  
MaWhinney &  
Plaster have**



**both seen me shoot this way with successful results.)  
It was developed by a WW2 British Sniper**

**Note candidate's headdress needs work!**

## **SUMMARY**

**This is just a small insight to our way of doing things. I have faith in the end product of these methods. They ensure that we only get the most promising Snipers in the Bn Sniper section.**

**I do monitor the students throughout the cadre and do not purely rely on the badge test to make my selection for the section (19 strong).**

**Once the cadre is complete, continuation training begins. This starts**

**the Snipers working in pairs and makes them come to grips with training for operations.**

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### **Additional photos**

- **Picture of Sniper candidate firing from the sitting tripod position, 800yds.** Bisley Ranges, July 2001. Note webbing pouches. (54Kb)
  - **Sniper candidate firing from the Hawkins position at 900yds.** Note Obs folder to protect from elements whilst drawing and logging. Note elastic bands on weapon for natural cam. (37Kb)
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