

INFORMATION PAPER

October 13, 2009

SUBJECT: Reliability of Small Arms

1. PURPOSE. To provide information on the reliability of US Army Small Arms

2. Facts:

a. The US Army provides its Soldiers with the most reliable, battle proven and tested weapons in the world. In addition, we continually solicit Soldier feedback and make constant improvements across all of our small arms systems.

b. To guarantee that the weapons we select and field meet or exceed their reliability requirements, the Army has a rigorous testing program. The Army fires hundreds of thousands of rounds during developmental and operational testing to ensure they are confident in the reliability of each weapon. For example, the M4 has been undergoing testing since its inception in 1991 and has fired over eight million rounds during testing.

c. The Army is committed to continuous improvement in all of our weapon systems. For example, the reliability requirement for the M4 is 600 Mean Rounds Between Stoppage (MRBS). The demonstrated current reliability is over 3600 MRBS as a result of our continuous improvement program. To date there have been 62 improvements to the M4, which include improvements to the trigger assembly, extractor spring, recoil buffer, barrel chamber, magazine and bolt. The M249 SAW, the Army's Squad Automatic Weapon, has a reliability requirement of 1200 MRBS and yet today demonstrates a reliability of over 23,400 MRBS. Like all other weapons, the Army has listened to the Soldier and incorporated suggested improvements. For example, the Army has made the SAW shorter, added soft ammo packs, a collapsible buttstock, and optics making it an extremely effective all purpose light machine gun – all while maintaining the reliability our Soldiers expect and demand.

d. The Army continually seeks feedback from Soldiers on the reliability of their weapons and makes improvements based on upon a variety of sources. These sources include a PEO Soldier/PM Soldier Weapons (PM SW) sponsored reliability and durability study conducted by the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) in 2006. The weapons examined in that study included the M9 pistol, M4 and M16 rifles, and the M249 SAW. The study found that 78% of Soldiers were satisfied with their weapons, with over 89% satisfied with the M4. Another source for Soldier feedback and information are the Post Combat Surveys. These surveys are conducted by the US Army Infantry Center on every returning combat unit. These surveys show an over than 90% satisfaction by Soldiers with their individual weapons, and furthermore few reliability issues are reported. Finally, PEO Soldier/PM SW has deployed two Officers into OIF and OEF to interview Soldiers and Leaders on any challenges with their

weapons. This information is analyzed and incorporated with other information to form the basis for improvements to our current fleet of weapons.

e. In order to ensure we provide our Soldiers with the best and latest in small arms technology, the Army is developing new requirements and plans full and open competitions for an improved modular hand gun, a subcompact personal defense weapon, a new individual carbine and a longer range sniper rifle. The individual carbine competition will address current, emerging and future threats. The Army will consider innovative technologies in order to provide our Soldiers with the best carbine in the world. The requirement for the improved carbine is currently in Army 3-Star level staffing, with an anticipated release to the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) for review. The Army has fully funded RDT&E to support a new carbine full and open competition – the full and open competition will initiate on the receipt of a JROC validated and approved requirement.

f. The Army is committed to providing our Soldiers with the best weapons in the world. Our current system allows us to gather feedback and incorporate improvements are necessary. We will continue to seek improvements to current weapons, training, optics, accessories and ammunition to maintain battlefield superiority.

COL Douglas Tamilio
Approved by: BG Peter N. Fuller