

QRT AIMS TO IMPROVE SNIPER PERFORMANCE WHEN ENGAGING MOVING TARGETS

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In Kabul, Afghanistan, a known insurgent is hurrying through a populated street preparing to ambush a coalition convoy. A U.S. sniper team has the enemy in their sights, but the insurgent is more than 700 meters away and moving erratically. A missed shot could result in collateral damage and negatively impact public opinion of U.S. forces. Does the sniper team have the training and confidence to take the insurgent down? Is the ground commander willing to accept the inherent risk to civilian life to allow his team to make the time-sensitive call in these type situations?

To assess a scenario such as this, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) Weapons Training Battalion (WTBN) sponsored the Joint Sniper Performance Improvement Methodology (JSniPIM) Quick Reaction Test (QRT). This test was directed on 17 October 2014 by the Deputy Director, Air Warfare, under the authority of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Director Operational Test and Evaluation. The QRT was a multi-service endeavor to improve sniper performance when engaging moving targets (via the development of tactics, techniques, and procedures [TTPs]), a skill not practiced except under real-world conditions. Summarizing this critical capability gap, the USMC WTBN stated in its 2015 nomination packet, "Sniper teams lack TTPs to engage moving combatants beyond standard engagement distances to the maximum effective range of their weapon systems and in civilian populated areas, which directly impacts employment of sniper teams." This project was nominated by BGen Austin E. Renforth, commanding general of the USMC

Training Command, and endorsed by United States Central Command, USMC Forces Special Operations Command, and the USMC Warfighting Laboratory. Test participants included sniper teams from the 10th Mountain Division, 101st Airborne Division, 82nd Airborne Division, USMC Scout Sniper School, USMC School of Infantry Scout Sniper School, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Development Group, U.S. Air Force Security Forces Center, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Tactical Law Enforcement Detachment. Range facilities were provided by the U.S. Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group at Fort A.P. Hill, VA.

During the yearlong test, the QRT team researched existing (or the lack thereof) sniper doctrine and training methods focusing on the engagement of moving targets. The team and community of interest then convened multiple Joint Warfighter Advisory Groups (JWAG) meetings, table top exercises, and risk reduction events. After these developmental events, a TTP was developed and implemented at the testing site for data collection and validation. During field test one at Fort A.P. Hill, 26 snipers from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Army National Guard utilized six different weapons systems and fired more than 8,000 rounds at targets. Those targets were human-like, mobile mannequins embedded with pressure sensors to register lethal and non-lethal hits and mounted on a four-wheeled chassis. This design allowed for realistic size, speed, and mobility for snipers to test the tactic.

A group of snipers have data on their shots recorded as they fire at robotic moving targets at Fort A.P. Hill, VA, on 10 October 2015 during the Joint Sniper Performance Improvement Methodology Quick Reaction Test.

Photo by Sgt Justin M. Boling, USMC





Photos courtesy of author

Above, a sniper aims his rifle during the Joint Sniper Performance Improvement Methodology Quick Reaction Test. The yearlong test aimed to improve the skills of snipers across all United States government agencies. At right, the robotic moving targets used during testing were human-like, mobile mannequins embedded with pressure sensors to register lethal and non-lethal hits targets.



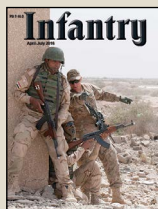
After evaluating the effectiveness of the TTP and conducting another round of JWAG meetings, the TTP was refined and tested again. During the second test, shooters were instructed on and familiarized with the TTP, then performed a series of engagements on the remote moving targets, firing more than 8,000 rounds. Surveys were then conducted to determine the efficacy of the new engagement methods. Based upon findings and conclusions, the TTP was finalized and distributed to the participating organizations for eventual implementation at sniper training schools within each service.

The TTP developed during the JSniPIM QRT established a set of techniques which apply to and improve upon the third and fourth steps of the four-step engagement process of identify, range, estimate speed, and engage target. It was based on the quantitative data, observation of effective sniper teams, and the consolidation of best practices

Ultimately, the JSniPIM QRT TTP cannot replace the benefits of frequency and repetition at the range; however, many snipers may also not have the range, ammunition, and target resources to practice this type of shooting. The TTP provides the foundation for sniper teams to begin understanding the dynamics of engaging moving targets and for commanders to employ sniper teams in difficult environments with the utmost confidence.

A QRT provides \$1 million of contract support spanning one year with a rapid ramp-up to solve a joint (two or more services) critical capability gap with a non-material solution. The objective is to focus on rapidly solving problems currently affecting the warfighter. All tests are OSD-funded and allocated following a nomination process that determines feasibility, testability, and urgency. If the nomination is a joint problem and will aid warfighters through capabilities improvement, the project will be considered. Typical test-generated products are TTP; concept of operations; doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) analysis, and handbooks. If you would like more information on the JSniPIM QRT or are interested in nominating a joint project, go to <https://www.atec.army.mil/jte/index.html>.

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