



The Sharp End



Sniper Units

Snipers in the US Marine Corps and US Army officially fill billets only at the infantry battalion-level. Unlike the services' reconnaissance organizations, sniper units do not exist at other higher organizations i.e. the regiment, brigade, division, Army corps or Marine expeditionary force levels. Scout-sniper platoons in the Marine consist exclusively of snipers; the US Army's scout platoons in the infantry battalions consist of two sections, a scout section and a sniper section.

Another issue impacting sniper organization concerns the Marine Corps scout-sniper platoon. This platoon serves as the infantry battalion's only unit with a proficient and adequately equipped information gathering, or reconnaissance, capability. Consequently, the scout-sniper platoon primarily executes reconnaissance and surveillance missions exclusive of its sniping mission. Some in the Marine Corps recommend removing the scout-snipers from the infantry battalions to form a sniper formation at the division level in order to ensure that the sniping capability is preserved. While this may effectively maintain sniping proficiency and capability, this removal of scout-sniper platoons from the infantry battalions leaves these organizations without the vital component of a trained reconnaissance element. A recent editorial written by a serving infantry battalion commander in response to transferring scout-sniper platoons to the division level states that: "While I appreciate sincerely the value of the human weapons system offered by the sniper team, my foremost concern is not to be blind on the field of battle. It is much more important to me that the battalion has an organic information gathering capability internal to the battalion is, in my judgment, more important than the lethality of the sniper. Frankly, if you took away my scout/snipers, then I would have to create my own scouts out of hide."

Clearly, the answer is not to simply create a division level sniper organization by taking sniper teams away from the infantry battalions. The solution lies in forming a new organization for the division to provide sniping support.

QuikManeuvers' publications advocate that every American combat division include a separate reconnaissance battalion, and a separate sniper battalion. The reconnaissance battalion would be under the control of a special forces intelligence cell. (Military Intelligence battalions should be disbanded since they are totally ineffective.) The sniper battalion would be under the control of the assistant division commander for maneuver. Every combat regiment or brigade should have both a reconnaissance company and a sniper company assigned to it. Both specialized reconnaissance and sniper units should be trained by the US Army Ranger School.

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