Sniper Positions

Selecting the location for a position is one of the most important tasks a sniper team accomplishes during the mission planning phase of an operation. After selecting the location, the team also determines how it will move into the area to locate and occupy the Final Firing Position (FFP).

Upon receiving a mission, the sniper team locates the target area and then determines the best location for a tentative position by using one or more of the following sources of information: topographic maps, aerial photographs, visual reconnaissance before the mission, and information gained from units operating in the area.

a. The sniper team ensures the position provides an optimum balance between the following considerations:

- Maximum fields of fire and observation of the target area.
- Concealment from enemy observation.
- Covered routes into and out of the position.
- Located no closer than 300 meters from the target area.
- A natural or man-made obstacle between the position and the target area.

b. A sniper team must remember that a position that appears to be in an ideal location may also appear that way to the enemy. Therefore, the team avoids choosing locations that are;

- On a point or crest of prominent terrain features.
- Close to isolated objects.
- At bends or ends of roads, trails, or streams.
- In populated areas, unless it is required.

c. The sniper team must use its imagination and ingenuity in choosing a good location for the given mission. The team chooses a location that not only allows the team to be effective but also must appear to the enemy to be the least likely place for a team position.

- Under logs in a deadfall area.
- Tunnels bored from one side of a knoll to the other. *(way too time and energy consuming)*
- Swamps.
- Deep shadows.
- Inside rubble piles.

d. The selection of the hide site and surveillance site(s) is METT-T dependent. Considerations for site selection are —

• Can the team place the designated surveillance target(s) under continuous and effective observation and within the range of surveillance devices to be used?

• Will the surveillance site have to move if weather and light conditions change?

• Does the area provide concealment and entrance and exit routes?

• Are there dominant or unusual terrain features nearby?

• Is the area wet, is there adequate drainage, or is the area prone to flooding?

• Is the area a place the enemy would want to occupy?

• Is the site silhouetted against the skyline or a contrasting back-ground?

• Are there roads or trails nearby?

• Are there other natural lines of movement nearby (gullies, draws, any terrain easy for foot movement)? • Could the team be easily trapped in the site?

• Are there any obstacles to prevent vehicle movement nearby (roadside ditch, fence, wall, stream, river)?

• Are there any inhabited areas in the prevailing downwind area.

•Are there any suitable communication sites nearby?

• Is the site(s) in the normal line of vision of enemy personnel in the area?

• Is there a source of water in the area?

(1)When the sniper team arrives at the firing position, it;

a. Conducts a detailed search of the target area.

b. Starts construction of the firing position, if required.

c. Organizes equipment so that it is easily accessible.

d. Establishes a system of observing eating resting, and latrine calls.

(2) **Time:**

(a) Amount of time to be occupied. If the sniper team's mission requires it to be in position for a long time, the team constructs a position that provides more survivability. This allows the team to operate more effectively for a longer time.

(b) Time required for construction. The time required to build a position

must be considered, especially during the mission planning phase.

(3) **Personnel and equipment:**

(a) Equipment needed for construction. The team plans for the use of any extra equipment needed for construction (bow saws, picks, axes, and so forth).

(b) Personnel needed for construction. Coordination is made if the position requires more personnel to build it or a security element to secure the area during construction.

(4) **Loopholes.**

The construction of loopholes requires care and practice to ensure they afford adequate fields of fire. Loopholes must be camouflaged by foliage or other material that blends with or is natural to the surroundings.

(5) **Approaches.** It is vital that the natural appearance of the ground remains unaltered and camouflage blends with the surroundings.

Hasty Position. A hasty position is used when the sniper team is in a position for a short time and cannot construct a position due to the location of the enemy, or immediately assumes a position. This requires no construction The sniper team uses what is available for cover and concealment. It can be occupied in a short time. As soon as a suitable position is found, the team need only prepare loopholes by moving small amounts of vegetation or by simply backing a few feet away from the vegetation that is already there to conceal the weapon's muzzle blast.

Expedient Position. When a sniper team is required to remain in position for a longer time than the hasty position can provide, an expedient position should be constructed. The expedient position lowers the sniper's silhouette as low to the ground as possible, but it still allows him to fire and observe effectively. This position is constructed by digging a hole in the ground just large enough for the team and its equipment. Soil dug from this position can be placed in sandbags and used for building firing platforms.

Belly Hide. The belly hide is similar to the expedient position, but it has overhead cover that not only protects the team from the effects of indirect fires but also allows more freedom of movement. This position can be dugout under a tree, a rock, or any available object that provides overhead protection and a concealed entrance and exit. This allows some freedom of movement. The darkened area inside this position allows the team to move freely. The team must remember to cover the entrance/exit door so outside light does not silhouette the team inside the position or give the position away. This will help conceal all but the rifle barrel. All equipment is inside the position except the rifle barrels. Depending on the room available to construct the position, the rifle barrels may also be inside.

a. Construction time: 4 to 6 hours.

b. Occupation time: 12 to 48 hours.

Semi-permanent Hide. The semi-permanent hide is used mostly in defensive situations. This position requires additional equipment and personnel to construct. However, it allows sniper teams to remain in place for extended periods or to be relieved in place by other sniper teams. Like the belly hide, this position can be constructed by tunneling through a knoll or under natural objects already in place. This is completely concealed. Loopholes are the only part of the position that can be detected. They allow for the smallest exposure possible; yet they still allow the sniper and observer to view the target area. These loopholes should have a large diameter (10 to 14 inches) in the interior of the position and taper down to a smaller diameter (4 to 8 inches) on the outside of the position. A position may have more than two sets of loopholes if needed to cover large areas. The entrance/exit to the position must be covered to prevent light from entering and highlighting the loopholes. Loopholes that are not in use should be covered from the inside with a piece of canvas or suitable material. This position requires extensive work and extra tools. It should not be constructed near the enemy. It should be constructed during darkness and be completed before dawn.

POSITIONS IN URBAN TERRAIN

Positions in urban terrain are quite different than positions in the field. The sniper team normally has several places to choose. These can range from inside attics to street-level positions in basements. This type of terrain is ideal for a sniper, and a sniper team can stop an enemy's advance through its area of responsibility.

a. When constructing an urban position, the sniper team must be aware of the outside appearance of the structure. Shooting through loopholes in barricaded windows is preferred; the team must make sure all other windows are also barricaded. Building loopholes in other windows also provides more positions to engage targets. When building loopholes, the team should make them different shapes (not perfect squares or circles). Dummy loopholes also confuse the enemy. Positions in attics are also effective. The team removes the shingles and cuts out loopholes in the roof; however, they must make sure there are other shingles missing from the roof so the firing position loophole is not obvious.

(1) The sniper team should not locate the position against contrasting background or in prominent buildings that automatically draw attention. It must stay in the shadows while moving, observing, and engaging targets.

(2) The team must never fire close to a loophole. It should always back away from the hole as far as possible to hide the muzzle flash and to scatter the sound of the weapon when it fires. The snipers may be located in a different room than the loophole; however, they can make a hole through a wall to connect the rooms and fire from inside one room. The team must not fire continually from one position. (More than one position should be constructed if time and situation permit.)

When constructing other positions, the team makes sure the target area can be observed. Sniper team positions should never be used by any personnel other than a sniper team.

b. Common sense and imagination are the sniper team's only limitation in the construction of urban hide positions. Urban hide positions that can be used are the ***room hide, crawl space hide***, and ***rafter hide***. The team constructs and occupies one of these positions or a variation thereof.

Room hide position. In a room hide position, the sniper team uses an existing room and fires through a window or loophole. Weapon support may be achieved through the use of existing furniture-that is, desks or tables. When selecting a position, teams must notice both front and back window positions. To avoid. silhouetting, they may need to use a backdrop such as a dark-colored blanket, canvas, carpet, and a screen. Screens (common screening material) are important since they allow the sniper teams maximum observation and deny observation by the enemy. They must not. remove curtains; however, they can open windows or remove panes of glass. Remember, teams can randomly remove panes in other windows so the position is not obvious.

Crawl space hide position. The sniper team builds a crawl space hide position in the space between floors in multistory buildings. Loopholes are difficult to construct, but a damaged building helps considerably. Escape routes can be holes knocked into the floor or ceiling. Carpet or furniture placed over escape holes or replaced ceiling tiles will conceal them until needed.

Rafter hide position. The sniper team constructs a rafter hide position in the attic of an A-frame-type building. These buildings normally have shingled roofs. Firing from inside the attic around a chimney or other structure helps prevent enemy observation and fire.

c. Sniper teams use the technique best suited for the urban hide position.

(1) The second floor of a building is usually the best location for the position. It presents minimal dead space but provides the team more protection since passersby cannot easily spot it.

(2) Normally, a window is the best viewing aperture/loophole.

(a) If the window is dirty, do not clean it for better viewing.

(b) If curtains are prevalent in the area, do not

remove those in the position. Lace or net-type curtains can be seen through from the inside, but they are difficult to see through from the outside.

(c) If strong winds blow the curtains open, staple, tack, or weight them.

(d) Firing a round through a curtain has little effect on accuracy however, ensure the muzzle is far enough away to avoid muzzle blast.

(e) When area routine indicates open curtains, follow suit. Set up well away from the loophole; however, ensure effective coverage of the assigned target area.

(3) Firing through glass should be avoided since more than one shot may be required. The team considers the following options:

(a) Break or open several windows throughout the position before occupation. This can be done during the reconnaissance phase of the operation; however, avoid drawing attention to the area.

(b) Remove or replace panes of glass with plastic.

(4) Other loopholes/viewing apertures are nearly unlimited.

- Battle damage.
- Drilled holes (hand drill).
- Brick removal.
- Loose boards/derelict houses.

(5) Positions can also beset up in attics or between the ceiling and roof.

- Gable ends close to the eaves (shadow adding to concealment).
- Battle damage to gables and or roof.
- Loose or removed tiles, shingles, or slates.
- Skylights.

(6) The sniper makes sure the bullet clears the loophole. The muzzle must be far enough from the loophole to ensure the bullet’s path is not in line with the bottom of the loophole.

(7) Front drops, usually netting, may have to be changed (if the situation permits) from dark to light colors at BMNT/EENT due to sunlight or lack of sunlight into the position.

(8) If the site is not multi-roomed, partitions can be made by hanging blankets or nets to separate the operating area from the rest/administrative area.

(9) If sandbags are required, they can be filled and carried inside of rucksacks or can be filled in the basement, depending on the situation/location of the position site.

(10) Always plan an escape route that leads to the objective rally point. When forced to vacate the position, the team meets the security element at the ORP. Normally, the team will not be able to leave from the same point at which it gained access; therefore, a separate escape point may be required in emergency situations. The team must consider windows (other than the viewing apertures); anchored ropes to climb down buildings, or a small, preset explosive charge situated on a wall or floor for access into adjoining rooms, buildings, or the outside.

(11) The type of uniform or camouflage to be worn by the team will be dictated by the situation, how they are employed, and area of operation. The following applies:

> (a) Most often, the BDU and required equipment are worn.
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> (b) Urban-camouflaged uniforms can be made or purchased. Urban areas vary in color (mostly gray [cinder block]; red [brick]; white [marble]; black [granite]; or stucco, clay, or wood). Regardless of area color, uniforms should include angular-line patterns.
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> (c) When necessary, most woodland-patterned BDUs can be worn inside out as they are a gray or green-gray color underneath.
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> (d) Soft-soled shoes or boots are the preferred footwear in the urban environment.
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> (e) Civilian clothing can be worn (native/host country populace).
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> (f) Tradesmen’s or construction worker’s uniforms and accessories can be used