

New rifle a bull's-eye with Marine Snipers

26th MEU(SOC) crack shots fire first with DMR M-14

by Sgt. Andrew D. Pomykal
26TH MEU(SOC) Public Affairs Detachment
USS BATAAN, KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

"The deadliest weapon in the world... is a Marine and his rifle," said Senior Drill Instructor GySgt. Hartman, a character portrayed by Marine veteran and actor R. Lee Ermy in Stanley Kubrick's "Full Metal Jacket."

Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) are field-testing the Corps' latest addition to its arsenal, the Designated Marksman Rifle M-14, in the desert surroundings here.

Marine Corps weapons' experts have coupled older match-grade M-14 rifle barrels, already in service, with a modern, fiberglass stock that offers the shooter an ergonomic pistol grip. The 7.62mm barrels were also retrofitted to accept a suppressor. The weather-resistant stock has a scope rail to accommodate different sights. Spacer plates and adjustable cheek pieces were incorporated into the design to allow an individual shooter to custom fit the 36-inch long, 15-lb. rifle. The DMR has a maximum effective range of 1,000 meters and accepts a 20-round magazine.

"This is the most accurate, combat weapon in the world," said Sgt. Dalton P. Baker, a precision weapons repairman. "For accuracy and durability, it can't be beaten."

The DMR is the creation of several precision weapons repairmen from Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Va. SSgt. Raymond Conrad is heading up production to supply the semi-



Sgt. Jason E. Capozzoli, a 26th MEU(SOC) Force Reconnaissance Marine from Tallahassee, Fla., gets acquainted with the Corps' new M-14 DMR. Eight of the nine rifles manufactured by precision weapons repairmen at MCCDC Quantico, Va., were sent here for testing during Operation Enduring Freedom. Photo by Sgt. Andrew D. Pomykal

automatic rifle to Fleet Marine units, according to Baker of San Antonio, Texas.

"This ain't your standard issue rifle. Every piece is fitted by hand. We've made nine so far and eight of them are here. It is a perfect weapon for security from the high ground and ideal for [Fleet Anti-terrorist Security Team] companies, military police and explosive ordnance disposal technicians," said Baker. "It offers a happy medium between the M16A2 and the M40 [sniper rifle]."

Baker estimates that by using older components to fabricate the DMR, they are saving the Corps a significant amount of money, especially considering the cost of research and development required to field such arms.

"A commercial equivalent would cost somewhere between twenty-eight and thirty-two thousand dollars a piece," he said. "We can build this rifle in two days, mostly because it

takes 24 hours for the [fiberglass] epoxy to dry, and it only costs a little more than six hundred dollars in materials."

"This is a superior weapon. It gives us an awesome capability," said Reconnaissance Marine Sgt. Jason E. Capozzoli of Tallahassee, Fla. "The suppressor will really help to conceal a shooter's position during urban operations."

"The three-pound trigger squeeze is great. I barely even have to pull," said Scout Sniper Cpl. Dustin Lee of Reno, Nev.

Baker also touted another advantage of the DMR.

"We've simplified repairs so that all armorers can perform [low level] maintenance," he said.

The DMR M-14 seems to be a crowd-pleaser among the sharpshooters of the 26th MEU(SOC) who will remain in place here until relieved by U.S. Army units.

