

Chapter 1

Introduction to Pistol Marksmanship

1001. Role of the Marine and Pistol Marksmanship

Marine Corps forces are employed across the entire range of military operations. Conflict within the range of military operations can take a wide range of forms reflecting the degree of violence involved. At one end is war. War is characterized by large-scale, sustained combat operations. At the other end of the scale are those actions referred to as military operations other than war. Military operations other than war focus on deterring aggression, resolving conflict, promoting peace, and supporting civil authorities. These operations can occur before, during, and after combat operations. By definition, military operations other than war do not involve combat. However, Marines always need to be prepared to protect themselves and respond to changing situations. The M9 service pistol is primarily used as a defensive weapon. Whenever the situation warrants the application of deadly force, a Marine must be able to deliver well-aimed shots to eliminate the threat. Sometimes the need for a well-aimed shot may even be heightened by the presence of noncombatants in close proximity to the target. The Marine who is proficient in pistol marksmanship handles this challenge without escalating the level of violence or causing collateral damage unnecessarily. Marines must have the versatility, flexibility, and skills to deal with a situation at any level of intensity across the entire range of military operations.

To be combat ready, the Marine must be skilled in the tactics, techniques, and procedures of pistol marksmanship and diligent in the proper care and maintenance of his pistol. Although equipped with the best equipment in the world, a unit with poorly trained Marines cannot be depended upon to accomplish its mission. A poorly trained Marine can lack confidence or may even possess false confidence. Usually, the poorly trained Marine either fails to fire his weapon or wastes ammunition by firing ineffectively. To send Marines into harm's way, without thorough training in the use of their individual weapons carries undue risks for every Marine in that unit. On the other hand, a well-trained Marine can deliver accurate fire against the enemy under the most adverse conditions. The well-trained Marine is not only confident that he will help his unit accomplish its mission, but also confident that he can protect his fellow Marines and himself.

1002. Combat Mindset

In a combat environment, the Marine must be constantly prepared to engage targets. When a target presents itself, there may be little time to take action. The target must be engaged quickly and accurately. Combat presents a unique set of demands on a Marine. Common experiences include: violence, danger, fear, stress, uncertainty, pain, and rapidly changing situations. Marines must be both physically and mentally prepared to face these horrors. It will not be enough to simply know marksmanship techniques. Marines must have the ability to eliminate their own hesitancy, fear, or uncertainty of action and focus on the actions required to fire well-aimed shots. The combat mindset requires both physical and mental preparation.

a. Physical Preparation. In combat, targets can present themselves without warning. Therefore, it is essential for the Marine to maintain proper balance and control of his weapon at all times so he can quickly present the weapon and accurately engage the target. However, speed alone does not equate to effective target engagement. The Marine should fire only as fast as he can fire accurately, never exceeding his physical capabilities to apply the fundamentals of marksmanship. To be effective in combat, the Marine must train to perfect the physical skills of shooting so they become second nature. The more physical skills that can be performed automatically, the more concentration that can be given to the mental side of target engagement.

b. Mental Preparation. While combat is unpredictable and constantly changing, the Marine can prepare himself mentally for the contingencies of the operational setting so he can act readily when confronted with a threat. The stress of combat, coupled with the often limited time available to engage targets, requires concentration on the mental aspects of target engagement, e.g., identification of targets, shoot/no-shoot decision making, and the selection and use of cover.

(1) Knowledge of the Combat Environment. Be constantly aware of the surroundings to include the terrain, available cover, possible threats, etc. This awareness will enable the Marine to quickly present the weapon and accurately engage targets.

(2) Plan of Action. In combat, the situation will dictate the action to be taken. The Marine must identify and evaluate possible courses of action and develop a plan for target engagement that will be appropriate to the requirements of the situation when it presents itself.

(3) Confidence. A Marine's level of confidence is rooted in the belief that future challenges will be overcome-- particularly the challenge of firing well-aimed shots in the stress of a combat situation. A key factor in a Marine's level of confidence is the degree to which he has mastered the tactics, techniques, and procedures of pistol marksmanship. Mastery of pistol marksmanship can only be obtained through a combination of classroom instruction, the application of the marksmanship fundamentals during dry and live firing, and while using marksmanship training devices.