



SLR.26  
1 Oct 99

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WEAPONS TRAINING BATTALION  
MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND  
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5040**

**DETAILED INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**

LESSON TITLE

SUPPORTED FIRING POSITIONS/SELECTION AND USE OF COVER

COURSE TITLE

SUSTAINMENT LEVEL RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP (PHASE I, II, III)



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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
Weapons Training Battalion  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5040

**INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION CHECKLIST**

**ESSENTIAL DATA**

LESSON DESIGNATOR	SLR.26
LESSON TITLE	Supported Firing Positions/ Selection and Use of Cover
DATE PREPARED	1 October 1999
TIME	1 hr 30 min
METHOD	Lecture, demonstration, and practical application
LOCATION	Indoor/outdoor training area
INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED	One Primary Marksmanship Instructor (PMI)
REFERENCE	MCRP 3-01A
TRAINING AIDS/EQUIPMENT	M16A2 service rifle, sling, cartridge belt, magazines, magazine pouches, flak jacket, helmet, and suspenders; slides (sSLR.26- 1 - sSLR.26-21); and cover materials (log, barricade, wall, window, vehicle, rubble, etc.)

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** A load-bearing vest may be substituted for magazine pouches and suspenders. Gear will be worn in accordance with the MBST Handbook.



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**DETAILED OUTLINE**

**SUPPORTED FIRING POSITIONS/SELECTION AND USE OF COVER**

**INTRODUCTION**

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1. **GAIN ATTENTION.** On the battlefield, a steady position that allows maximum observation of the enemy as well as cover and concealment is a necessity. A good position will provide a solid foundation for the rifle and protection from enemy fire. It is unlikely that targets will be engaged with any proficiency unless a good shooting position is established.
2. **OVERVIEW.** This lesson will cover the selection and use of cover, considerations for firing from cover, supported firing positions, and techniques for searching for and engaging targets from behind cover.
3. **INTRODUCE LEARNING OBJECTIVES.** The Terminal Learning Objectives and Enabling Learning Objectives pertaining to this lesson are as follows:
  - a. **TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE.** Given an M16A2 service rifle, sling, cartridge belt, magazines, magazine pouches, flak jacket, helmet, suspenders, ammunition, and moving targets, without the aid of references, engage moving targets with the rifle IAW MCRP 3-01A and to achieve a proficiency level IAW MCO 3574.2\_. (PVTX.11.10)
  - b. **ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE.** Given an M16A2 service rifle, sling, cartridge belt, magazines, magazine pouches, flak jacket, helmet, suspenders, ammunition, and targets, without the aid of references, assume a supported field firing position IAW MCRP 3-01A. (PVTX.11.10c)
  - c. **TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE.** Given an M16A2 service rifle, sling, cartridge belt, magazines, magazine pouches, flak jacket, helmet, suspenders, ammunition, and targets, without the aid of references, engage targets at unknown distances with the rifle IAW MCRP 3-01A and to achieve a proficiency level IAW MCO 3574.2\_. (PVTX.11.11)
  - d. **ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE.** Given an M16A2 service rifle, sling, cartridge belt, magazines, magazine pouches, flak jacket, helmet, suspenders, ammunition, and targets, without the aid of references, take cover IAW MCRP 3-01A. (PVTX.11.11d)



4. METHOD. This lesson will be taught in a classroom setting using lecture, demonstration, and practical application.

5. EVALUATION. The Marine will be evaluated via a performance checklist during the Field Firing Live Fire Exercises, SLR.31.

TRANSITION: In combat, a Marine must be prepared to fire from any type of cover to engage the enemy. In defense, fighting is normally carried out from a fighting hole. In the attack, or when patrolling, any available cover can be used that conceals from enemy view, protects from fire, offers observation of the enemy, and provides support for a firing position. Proficiency in assuming various field firing positions will enable the Marine to adapt these positions to fire from cover.

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**NOTE**

The procedures in this lesson are written for right-handed Marines. Left-handed Marines should reverse instructions as needed.

**1. (5 MIN) COVER AND CONCEALMENT**

a. Cover and Concealment. Cover is anything that provides protection from enemy fire. Cover may be an existing hole, a hastily dug shelter, or a well-prepared fighting position with overhead protection. Concealment is anything that hides a Marine from enemy view; it may not afford protection. Concealment can be attained from buildings, trees, crops, and a skillful use of ground contours.

b. Types of Cover

1) Frontal Cover. Frontal cover provides protection from small arms fire. Ideally, frontal cover should be:

a) Thick enough to stop small arms fire.

b) High enough to protect the head when firing around cover.

c) Wide enough to provide cover when firing to the oblique.



2) The Ideal Cover. Cover must be strong enough to provide protection from small arms fire and indirect fire fragments. The ideal cover offers the following:

- a) Overhead, flank, and rear protection from direct and indirect fire.
- b) Free use of personal weapons.
- c) Concealment from enemy observation.
- d) A concealed route in and out.
- e) An unobstructed view of a wide and deep area of fire.

c. Cover Materials. Natural cover (e.g., trees, rocks, logs, rubble) is the best type of cover because it is hard for the enemy to detect a position that is concealed by natural cover. Any material that protects an individual from small arms fire may be used for cover. Dirt, when packed to a minimum thickness of 18 inches, is an excellent form of cover. Some common materials are:

1) Sandbags. Cover can be improved by using dirt from the position for sandbags and using the sandbags to fortify the position. Tests have shown that bullets more easily penetrate sandbags that are loosely filled or moist. The water in the moist sand allows the bullet to travel easier; loosely packed sand allows pockets of air for the bullet to travel through. If sandbags are tamped down, their density is increased; sandbags should always be tightly packed. Doubling or overlapping sandbags increases the thickness of the protection. A minimum thickness of three sandbags is required to stop small arms fire.

2) Trees/Logs. Wood is a relatively dense material and offers good covering protection. Bullets have a tendency to fragment when they penetrate wood. Live trees have a greater resistance to bullet penetration than dead wood. Wood that has been treated with creosote, such as telephone poles and railroad ties, offers better protection from projectiles than untreated wood; but still does not ensure positive protection from small arms fire.

3) Cinder Blocks. Cinder blocks used as foundations for houses or walls are not impenetrable cover. Although they are made of a dense material, they are brittle and can shatter upon impact from small arms fire, causing injury by secondary fragmentation.



Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: The effective use of cover will enable engagement of enemy targets while affording protection from enemy fire; concealment will hide a Marine from enemy view. In a combat environment, you should use any material available for cover as long as it provides positive protection from small arms fire. When employing cover, it is important to establish stable firing positions for accuracy of engagement. We will now cover considerations for firing from cover.

## 2. (15 MIN) CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRING FROM COVER

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Demonstrate the positions in this section, when possible, as they are explained.

a. Firing From Specific Types of Cover. There are several types of cover that provide support and protection, as well as concealment, and do not interfere with target engagement. A Marine must know the features of each type of cover to adapt the firing position to the combat environment. There will be more variation with naturally occurring cover than with positions that have been deliberately built.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-1.

1) Fighting Hole or Bunker. Use a fighting hole whenever such prepared positions are available. Upon entering the fighting hole, a right-handed Marine should assume a position on the right side of the fighting hole. Add or remove dirt, sandbags, or other supports to fit your height. Assume a firing position by performing the following:

- a) Place the right foot to the rear as a brace and lean forward until your chest is against the forward wall of the fighting hole.
- b) Extend the left arm and elbow over the forward side of the fighting hole so the left forearm rests against the back of the parapet.
- c) Place the rifle butt into the pocket of the right shoulder and grasp the pistol grip with the right hand.



d) Place the right elbow on solid support using the parapet of the fighting hole or sandbags placed beside the fighting hole.

Refer to slides sSLR.26-2 and sSLR.26-3.

2) Rooftop. When firing from a rooftop, expose as little of the body as possible by assuming a position behind the apex of the roof. If no other means of supporting the body is available, place the left arm over the apex of the roof to hold the weight of the body but expose a minimum of the head and shoulders.

3) Window. When firing from a window, the Marine can establish a supported or an unsupported position.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-4.

a) Unsupported. Where possible, remain well back from the opening of the window so the rifle will not protrude and interior shadow will provide concealment so a silhouette is not provided to the enemy.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-5.

b) Supported. When additional stability is needed, establish a position by placing the rifle handguards or your forearm in the "V" formed by the side and bottom of the window sill.

4) Vehicle. In many combat situations, particularly in urban environments, a vehicle may be the best form of cover.

Refer to slides sSLR.26-6 and sSLR.26-7.

a) When using a vehicle for cover, the engine block provides the most protection from small arms fire. Establish a position behind the front wheel so the engine block is between you and the target. From this position, you may fire over, under, or around the vehicle. This is a particularly effective position for larger vehicles that are high off the ground.



Refer to slide sSLR.26-8.

b) Establish additional support for the rifle by positioning yourself behind the door jamb (frame of door) and placing the rifle against the "V" formed by the open door and door frame. From this position, you may fire over the hood of the vehicle while using the engine block for protection. However, this position limits lateral mobility and it is more difficult to maneuver from.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-9.

c) At the back of the vehicle, the only cover is provided by the axle and the wheel. If you must shoot from the back of the vehicle, position yourself directly behind the wheel as much as possible.

Refer to slides sSLR.26-10 and sSLR.26-11.

5) Wall or Barricade. If possible, fire around the end of a wall or barricade at its base. If not, assume a position that permits firing over the wall or barricade while presenting a low silhouette.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-12.

6) Log. Ideally, firing is done from the end of a log. If it is necessary to fire over the log, use the prone or kneeling position and rest the rifle on your forward hand supported by the log. This will make maximum use of cover and provide optimum support for firing.

b. Considerations for Firing From Cover. Regardless of the combat environment (e.g., urban, desert, jungle), the uses are the same for different types of cover of like height and width. For example, cover is used to support the weapon and position in the same manner behind a tree or a telephone pole; behind a berm, or a wall, or a vehicle; behind a log or a curb, etc.

1) Adjustment of the Shooting Position. Cover should be used to provide additional support for the position. The shooting position selected will depend on the Marine's height in relation to the height of the cover.





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a) The firing position selected should be adjusted to fit the type of cover to:

(1) Provide stability. The position should be adjusted to cover to stabilize the rifle sights and allow the management of recoil to recover on target.

(2) Permit mobility. The position should be adjusted to cover to permit lateral engagement of dispersed targets and movement to other cover.

(3) Allow observation of the area/enemy while minimizing exposure to the enemy.

b) The firing position is adjusted to fit the type of cover by adjusting the seven factors (i.e., left hand, pocket of shoulder, right elbow, stock weld, grip of right hand) to support the rifle or the position.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-13.

2) Support for the Rifle. The support should stabilize the rifle to enable you to maintain sight picture. Avoid touching any part of the support with the rifle barrel. This disrupts the natural vibration of the barrel and affects the accuracy of shots fired.

A firing position can generally be established with the forward hand placed between the rifle and the support.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-14.

3) Keeping the Entire Body Behind Cover. Avoid inadvertent exposure of any part of your body to fire. Be especially aware of the top of the head, elbows, knees, or any other body part that may extend beyond the cover.

4) Firing From the Left Side of Cover. To minimize exposure to the enemy and maximize the protection of cover, if possible, right-handed Marines should fire from behind the right side of cover, and left-handed Marines should fire from behind the left side of the cover. If a right-handed Marine must fire from the left side of cover, he fires right-handed but adjusts his position behind cover and uses the rollout technique to engage the target.

5) Firing Over the Top of Cover. Firing over the top



of cover provides a wider field of view and lateral movement.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-15.

- a) When firing over the top of cover, the position may be supported and stabilized by resting the handguard or the left forearm on the cover. Keep as low a profile as possible; the rifle should be as close to the top of cover as possible.
- b) Remember that the rifle's sights are higher than the barrel. Always maintain a position that ensures the muzzle is high enough to clear the cover (e.g., window sill, top of wall).
- 6) Ejection Port Clearance. Ensure the cover does not obstruct the ejection port because it may interfere with the ejection of a spent cartridge, causing a stoppage.
- 7) Resting the Magazine. The bottom, front, or side of the rifle magazine can rest on or against support to provide additional stability. However, the back of the magazine should not be pulled back against support because it can cause a stoppage by not allowing a round to feed from the magazine.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Supports are foundations for positions. Positions are foundations for the rifle. The considerations for firing from cover must be incorporated into supported firing positions. Remember the seven factors common to all shooting positions. These factors still apply when firing from supported firing positions and should always be applied to the extent practical.

### 3. (20 MIN) SUPPORTED FIRING POSITIONS

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Demonstrate the positions in this section, when possible, as they are explained.

#### a. Introduction to Supported Firing Positions

- 1) In combat the Marine will not have the luxury of time to assume a perfect textbook position. Therefore, the Marine must know instinctively that his position is correct rather than follow a regimented



sequence of movements to ensure its correctness. With training, stable firing positions can be assumed quickly and instinctively.

2) A supported firing position must be chosen that minimizes exposure to the enemy and maximizes the stability of the rifle and protection from enemy fire.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-16.

3) The firing position may be adjusted to fit the support as long as the position provides balance, control, and stability for firing. Any body support may be used that is steady such as logs, rocks, sandbags, or walls. The surrounding environment will often dictate the support and position. When time permits, use the hasty sling for additional support for the rifle.

b. Seven Factors. The seven factors are applied when firing from cover, however, some may have to be modified slightly to accommodate the artificial support provided the rifle and position.

1) Forward Hand. The support should be used to help stabilize both the firing position and the rifle to enable the Marine to maintain sight alignment and sight picture.

a) The forearm or hand can contact the support to stabilize the weapon. Rest the forearm or the meaty portion of the bottom of the left hand on the support and rest the rifle in the "V" formed by the thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

b) The rifle's handguards may rest on the support, but the barrel may not. Placement of the left hand on the handguard may have to be adjusted forward or back to accommodate the cover and the additional support provided by the rifle resting on the cover.

c) If the handguards are resting on the cover, you may pull down on the handguards to further stabilize the weapon.

2) Rifle in the Pocket of the Shoulder. Regardless of the combat situation or the height of the cover, the butt of the rifle must remain in the pocket of the shoulder to manage the effects of recoil, stabilize the rifle, and maintain the rifle's battlesight zero. The firing position must be adjusted behind cover to enable the rifle to be placed in the shoulder.



3) Stock Weld. Regardless of the cover, the firing position must be adjusted to allow stock weld to be achieved. Proper stock weld provides quick recovery between shots and keeps the aiming eye centered in the rear sight aperture.

4) Right Elbow. The right elbow can be placed on or against support to stabilize the weapon and the position. Ensure the elbow is not extended beyond cover to telegraph your position to the enemy.

5) Grip of the Right Hand. If the rifle handguards, the forward hand, or the forearm rest on cover for support, the grip of the right hand should pull back and down on the pistol grip to further stabilize the weapon in the shoulder and on the support.

6) Breathing. Breathing does not change when firing from a supported position.

7) Muscular Tension. To create balance and support for the position, shift your body weight into or against support. This enables the use of cover to support your body weight, reducing the need for muscular tension.

c. Supported Prone. Whenever possible, the supported prone position should be used when firing from behind cover. It is the steadiest position and provides the lowest silhouette, thereby providing maximum protection from enemy observation and fire.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-17.

1) The prone position can be assumed behind a tree, a wall, a log, or almost any type of cover. It is flexible and allows shooting from all sides of cover and from cover of varying sizes.

2) Support the position by placing the handguards, the forearm, or the magazine on or against support.

3) Keep the position as low as possible to ensure no part of the body is exposed to the enemy.

4) The body must be adjusted to conform to cover. For example, if the cover is narrow, get directly behind it and keep the legs together. The body should be in line with the rifle, directly behind the weapon. This presents a smaller target to the enemy and more body mass to absorb recoil.

d. Supported Kneeling. When the prone position cannot be used because of the height of the support, the supported



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kneeling position may be appropriate. The kneeling position provides additional mobility over the prone position.



Refer to slides sSLR.26-18 and sSLR.26-19.

1) The kneeling position allows shooting from all sides and from cover of varying sizes. This position may be altered to maximize the use of cover or support by assuming a variation of the kneeling position (high, medium, or low).

2) In the kneeling position, the Marine must not telegraph his position behind the cover with his knee. When shooting around the sides of cover, strive to keep your right knee in line with your left foot so as not to telegraph your knee.

3) Support the position by placing the handguards, the forearm, or the magazine on or against support. In addition, the position (e.g., a knee, the side of the body) may rest against support.

4) If the rifle is resting on support, the Marine may not need to stabilize the weapon by placing his left elbow on his knee.

e. Supported Sitting. A supported sitting position may be used to fire over the top of cover when mobility is not as critical. A sitting position can be comfortably assumed for a longer period of time than a kneeling position and it can conform to higher cover when a prone position cannot be used.

Refer to slide sSLR.26-20.

1) Support the position by placing the handguards, the forearm, or the magazine on or against support.

2) If the rifle is resting on support, the Marine may not need to stabilize the weapon by placing his left or right elbows on his legs.

f. Supported Standing. When the supported prone or kneeling position cannot be used to engage the target, the supported standing position may be used. The supported standing position is effectively used behind high cover (e.g., window, over a wall) or narrow cover (e.g., tree, telephone pole).



Refer to slide sSLR.26-21.

- 1) To assume the supported standing position, the Marine leans his body forward or against support to stabilize the weapon and the position.
- 2) Support the position by placing the handguards, the forearm, or the magazine on or against support. In addition, the position (e.g., the side of the body) may rest against support.

Confirm by questions.

**TRANSITION:** The use of cover to stabilize your firing position will enable the rifle sights to be stabilized for accurate shooting. To use cover effectively, you must be able to locate targets when behind cover or ensure the area is clear before moving. In so doing, you must expose as little of yourself as possible to the enemy. Additionally, you must be ready to fire if a target is located. There are two techniques that can be used to locate and engage targets from behind cover: the pie technique and the rollout technique.

#### **4. (20 MIN) SEARCHING FOR TARGETS AND ENGAGING THEM FROM BEHIND COVER**

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** *Demonstrate the techniques as they are explained.*

a. Techniques for Searching and Engaging Targets From Behind Cover. The pie and rollout techniques minimize the Marine's exposure to enemy fire while placing the Marine in a position to engage targets or to move to another location if necessary. These techniques are also used to enter a building or structure. Both techniques are used in the kneeling and standing positions. To be accurate in engaging targets using either technique, the seven factors must be applied, i.e., the grip of the right hand must pull the weapon into the shoulder, the butt of the rifle must be firmly placed in the shoulder, and stock weld must be established to allow the aiming eye to look through the rear sight.





1) Pie Technique. To perform the pie technique:

a) Staying behind cover, move back and away from the leading edge of the cover. The surroundings and situation will dictate the distance you should move back and away from the cover. Generally, the further back you are from cover, the greater your area of observation; staying too close to cover decreases the area of observation. However, if you are too far back from cover, you can come off the leading edge of cover and it is difficult to know how much of your body is being exposed to the enemy.

b) Assume a firing position and lower the rifle sights enough to have a clear field of view, orienting the muzzle on the leading edge of the cover. (In a building, the baseboards serve as a reference point for the muzzle of the rifle when searching for targets.)

c) Taking small side steps, slowly move out from behind the cover, covering the field of view with the aiming eye and muzzle of the weapon. Wherever the eyes move, the muzzle should move (eyes, muzzle, target). The muzzle should remain on the leading edge of cover, serving as a pivot point when moving out.

d) Continue taking small side steps and moving out from cover until a target is identified or the area is found to be clear.

e) When a target is identified, sweep the safety, place the finger on the trigger, and engage the target.

2) Rollout Technique. To perform the rollout technique:

a) Staying behind cover, move back and position the body so it is in line with the leading edge of the cover, ensuring that no part of the body extends beyond the cover.

b) Assume a firing position and come to the Ready, ensuring the muzzle is just behind the cover.

c) Canting the head and weapon slightly, roll the upper body out to the side just enough to have a clear field of view and allow the muzzle to clear the cover. Keeping the feet in place, push up on the ball of one foot to facilitate rolling out.



d) Continue rolling out from cover until a target is identified or the area is found to be clear.

e) When a target is identified, sweep the safety, place the finger on the trigger, and engage the target.

f) If a target is identified before moving out from cover, the rifle should be taken off safe before moving out using the rollout technique.

3) Combining the Pie and Rollout Techniques. In some situations, it may be necessary to utilize both the pie and rollout technique in order to search an entire area for targets (e.g., corner of a building, a doorway). Changing from one technique to another may permit the Marine to minimize his exposure to the enemy and reduce the time that he is exposed to enemy fire.

b. Moving Out From Behind Cover. You must be constantly aware of your surroundings and available cover should a threat appear. Avoid obvious danger areas and move quickly through danger areas that cannot be avoided.

1) When moving from cover to cover, select the next cover location and plan your route before moving from your present position. This is done by quickly looking from behind cover to ensure the area is clear, ensuring the head and eyes are exposed for as short a time as possible.

2) If necessary, conduct a Condition 1 reload before moving from cover.

3) Once you are committed to moving, all focus should be on moving until cover is reassumed.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Practicing supported field firing positions and the cover techniques we have discussed will make you proficient in their use. We will now move to the range to practice these techniques.



**5. (25 MIN) PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR SUPPORTED FIRING POSITIONS/SELECTION AND USE OF COVER**

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Give Marines approximately 25 minutes to practice the supported firing positions from all types of cover.

- a. Demonstrate the appropriate supported firing position at each type of cover.
- b. Provide immediate feedback to Marines, as necessary, as they practice the techniques for firing from behind cover:
  - 1) Use of support to stabilize the weapon.
  - 2) Minimizing exposure to the enemy.
    - a) Body.
    - b) Muzzle awareness.
  - 3) Supported field firing positions.
    - a) Prone.
    - b) Kneeling.
    - c) Sitting.
    - d) Standing.
  - 4) Pie and rollout techniques.

Confirm by practice.

TRANSITION: Training in the field firing positions will enable the assumption of a stable field firing position quickly and instinctively. That skill, coupled with knowledge of the considerations for firing from cover and concealment, and the employment of search and engagement techniques from cover will improve the Marine's effectiveness and survival in combat.



OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS:  
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1. Respond to questions from the class.
2. Prompt Marines with questions to the class.
  - a. QUESTION: What is the purpose of concealment?  
ANSWER: To hide the Marine from enemy view.
  - b. QUESTION: What is the purpose of cover?  
ANSWER: To protect the Marine from enemy fire.
  - c. QUESTION: What supported firing position should be used whenever possible?  
ANSWER: The supported prone.

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Ask Marines as many questions as necessary to ensure they fully understand the material presented in this lesson.

SUMMARY:  
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The proper use of cover is a basic technique of field firing. Utilizing cover greatly increases the chances of survival in combat. However, it is not enough to simply sit behind cover. Targets must still be effectively engaged. Since cover comes in all shapes and sizes, the shooting position must be adapted to the cover. Adapting the supported prone, kneeling, sitting, and standing positions to cover while maximizing the use of the cover to provide protection and support for the rifle enables effective field firing. In addition, employment of search and engagement techniques from behind cover minimize the Marine's exposure to enemy fire while placing the Marine in a position to engage targets or to move to another location if necessary.



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sSLR.26-21

SUPPORTED STANDING