

The successful employment of Marine Scout Snipers and U.S.

Army Sniper teams in Vietnam taught a valuable lesson to those responsible for America's tactical warfare doctrine in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. The probability of One Round - One Kill had been proven in the jungles of an alien country half a world away. Sniper training and employment was here to stay, with the establishment of the U.S. Army Sniper School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Equipping the modern day military sniper with the best

possible weapon is as important as training the soldier who pulls the trigger. The sniper rifle used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam was the M21, a match-grade M14 that was originally equipped with a Redfield 3X-9X ART scope. The Marines choice was the venerable M40, a Remington M700 sniper rifle also fitted with a Redfield scope. Both sniper weapons performed well in the late 1960s, but by the late 70s, both the Army and Marine Corps needed a better weapon to engage targets out to and beyond 1,000 meters. In 1977, the Army began comparative testing at the Aberdeen Proving Ground and at Fort Benning of a number of precision rifles, including the French FRF1, the AR10, the Marine Corps M40A1, the Winchester 70 Match, the Canadians Parker-Hale 1200TX, and a heavy-barrel M14.

These rifles were tested against the Army M21, which was used as the control weapon. Despite extensive trials, the U.S. Army decided that the M21 was still adequate to the task. By the early-1980s, the Army began taking a second look at the drawbacks of the M21, especially its inability to maintain a zero when dropped during airborne operations. The original M21s were wearing out, and suitable replacement parts were hard to come by. U.S. Army Training Circular TC 23-14 stated:

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<p>During operation Urgent Fury in 1983, U.S. Army Rangers employed snipers in Grenada. Target reductions were successful against enemy mortar positions at ranges up to 800 meters. The reduction of fires from these positions was critical to the missions success, and illustrates the continuing value of sniper employment.</p>

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<p>The necessity of fielding a state-of-the-art sniper rifle came to light in Grenada and in other police actions of the 1980s. The U.S. Army Rangers echoed the same need. Soon the chief military threat to NATO would no longer lay across the North European Plain with rolling hills and thick forests that shortened sniper engagements to from 300 to 500 meters. Future engagements would now emanate across flat, open desert terrains of the Middle East, with potential sniper engagements exceeding 1,000 meters. The responsibility of solving this problem was