

By SFC Daniel R. Saito

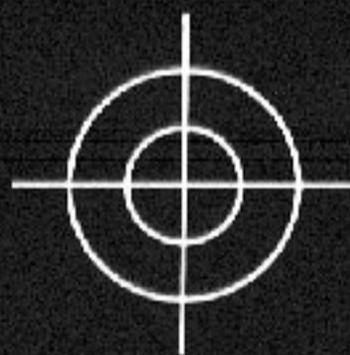
**A**ll soldiers should be familiar with the importance of physical fitness.

Soldiers do physical training (PT) three to five times per week whether they want to or not. A physically fit soldier does a better job both in peacetime and combat. A healthy soldier is more resistant to sickness and can operate for longer periods of time under stressful combat conditions. The Army leadership realizes this important correlation and thus has placed a command emphasis on weekly PT.

Unfortunately, another basic soldiering skill which is more important to soldiers surviving in a combat situation is being seriously neglected in peacetime. I am referring to rifle marksmanship. Soldiers do PT every week, but rifle marksmanship training is conducted semi-annually at best in most units and usually only in conjunction with semi-annual weapons qualification. That is just not often enough.

Operation Desert Storm was so quick and decisive that most soldiers never fired their rifle at an enemy soldier. The mechanized infantry and cavalry units relied on the 25mm cannon and Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles of their Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The tankers relied on their laser range-finders to engage targets at 4,000 meters. That "war" may, unfortunately, have given our Army's latest combat veterans the notion that an individual soldier's marksmanship skills may be less important and therefore require less training. That line of thought for any leader may be considered borderline criminal negligence.

## Are We Neglecting



## Rifle Marksmanship?

Sadly, the one training event the Army leadership is getting away from is rifle marksmanship. Research is being conducted to replace the highly accurate M16A2 rifle with a weapon that fires a three-round burst each time instead of stressing well-aimed single shots. The Marksmanship Training Units (MTU) which used to be an integral part of most active Army divisions seem to be disappearing. Most soldiers have never heard of the competitive marksmanship programs (found in AR 920-15) that most combat divisions used to host annually and are therefore unable to compete for prestigious marksmanship badges authorized for wear on uniforms. True, the pooled expertise the MTUs provided to their installations has been dispersed throughout the units. Also true is the fact that all NCOs should be proficient shooters and therefore proficient as

trainers to train their soldiers. But the expertise of senior NCOs to train the trainers is rapidly fading. New trainers have to be referred to FM 23-9, M16A1 Rifle and M16A2 Rifle Marksmanship, dated July 89.

Here are 10 basic questions on rifle marksmanship that all NCOs should be familiar with. I have provided the page and paragraph of FM 23-9 where the answers can be found. If your answers don't match the guidelines of the field manual, then study the FM until you understand it so you can teach your soldiers. My point is not to embarrass anyone, but to have leaders realize that more emphasis needs to be given to marksmanship training and sustainment to keep soldiers' marksmanship skills within the "band of excellence." It's time to get serious and smart about marksmanship and your job.

**1. What is the initial sight setting for a newly issued M16A2 rifle? (pg. G-14 and Fig. G-25)**

- rear sight all the way right, front sight flush.
- rear sight 17 clicks right, front sight 11 up from flush, windage drum one click past 8/3.
- front sight flush, rear sight aligned with index mark, elevation one click past 8/3.
- front sight 11 up, rear sight set at 25 meters.

**2. To zero the M16A2 rifle at 25 meters, the front sight is: (pg. G-14, 25 meters, para 1)**

- moved to flushed and no longer adjusted.
- moved 11 clicks up and no longer adjusted.

- c. used for all elevation adjustments until zeroed.
- d. none of the above.

3. To engage pop-up targets after zeroing, the M16A2 rear sight is: (pg G-14, 25 meters, para 2)

- a. flipped to short range because all targets to 300 meters are considered short range.
- b. left alone because it's already zeroed.
- c. adjusted by moving the elevation wheel to the 8/3 mark.

4. Before being allowed to make any sight adjustments on the M16 rifle when zeroing, the firer must: (pg G-10, para 1)

- a. complete sustainment training before going to the range.
- b. fire two consecutive three-round shot groups within a four-centimeter area.
- c. move the sights to mechanical zero.
- d. fire a three-round shot group on the zero target.

5. The recorded battlesight zero of an M16 rifle is: (pg. G-13 and G-16, Recording of Zero)

- a. the last sight adjustments made prior to confirming zero.
- b. the sum of all sight adjustments made during zeroing.
- c. the last sight adjustment made.
- d. the resulting sight setting after all sight adjustments have been made during zeroing.
- e. the same as the mechanical zero.

6. The battlesight zero on the M16A2 allows the firer to: (pg. 3-22, para 2, and Fig. F-5)

- a. hit all targets out to 300 meters by aiming center mass.
- b. aim center mass at the 300-meter target and hit center mass.
- c. increase chances of target hits in combat out to 400 meters.
- d. all of the above.

7. The battlesight zero sight setting of an M16 is: (pg. 3-21, Concept of Zeroing)

- a. transferable from one weapon to another.
- b. transferable from one soldier to another.
- c. not transferable at all.
- d. 17 clicks right and 11 clicks up.

8. Before a soldier is allowed to qualify, he or she must have a confirmed zero. A confirmed zero is: (pg. G-11, para 2, Fig.

G-22 and pg. G-16, para 4, Fig. G-29)

- a. three rounds anywhere within the silhouette of the zero target.
- b. two consecutive three-round shot groups within the circle on the zero target.
- c. six rounds within the four-centimeter circle of the zero target.
- d. one three-round shot group within the four-centimeter circle of the zero target.

9. A promotable specialist fires on a record fire range in the morning and does not qualify. The specialist requalifies again that afternoon and fires an Expert score. What qualification badge is the specialist authorized to wear? (pg. G-45, para 4 and G-48, para 2)

- a. Expert.
- b. Sharpshooter.
- c. Marksman.

10. All newly assigned soldiers issued a previously zeroed M16 rifle must move the sights to the initial sight setting before attempting to zero. (pg. 3-22, para 2, 3, 4)

- a. True.
- b. False.

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## Lack of command emphasis and opportunity... to regularly practice... rifle marksmanship skills is appalling.

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The FM specifies marksmanship standards that all soldiers are expected to meet. There aren't any acceptable reasons for not meeting the standards. With proper and frequent marksmanship training, the unit can save training dollars, which are wasted by allowing soldiers to burn up ammunition attempting to re-zero or re-qualify without the intense but patient remedial training required to teach soldiers to shoot better.

The lack of command emphasis and opportunity for soldiers to regularly practice their rifle marksmanship skills is appalling. What would happen if the Army gave PT the same emphasis that rifle marksmanship now gets? Don't do

any organized PT, but still administer record Army Physical Fitness Tests (APFT) semi-annually? The outcome would be the same. Many soldiers would perform poorly and would barely be able to meet standards. Luckily, most soldiers can maintain an acceptable level of fitness without having to buy any extra equipment. It's not the same with rifle marksmanship. A soldier cannot get proficient with a weapon if he or she can't practice with it. Practice doesn't necessarily mean live fire. There are soldiers of all ranks who cannot perform combat survival skills like immediate action to clear a malfunction or a rapid reload magazine change. And because soldiers can't afford to go out and buy their own M16 or its civilian version, the AR-15, the Army and its leadership is even more liable for ensuring promotion points — especially to those deployed in harm's way. We claim to be the best trained fighting force in the world. Are we? Not if our soldiers are deficient in one of the most basic soldiering skills.

A well-trained soldier thoroughly proficient in individual weapon training will be better able to perform in a combat environment. A soldier's ability to engage and hit targets at more than 300 meters instills a confidence in his weapon that significantly increases survivability in combat. If all soldiers were given the chance to attain a high level of marksmanship proficiency, our Army would be truly awesome in combat. Rifle marksmanship is a skill that will, like any other skill, deteriorate without regular sustainment training. It is also a proud American heritage handed down from the first boatload of our American ancestors who had to be able to shoot to survive in the New World. That heritage has passed on through the infancy of our great Army to our still-developing 21st-century fighting force. A soldier and his rifle will always be crucial factors on our battlefields. ■

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