

2015 Police Sniper Utilization Survey released

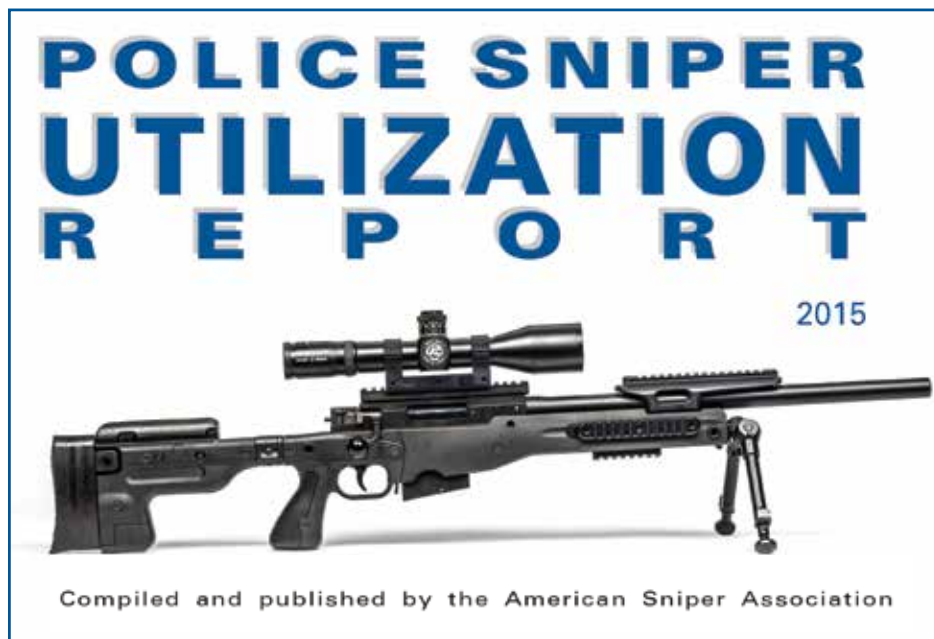
By Derrick Bartlett

The 2015 Police Sniper Utilization Survey Report has been released. This is the sixth edition of this important collection of data.

When the American Sniper Association (ASA) was formed in 2000, one of the first orders of business was to develop a survey to collect statistics on police sniper shootings. The ASA developed a form consisting of questions of greatest importance to sniper teams and administrators. Extensive outreach to various agencies across the country resulted in a wide-reaching response.

The survey was disseminated to 897 agencies identified through the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, all listed members of the National Directory of Law Enforcement Administrators published by the National Public Safety Information Bureau, and many others who learned of the survey through presentations made by ASA personnel at tactical conferences, sniper schools, seminars and competitions nationwide. By reaching additional teams that would not have been included, this led to a more comprehensive and complete survey of tactical teams around the country.

This project was ambitious at the outset and proved arduous in the execution, but we were proud to finally produce the first Police Sniper Utilization Report in 2005. This report was a significant accomplishment and unprecedented in its scope. A comprehensive study of the historic use and effective-



ness of police snipers in the United States existed for the first time ever.

The finished product is not a dry recitation of numbers and statistics. Instead, it is a compilation of data and relevant anecdotal information, which has proven useful in understanding how snipers have been employed over the past two decades. In addition to knowing the average distance of police sniper shootings, there is other operational information, such as the longest and shortest distances encountered and a breakdown of how many have occurred in daylight or low light. The report also shows what shots have passed through intermediate barriers, as well as how many have passed through their intended target. Many more operational circumstances are recorded and quantified in the publication, as well.

The data in this report gives administrators, snipers and team leaders a clearer picture of real-world sniper operations. It has also helped dispel a number of misconceptions about snipers. We know this information will assist you and your SWAT team leadership in structuring training, buying equipment and planning deployments.

There is nothing in this report that could be viewed as detrimental to law enforcement agencies. Since no agencies or persons are identified in the report, it will not expose any participating agency to future litigation. Therefore, we are not overly afraid of it inevitably making its way into the hands of attorneys. However, the report carries with it an implied warning for every agency reading it. We have clearly documented what snipers are facing in real-world opera-

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tions. Knowing what snipers are really doing should become the framework for designing training to prepare your team for the realities of the job. From this day forward, if teams choose to do otherwise, they do so at their peril. This report will help quantify the standards all teams will be expected to meet. Every sniper, on every sniper team, needs to read these reports.

The survey remains a work in progress. We know that as soon as we finish collecting available data for a specific timeframe, other incidents will have occurred. Still others have gone unreported in our prior collection attempts. We continue to hope agencies that initially balked at participating will be convinced of the legitimacy of the project after seeing the reports.

Although the latest report is completed, the process is not. This is meant to be a living document. We encourage agencies to help us maintain current data by reporting any sniper-involved shootings to the ASA as soon as it is practical. We understand the issues raised by ongoing investigations and pending litigation. Our need is for statistical information. The information requested on the survey form is basic, non-judgmental details contained in an incident report. We do not need investigative information that could be subpoenaed or otherwise used in a civil case. The individual officer or agency involved is not part of the database and neither is identified in the report. Most agencies around the country routinely

provide Uniform Crime Reports to the FBI. What we are asking for is the same sort of diligence in reporting any sniper-involved shootings that occur in your jurisdiction. All data and information collected will be considered sensitive and will not be distributed to the general public.

A Sniper Utilization Survey Form can be found on the American Sniper Association website, www.americansniper.org. If you have any questions,

or would like information on how to receive a copy of the report, please contact ASA at info@americansniper.org or 863-385-7835. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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