

**Marksmanship** - Throughout the last several courses, half of our attrition has come because of multiple marksmanship events. We used to only drop one or two Marines between known distance (KD) and unknown distance (UKD) qualifications. The new POI has a more robust marksmanship package which includes qualifications in KD, UKD, night qualification, M110 qualification, mil holds, max point blank, alternate shooting positions, and moving targets at various speeds. Although attrition has increased in marksmanship due to the increased amount of tasks, the Marines leaves here a better shooter than ever produced.

**Land Navigation** - On average we lose 1-2 Marines each course with this task. Marines have become tied to a GPS and spend very little time doing proper navigation with a compass, terrain association, proper map work, etc. This also will tie into patrolling but, as a whole, we need to stay focused on the basics of land navigation and not remain tied to a GPS. In the past decade, Marines have become accustomed to operating on batteries, relying solely on GPS', and not what we are known for; our field craft. In my eyes, two things separate Marine Infantry from every other unit in any other force; our small unit leader and our field craft. We need to stop overusing the term "brilliance in the basics" and start training to them.

**Patrolling** - We are atrocious because of where we have been the past decade plus. We need to get back into, and stay in, "the green". Marines are not comfortable being uncomfortable. Marines navigating are not doing checks prior to patrolling. They are acting as if the GPS is an extension of their body and their eyes are glued to it from the minute of insert. This is why we take the GPS' away from them on their patrol exercises. Without the GPS their patrolling greatly improves because they are forced to focus on the basics. Another huge issue is order in a patrol, such as what we see every course; SAW gunners being assigned as Point Man or Nav Man. Marines are relying on roads to navigate and are not staying away from likely avenues of approach, natural lines of drift, etc. We have moved so far away from our doctrinal scouting and patrolling that it hurts to watch these guys, especially when questioned to hear their answer of "this is how we did it last deployment".

**Final Firing Position (aka stalking)** - The only thing that has changed is the grading criteria. Marines are not being trained enough on this task prior to attending the course, resulting in being dropped. The conclusion I have come to is, for several years, the POI was under "recruiter math" stipulations regarding this event and there used to be 15 graded stalks. At the end of the 15, the five lowest scores were dropped. This created a false sense of security that Marines attending did not need to be trained as much on this task because it had been graded in such a manner that anyone could pass it, and almost anyone and everyone did. This did not show sustained proficiency of the task. There is no longer "recruiter math" involved and it is imperative that Marines are trained on this prior to attending the course.

**Reoccurring injuries** - This has become a plague at our course. Every course we run a Marine is injured and almost every time we ask him about the injury it is a reoccurring injury. "Stand-by" Marines that meet the prerequisites are turned away every SSBC. If the Marine has an injury, it will definitely be exposed as this course is PT intensive. It includes conditioning hikes, timed movements,

combat conditioning, etc. All these events are on top of the daily grind of training these Marines are exposed to.

**Other preparation hints:**

- Have a basic knowledge of the PRC-117, 150, and 152 operations.
- Practice stalking skills, such as burning windows and setting up final firing positions. Concealment's are a good exercise for conduct of actions while in a final firing position.
- You must have a current rifle score of expert. If you show up on check-in day without it, or waivers, the Marine will be turned away.
- Have a completed and screened command screening check-list by your command ready to turn in with your SRB and BTR/BIR on check-in. Ensure the BTR/BIR is recent and all information is up to date. If rifle score was too recent to have posted, a copy of the score from the range the annual qualification was conducted on is expected to be attached to the BTR.
- Ensure GT score is above 100. If test was taken too recently to have been graded and entered, the Marine will not be waived and a fully qualified Marine will be placed in his spot.
- Have all the gear recommended on the gear list that is attached to the check in sheet. Ensure you have the SOI-E Scout Sniper Basic Course gear list. Each school house's gear list is different!

The above probably comes as no surprise to most, but I hope it helps by seeing the main deficiencies that are feeding the attrition beast. I know it hurts to see a Marine come home on T-Day 50, but if I switched the schedule around they would be coming home T-Day 18 because there is only so much extra help we can provide here.